

# Lionhearted and Lamblike the Christian Husband as Head, Part 2

by John Piper

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*The husband's role as head in marriage involves taking primary responsibility for Christ-like servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home.*

**Duration:** 44:34

**Scripture:** Judges 11:11, Ephesians 4:26, Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:28-29, Philippians 4:13

**Topics:** "Christian Leadership", "Marriage Roles"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the role of husbands as leaders in their homes, drawing from Ephesians 5 to emphasize the husband's responsibility to provide Christ-like servant leadership, protection, and provision. The sermon highlights the importance of husbands embodying qualities of being lionhearted and lamb-like, strong yet tender, in their leadership. It delves into practical examples of spiritual and physical provision, protection, and reconciliation within families, stressing the significance of husbands taking the lead in these areas.

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## Transcript

Lord, grant to husbands and wives in particular, but single people as well, old and young, to grasp the truth of this text as we focus on it in this service. Grant that those who are watching the downtown campus and the north campus to engage now with this word from Ephesians. Grant that across these campuses, transforming work would happen for husbands and wives and all of us.

Oh, that our minds would be in tune with the apostolic mind here that is expressed through these inspired words. Come, make me faithful to them. Guide my lips and my mind so that I don't lead this church astray, but rather lead it in truth.

Come, be our teacher now, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen. The reason I'm using the title Lionhearted and Lamb-like as a designation for the role of the husband as head over his wife is because Ephesians 5 says that the husband is to pattern his role after the role of Christ, and Christ is called the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God.

Which means, since those two come right together in Revelation 5, 5 and 6, that he is lionhearted and lamb-like. Strong and meek, tough and tender, aggressive and responsive, bold and broken-hearted. He

sets the pattern of manhood.

Last time I suggested this definition of headship. Let me give it to you again. Headship is the divine calling of the husband to take primary responsibility for Christ-like servant, leadership, protection and provision in the home.

And the more I have thought about those three things, leadership, protection, provision, the more it has seemed to me that they are one thing expressed in two ways. That is, to be the head is to be a leader, and that leadership is exercised in providing and exercised in protecting. So that definition is really calling attention to the one main thing that husbands are called to do in relationship to their wives as heads.

So the question we should pose before I fulfill my promise from last time, namely give concrete examples, which you wouldn't need if you really got last week, but which are helpful, is to support perhaps just a bit more the fact that headship implies leadership. Let me give you four reasons from the text or from the Bible. Number one, head is used in the Old Testament frequently.

For example, Judges 11.11 to describe leadership. Here's what Judges 11.11 says. So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and leader over them.

Second reason. Here in Ephesians 1.21 to 23, Christ, Ephesians 1, not 5, 1.21 to 23, Christ is described as above every name that is named, and God has put all things under His feet, has made Him head over all things for the church, which is His body. And the focus there is on Christ's rule and His authority as head.

Third, here in Ephesians 5, verse 25, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Now, the stress falls on the nature of the love. It is a self-sacrificing love.

I agree with that totally. And it colors, defines, shapes, governs the love of a husband for his wife. But, there is another inescapable truth in verse 25.

Namely, that when Jesus undertook to die on behalf of His wife, He was not responding to her. This had been planned by Jesus. This had been planned by the Father.

Ages before the bride ever came on the scene, if there ever was leadership undertaken to save a bride, this is it. And therefore, verse 25 manifestly describes love acting in leadership, moving to do what has to be done to rescue this people. Fourth, because of these three reasons, now when we get to the issue of headship and submission and see the two linking, you can't help but think that submission here implies leadership here.

Let me just read verses 22 and 23. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, and then He gives the ground, for the husband is the head. So when submission is correlated with head, then clearly head has some initiative to take or something that can be submitted to, some leadership to be honored.

So for those four reasons at least, and there are many others in the wider scope of Scripture, I'm arguing that headship is the divine call upon a man's life as husband to fulfill primary responsibility for servant leadership. I've been arguing that headship implies leadership. Servant leadership and protection and provision.

So let's move to those two. Are they in the text? Is that just tradition? That protection and provision should be part of a husband's burden? Or is that here somehow? Let's talk first about protection. Verse 25 to 27 shows how the husband loved their wives.

Here's what it says. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish. In the words, gave Himself up for her, you cannot fail to hear the rest of this book that has been describing what that means.

When He gave Himself up for her, He bore her sins. When He gave Himself up for her, He became a curse for her. When He gave Himself up for her, He died for her.

When He gave Himself up for her, He reconciled her to God and enabled her to escape the wrath of God. There cannot be a higher act of protection of a wife than was performed in these words. You and I, part of the bride, if you're a believer, are under the greatest danger except for what our husband has done for us.

He has died for us. He has borne our sins. He became a curse for us.

