A GODLY HUSBAND

Returning to God's Original Design



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Genesis 2:18–25 • Ezer Kenegdo • Servant Leadership • Honor • Protection

Prepared for teaching and live presentation

CENTRAL QUESTION
Does my wife experience my leadership as a place of fear and control—or as a place of safety, honor, strength and Christ-like love?

1. Return to the Beginning

If we want to understand what a godly husband is, we need to go back to the beginning—not to tradition, not merely to what our culture has taught us, and not to the habits we inherited from our fathers. We go back to Genesis, to the moment when God created man and woman and established His original design.

> ***Genesis 2:18–25***
> *The passage begins with God saying that it is not good for the man to be alone. God then creates a corresponding partner, brings her to the man, and the two become one flesh. The chapter ends with the man and woman naked and not ashamed.*

This passage is foundational because it tells us what marriage looked like before sin entered the story. Before we discuss culture, family expectations, male authority, or the pressures placed on husbands and wives, we should first ask: What did God design?

2. "It Is Not Good for the Man to Be Alone"

Genesis does not present the woman as an afterthought or as an inferior assistant. God Himself says that something is not good: the man is alone. The answer is not another servant, another animal, or another person to be controlled. God makes a partner who corresponds to him.

> ***Genesis 2:18***
> *"It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make for him a helper as his counterpart."*

Ezer Kenegdo

The Hebrew expression behind this relationship is ezer kenegdo.

- Ezer is commonly translated "helper." It should not automatically be heard as "inferior assistant." Across the Old Testament, ezer is also used of God as the One who helps, rescues, strengthens and protects.
- Kenegdo carries the idea of corresponding to him, being before him, or being a counterpart who matches him.
- The picture is therefore not a master with a subordinate. It is a man and woman facing one another as corresponding partners in God's purpose.

TEACHING POINT
A wife is not created to stand behind her husband as a lesser person. Genesis presents her as a corresponding partner whose presence answers something God Himself declared was missing.

3. Adam Needed a Corresponding Partner

Adam names the animals, but among them no corresponding helper is found. The point is not that animals are worthless. The point is that none of them corresponds to Adam in his humanity, calling and relationship with God.

The marriage relationship is therefore not simply about companionship or sexuality. It is about shared humanity, shared purpose, counsel, strength and covenant partnership.

4. Tardemah — Adam Is Passive While God Works

Genesis 2:21 says that God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. The Hebrew word is tardemah. The source material emphasizes that this is more than ordinary sleep: it is a profound sleep or trance-like state initiated by God.

- Adam is not directing the process.
- Adam is not negotiating the design.
- Adam is not constructing the woman.
- God is doing the work.

The same Hebrew word appears in Genesis 15:12 when Abram experiences a deep sleep as God works in the covenant scene. The emphasis is that God is the active Creator.

APPLICATION FOR HUSBANDS
Your wife is not your possession to redesign. God is the Creator. The husband's responsibility is to recognize, honor and steward the gift God has entrusted to the marriage.

5. Tsela — More Than the Traditional Picture of a "Rib"

This is one of the most important Hebrew observations in the teaching. Genesis 2 uses the Hebrew word tsela. It is traditionally rendered "rib" in English translations of this passage. However, elsewhere in the Old Testament the word is used for a side, lateral side, or structural side/chamber.

- Exodus 25:12 — the sides of the Ark.
- Exodus 26:20 — the sides of the Tabernacle.
- 1 Kings 6:5 — side chambers or structural areas of the Temple.
- 2 Samuel 16:13 — the side/flank of a mountain.

That broader Hebrew usage means we should be careful about building the entire theology of marriage on the mental picture of a small bone removed from Adam. "Rib" is a traditional rendering, but "side" captures an important dimension of the word's broader Old Testament usage.

IMPORTANT NUANCE
The point is not to claim that every interpreter agrees that tsela must mean an entire anatomical half. The point is that the Hebrew word has a broader range than the English picture of "rib," and that broader range strengthens the Genesis picture of corresponding partnership.

6. Bone of My Bones, Flesh of My Flesh

> ***Genesis 2:23–24***
> *Adam responds: "This at last is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh." The passage then says that a man leaves father and mother, cleaves to his wife, and the two become one flesh.*

Notice Adam does not speak of a disposable part. He recognizes a profound connection: bone and flesh. The marriage covenant is therefore about becoming one—not one person dominating another, but two persons joined in a covenant relationship where each belongs to the other.

7. Submission Must Be Understood Through Christ

> ***Ephesians 5:21***
> *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

Submission is one of the most debated subjects in Christian marriage. But the discussion must begin with the instruction that frames the household teaching: mutual submission out of reverence for Christ.