He enabled us to escape the danger we were in, condemnation, hell. And so my answer is, you better believe there's protection in this text. Right at the very thing He chooses to focus on as the picture of what love does is rescue where rescue is needed.

What about provision? Providing for the wife. Verses 28 and 29. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself. Remember the one flesh argument. He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes it and cherishes it just as Christ does the church. Let's take those two words and just think about them for a moment. Because now he's holding up Christ as the one who nourishes and cherishes the church as the model for the way a husband loves his wife who is his own flesh.

And he nourishes and he cherishes. What do those words mean? The word nourish means almost always, not quite, what parents do for children in supplying their needs and bringing them up. It's used dozens of times in the Old Testament in that regard or similar regards.

However, it's not only that. It's the provision quite apart from childhood. For example, Genesis 45.11. Joseph, when he was made vice president, remember, in Egypt said, There I will provide.

This word exactly, this word, nourish. I will provide for you for there are yet five years of famine to come. So I draw from the word nourish that a husband should sense a primary responsibility to see to it that happens in the family.

Provision. Now the next word, cherish. That word is used only one other time by Paul.

In fact, I think only one other time in the New Testament. Namely, 1 Thessalonians 2.7. And listen to the sweetness of Paul's usage of it to express his relation to the church. It has a connotation of a nurse with an infant.

But Paul now, for himself relating to the church and then for a husband relating to a wife, here's what he says. We were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care, there's the word, cherishing, taking care of her own children. And the point in using this with regard to the church isn't to belittle the church, but to emphasize the tender care that Christ has for the church and the husband should have to take care of his wife.

So my answer is yes. Not only do you have evidences of headship, meaning leadership, you have now evidences that a husband should, in his leadership, exercise it in protecting and exercise it in providing, cherishing, nourishing, caring for his wife. Now, the question arises in my head, why these two? I drew these out of here.

Why are they there? Why is the focus on provision and protection as expressions of leadership? And I think there are two reasons at least. One is when you think about it, these two things are so fundamental and basic that if they don't happen, life is threatened. There might be other things a husband does, but if he doesn't do these, the marriage, life is threatened.

If there's no food, life is threatened. If the intruder isn't stopped, life is threatened. These are basic.

These are so fundamental to life. Life won't exist where there's no protection against hostile forces and life won't exist where there's no provision to keep the body and the mind alive. So there's the first reason why I think that's probably here.

If a husband fails here, there's nothing else to work with. He may like other kinds of leadership, but if he doesn't bring this through, then there won't be anything left probably to exercise his leadership with. Here's a second reason, maybe.

At least it's the case whether or not it was the conscious intent. These two are interesting, protection and provision, in that both of them have a physical and a spiritual dimension. Wives, children need physical protection and they need spiritual protection.

Wives, children need nourishment physically and they need nourishment spiritually. And this leadership is called upon to take primary responsibility for all four of those categories. Provision, spiritual and physical.

Protection, spiritual and physical make four categories that I'm going to illustrate in just a few minutes. But before I do, a caution and an encouragement. I've been hearing and hearing and listening in these messages and here's an encouragement to the men and a caution to the women.

The encouragement to the men is this. If these messages are landing on you discouragingly, as they are for some. That's what I've been told.

Partly because wives are putting pressure, I'll come to that in a minute, and partly because husbands are not stepping up to the plate to do what needs to be done. And so when you're out of sync with the Scripture and a message comes and points that out, you can either feel by the power of the Spirit some sense of, I'm going to do this in the power of God or I guess I'm just a total failure. So I'll just check out.

And my word of encouragement is this to the men. God does not call you to any calling for which He does not supply the power. I took out my daddy's Bible yesterday.

It is the greasiest Bible I've ever seen. And especially from about Romans through Ephesians. It's sticky.

Thumb grease everywhere. Every column so marked up you can hardly read it. And I just went to Philippians to see if it was underlined because I remember over and over again to us as a family and to me in particular, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

That's Philippians 4.13. Men, you can do it. You're a man. And Christ is strong.

Avail yourself of His power. Remember, if your Father, and this is true of so many, if your Father never taught you this and never modeled this for you, your Heavenly Father will. There is no excuse.

We have a Heavenly Father. And if your earthly Father did not do this sort of leadership at all, your Heavenly Father is in you and will help you. Now, here's my caution to the women.

Do not demand this of your husbands for three reasons. Number one, demanding is contradictory to what you're after. If you become the demander, he's not the leader.

It's self-contradictory. It backfires. Second, it is counterproductive.

I'll just tell you it is. I'm a man. It is counterproductive because if he had it in his heart a week or two ago to make some new efforts, and you come down on him that he's not going fast enough, all that's left to him to do is acquiesce, which isn't leadership.

So he's finished. You've put him in an impossible situation. And number three, it's got to come from inside of him, just like submission has to come from inside of her.

There's no demanding going on here. This has just got to happen by the power of God within the heart. So, positively, wives, I'll give you a couple of tips.

First, pray for him without ceasing, that the spirit of manhood would rise fresh, deep, powerful in his heart. Pray for him. Never stop praying for your husband.

And number two, when neither of you is tired and neither of you is angry, ask him to go out to lunch. And pour out your heart's desire to him. Usually, the frustrations of a woman get poured out in the moment when he's least able to receive it, because it's the moment of failure.

That won't work. So I'm saying wait a week or two. You're both happy.

You're both feeling strong. You've both got a good night's rest. Things are going well.

And now, go to lunch together and share your longings that he might lead in devotions or wherever you feel he's not there. And how do you do that? One, without ultimatums. You don't do this, I'm out of here.

Or you don't do this, I'll be depressed the rest of my life. Number two, with a sense of hope grounded in God, not him. He's not hopeful.

And three, expressing authentic appreciation and honor with your mouth for every incremental success this poor jerk has made. We husbands need a little bit of encouragement that we've done one or two things right. So there's the caution and there's the encouragement.

Now we're going to do what I promised to do and spend the rest of our time on practical illustrations in these four areas of provision and protection, physical and spiritual. So here we go. Number one, leadership in spiritual provision.

Spiritual provision. Men, to provide spiritual food for the family, you must know spiritual food. Which means you need to go hard after God, guys.

You can only lead spiritually if you're growing spiritually. If you're pursuing, wanting more, reading your Bible and praying and growing in the knowledge and the love of God. But if you feed your own soul, you'll have something to feed your children and your wife with.

So very practically, gather the family for family devotions every day. And if you miss a day, don't panic. We miss days.

But it's our goal, every day, family devotions. Call it whatever you want. Family prayers, family worship, family Bible time.

Take the initiative to gather them. If you don't know what to do, ask a few brothers what they do. Or ask your wife what she would like to happen.

Okay, I'm sorry. Back to the wives. When I say headship is primarily or the primary responsibility, I really am saying it that way because husbands and wives both have responsibility in this.

I assume you caught that. When I say you have primary responsibility for these devotions, I don't mean you're the only person who does anything with regard to teaching this family or leading this family in spiritual life. I mean take some initiative and that may be simply, what do you think would work, honey? And then she sets it up.

Let me give you a concrete suggestion, guys, because Mary wanted me to do this. I'm going to do it, Mary, right here. One of the very concrete ways to nourish spiritually, provide spiritually, is to take some initiative to get your wife to the women's conference in May.

So just say to her, do we need a babysitter? Does that cost something? Or how does this work? I would like you to go and what do I need to do to make it happen? And that would be considered significant leadership, I think, by many wives. That's May 4 and 5. Do that, guys. Mark that one down as a concrete example.

So enough. This is so simple and so obvious and yet so undone. Men, do this.

Gather the family. Two minutes, 20 minutes, do it for prayer and Bible reading. Number two, leadership in physical provision.

So that was spiritual provision. What about physical provision? The husband bears the primary responsibility to put bread on the table. I believe that.

I believe it's implied. In Genesis 3, I believe it's implied here in this text. And again, the word primary is very important.

It takes primary responsibility to see to it that that happens. Both husbands and wives from time immemorial have both always worked. Always.

There's never been a culture in which husbands and wives have not worked, except ours, maybe. And it's weird when it happens here. A wife that just shops all day is strange.

Normal spheres of work, however, man, breadwinner, wife, domestic manager, designer, nurturer. And that never has meant in any culture, permeated at all by Christianity, that the wife can't work outside the home. Doesn't mean that the husband can't bear some domestic responsibility.

It's like, yikes, that's below me. Vacuum, wash dishes, change diapers, that sort of thing. Work up the grass, keep the car working, make sure the finances are running, whatever else might be involved.

However, it does mean that a man compromises his own soul and sends the wrong message to his wife and children when he does not position himself as the one who lays down his life to put bread on the table. He may be disabled and not be able to do it. And his heart longs to do it.

And he's a good man. And they both knew it. They'd like it to be otherwise.

And he does what he can do. But he's in this disability. Can't make it happen.

It may be temporarily the guy's in graduate school. And she's the only one working. We did that.

Four years, Noel, put bread on the table. All the while knowing, it ain't supposed to be this way. And she gave that gift to me.

Which I will not forgive. He may temporarily go into another mode. But, in any case, his heart and if possible his body is moving toward the use of his mind and his hands to provide physically for his wife and his children.

I believe God wired us that way. I believe that's our calling. However it's shared, the man bears primary responsibility.

Number three, leadership in spiritual protection. Now we're moving from provision to protection. Spiritual protection first.

There are spiritual dangers, brothers, coming at our families from every side today. Innumerable and subtle. We need valiant warriors as never before, but not with spears and shield, but with biblical discernment and courage.