The Greek verb associated with submission is hupotasso. Its range includes arranging oneself under or yielding. In the marriage context, the important biblical principle is that Christian relationships are not built on coercion, humiliation or the demand that one person always gets his way.

- Biblical submission is not a declaration that one spouse has less value.
- It is not permission for intimidation or abuse.
- It is not a demand for blind obedience.
- It is a posture of yielding self-interest for the good of the relationship and obedience to Christ.

8. The Husband Receives the Harder Command

> ***Ephesians 5:25***
> *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."*

In the first-century Greco-Roman world, household authority could be understood in strongly hierarchical terms. Paul places a radically different model before Christian husbands: love that gives itself away.

Jesus did not demonstrate leadership by demanding that everyone serve Him. He washed feet. He carried burdens. He laid down His life. The cross becomes the pattern for Christian husbandhood.

ONE SENTENCE TO REMEMBER
A godly husband does not use strength to make his wife bow; he uses strength to carry what would otherwise crush her.

9. Servant Leadership

Biblical leadership is responsibility before privilege. If a husband wants to speak about leadership, he must first ask what he is willing to carry.

- Be the first to apologize.
- Be willing to sacrifice comfort for the good of the family.
- Listen before making decisions that affect both spouses.
- Use authority to protect, never to intimidate.

- Create conditions where your wife's gifts, wisdom, intellect and spiritual life can flourish.
- Take responsibility when the home is unhealthy rather than simply blaming the wife.

10. Returning to Genesis: Work, Care and Responsibility

Genesis 2:15

God placed the man in the garden "to work it and take care of it."

Adam was given responsibility to cultivate and care for what God entrusted to him. In the marriage application of this teaching, a husband should understand his responsibility as cultivating a healthy environment—not controlling the person living inside it.

ASK YOURSELF

Is my wife becoming more alive, more secure, more confident in God and more able to use her gifts because of the way I lead?

11. Live With Understanding and Honor

1 Peter 3:7

"Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way... showing honor... as fellow heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

Peter puts the husband under a direct command: live with understanding. That means learning your wife. Know what encourages her. Know what frightens her. Know her boundaries, burdens, hopes and dreams. Do not demand that she adapt to you while you refuse to understand her.

Then Peter uses the language of honor and co-heirship. Whatever distinctions exist between husband and wife, Peter explicitly places them together as heirs of God's gracious gift of life.

A SOBERING WARNING

Peter connects the husband's treatment of his wife with his prayer life. The man who mistreats his wife cannot assume that his spiritual life is unaffected.

12. "Weaker" Does Not Mean Less Valuable

The phrase "weaker partner" in 1 Peter 3:7 must not be turned into a doctrine of female inferiority. The passage immediately protects the wife's dignity by calling her a fellow heir.

The source material understands the language primarily in relation to physical vulnerability and the social vulnerability experienced by women in the ancient world. Whatever precise nuance one gives the phrase, the application in the passage is clear: vulnerability is not an invitation to domination.

THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABILITY

If your wife is more vulnerable in an area, that is not your opportunity to rule over her. It is your opportunity to protect, cherish and honor her.

13. Provision Is More Than a Paycheck

1 Timothy 5:8

Scripture emphasizes responsibility for one's household.

A godly husband takes responsibility for the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of his household.

- Physical provision: food, shelter, practical needs and responsible financial stewardship.
- Emotional provision: stability, listening, affection, reassurance and safety.
- Spiritual provision: prayer, repentance, Scripture, integrity and a life that points the family toward Christ.
- Relational protection: refusing to allow unnecessary conflict, humiliation or destructive outside pressure to dominate the home.

14. Speaking to Men in Cultural Context

This section should be delivered with respect. The purpose is not to condemn culture as a whole. Every culture contains both strengths and practices that need to be brought under the authority of Scripture. The question is always: what happens when a cultural expectation conflicts with the character of Christ?

Cultural pressures can affect some families, including extended-family expectations, financial dependence, family honor, dowry-related pressures and the risk of control or domestic mistreatment. These issues should be addressed as real pressures not as a claim that every cultural affected family operates in the same way.

THE QUESTION FOR MEN
When society gives you greater power, what will you do with that power? A worldly man uses power to control. A godly man surrenders power to protect.

15. Redefining Honor

Family honor is important in many cultures. But biblical honor cannot mean protecting a man's pride at the expense of his wife's dignity.

> ***1 Peter 3:7***
> *"Show her honor... as fellow heirs of the grace of life."*

- Honor her in public, not only in private.
- Do not permit relatives to humiliate or mistreat her.
- Do not use money as punishment or a tool of intimidation.
- Do not use physical strength to frighten her.
- Include her in decisions that affect her life and the family.
- Do not weaponize private information she shared with you in trust.

CULTURE OR CHRIST?
We do not have to dishonor our fathers or our heritage. But where tradition contradicts Jesus, the disciple of Jesus chooses Jesus.

16. The Husband's Strength Is a Shield

Physical strength, financial strength, social influence, education, family position and decision-making power can all become weapons when they are placed under selfishness. Under Christ, strength becomes service.

1. Carry burdens so that your wife can stand tall.
2. Use your voice to defend her dignity, not silence her.
3. Use your finances to provide security, not fear.

4. Use your physical strength to protect, never threaten.
5. Use your influence to create peace, not to demand submission.

17. Genesis 2:25 — Naked and Not Ashamed

> ***Genesis 2:25***
> *"The man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed."*

Nakedness in Eden is physical, but the teaching application goes deeper. The picture is one of complete openness without fear. There are no defensive walls between Adam and Eve.

The Absence of Shame

The Hebrew idea of shame in this context points toward exposure, humiliation and the experience of being disgraced. After the Fall, fear and hiding enter the story. Before the Fall, vulnerability is not weaponized.

THE GODLY HUSBAND'S GOAL
Create a marriage where your wife can tell the truth without being punished for telling it.

18. Removing the Armor

Many men have been taught that masculinity means never showing weakness, never admitting failure and never apologizing. But the gospel gives us a stronger picture. Jesus demonstrates strength through humility and self-giving love.

A husband can say: "I was wrong. I hurt you. Please forgive me." That is not weakness. That is strength submitted to Christ.

A wife should also be able to speak honestly about her fears, hurts and thoughts without fearing that her husband will later use those disclosures as weapons.

19. Recreating an Eden-Like Environment

A SHAME-FREE HOME
In this house, cultural shame stops at the door. My wife is safe to be fully seen, fully known and fully loved.

The godly husband removes his own armor first. He models repentance. He makes room for honest conversation. He does not mock tears. He does not punish vulnerability. He does not collect weaknesses to use during the next argument.

20. Ten Marks of a Godly Husband

1. He sees his wife as a corresponding partner, not a subordinate.
2. He leads by serving, not by demanding.
3. He listens to her wisdom and values her voice.
4. He protects her dignity in front of relatives and the wider community.
5. He provides physical, emotional and spiritual care.
6. He treats vulnerability as something to protect.
7. He is willing to apologize first.
8. He does not weaponize finances, anger, physical strength or private information.
9. He creates an atmosphere where his wife can flourish.

10. He measures his leadership by the standard of Christ's self-sacrificial love.

21. A Word to Men Who Have Failed

This teaching is not an invitation to defend ourselves. Some men will hear it and realize that they have used authority wrongly. Some will recognize anger, control, financial manipulation, emotional intimidation or neglect.

The gospel does not require you to pretend you have never failed. It calls you to repentance. Do not defend what Christ is asking you to surrender.

START HERE
Tell your wife the truth. "I was wrong. I have hurt you. I am sorry. I want to learn a different way." Then let your changed actions prove that repentance is real.

22. Culture or Christ?

Every man must eventually answer this question. What will define his marriage: the strongest expectations of his culture, or the character of Jesus?

> ***Ephesians 5:25***
> *"Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."*

This is not a Western idea versus an Eastern idea. It is the call of the Christian gospel. The standard is Christ.

23. The Final Test of Leadership

The final question is not: "Does my wife obey me?" The deeper question is: "Does my wife feel safe with me?"

- Safe to speak?
- Safe to disagree?
- Safe to admit a mistake?
- Safe to share a fear?
- Safe to tell me when I am wrong?
- Safe from humiliation?
- Safe from physical intimidation?
- Safe from financial punishment?
- Safe to become everything God has called her to become?

THE CHALLENGE
If your wife is flourishing, your leadership may be bearing good fruit. If she is continually shrinking, silencing herself or living in fear, do not simply ask what is wrong with her. Ask what your leadership is producing.

24. Closing Challenge

Men, our culture may teach us to rule through fear, pride, silence or the threat of shame. Genesis gives us another picture. In God's original design, husband and wife were exposed and yet safe.

A godly husband does not need his wife to be afraid of him in order to respect him. He earns trust by becoming trustworthy.

CLOSING DECLARATION
"In this house, cultural shame stops at the front door. With me, my wife is safe to be fully seen, fully known and fully loved."

Suggested Closing Prayer

Father, take us back to Your original design. Teach us to see our wives as You see them. Remove every form of pride, control, fear and selfishness from our leadership. Make us men who serve, protect, honor, listen and love sacrificially. Give us courage to repent where we have failed and wisdom to rebuild trust where it has been damaged. Let our homes become places of safety, truth, prayer, growth and grace. Teach us to love as Christ loved the Church. In Jesus' name, Amen.