First, husbands. Pray for your wife and children every day without fail over and over again during the day. Noel, Talitha, Carsten, Shelley, Millie, Frances, Abel, Benjamin, Melissa, Oscar, Lillian, Abraham, Molly, Orison, little one, Barnabas, Leslie, Grace.

Grace, and I used to say, I don't say it anymore unless I slip up. Every day, over and over and over, protect them, protect them. Lead them in paths of righteousness.

Don't let them go into temptation. Guard their lives. Make their marriages work.

Make their children strong. Protect them. Oh my God, that's your job.

To call down from God, hour by hour, blessing on this family. That's what headship means. Prayer for them.

Then, set standards for your wife and children. Work them through with your wife. Here again, primary responsibility means talk to her about it.

She's probably got some better ideas than you. But, taking initiative to talk is what she so longs for. Women are not eager to be dominated.

They're eager for their husbands to take initiative to make things happen in the moral sphere of their marriage. Would you please help me set some standards for these kids and then help me carry this through. She shouldn't have to say that.

She wants you to step up. Let's do this together. Take some initiative.

We've got to figure out what this kid's going to watch on TV. We've got to figure out what movies they're going to go to. We've got to figure out what music is coming into this house.

And we've got to figure out how low that neckline is going. And that's mainly your job, Dad. Now on that last one, I'm fully aware that it is mainly mom and daughter that work that out from age 2 months to 22.

And what kind of bathing suit you put on this 2-year-old will make a difference in her view of modesty later. It will. However, Dad, they desperately need your input on this.

They need you to celebrate when they get it right. And look beautiful and modest. And they need you to say, you're not going out of the house with that on.

Over my dead body. We've got fathers that are simply fearful of their daughters at this point. Now guys, you know what I mean when I say, you know what it's saying and these little girls don't know.

Now you little girls that are here, ask your daddy. Because I promise you, you're wired like a woman. You do not get it.

You might read enough to get it, but guys are wired to get it, see it, feel it. There is a way to dress that is not helpful in the culture. And there's a way to dress that is so helpful.

And Christian women ought not to think, get out of my life, I'll wear what I want. That's not a Christian mentality. A Christian mentality is, how can I bless the world? How can I maximize my life for good in the world? And dads, you're a key here.

Positively and in terms of warning. Sometimes it means what they don't think it means. Where are they going to find out? Their boyfriend? They find out from dad.

That's where they find out what this means. Here's another one. I'm still on spiritual protection.

The Bible is very clear about one of the most dangerous intruders spiritually in the family. Let me read it to you from Ephesians 4, 26. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Give no opportunity to the devil. How is the devil allowed into a teenager's bedroom? How is the devil allowed at night into a married couple's bedroom? Answer, when they go to bed. If you go to bed angry night after night after night, that kid's seething at you in there, and no steps at reconciliation have happened, the devil, the door is just thrown open wide.

And the havoc he can wreak over weeks, months, and years to destroy a soul, a marriage, and a family is awesome. So what are you going to do? I'll tell you dad, this is where headship is so hard no woman would ever want it. This is the hardest thing in the world.

Headship means you must initiate reconciliation. No matter how many times it's been her fault, or the kid's fault. You have not the luxury as head to say, she did it, and if she doesn't say she's sorry, I'm hitting the pillow.

No way. Justice might say, yes, that's the right way to act, but let me ask you this, is that the way Jesus treated his bride? How many times has he come back to her, and back to her? You, you. How many times has he come back to you, and back to you, and back to you, saying, here I am, ready to make up? A thousand times.

Seventy times, seven times, seven times, seven he has come back to you. When it's your fault, and not his, and he took the initiative to make it right. He died to make it right.

Will we husbands say, it's her turn? Yes, we will. Without the Holy Spirit. This is impossible without Christ.

You don't want to be heads, women. Because I'm holding the men accountable, that this family not go to bed angry at night. You knock on that teenager's door.

Oh, this can be sweet, brothers. This is as hard as it gets. You knock on that door, and any little increment of fault that you bear over against his many faults, you confess it.

Not many things will break a teenager, but that might. To walk in and say, son, my reaction to what you did was over the top. What you did was wrong, that's not the issue here.

But my reaction to it was over the top. I want to apologize and say, it wasn't in love. I just got out of control, and I'm sorry, and I'd like you to forgive me.

You talk about sweet sleep. You talk about healing balms in the mind and the soul, dads. Now, I'm not naive, good night.

I've been married 38 years. There are attempts at peace that don't work. All right? But you've got to try.

You get down on your knees, Noel and I have knelt beside each other, and we haven't hardly been able to pray. You just kneel there in silence. Who's going to pray first? Neither of us feel like praying.

We're so upset, and these hinder your prayers big time. And you can just eke out, God help us. I want it to be better.

It's your job, dad. Hardest thing in the world. Keep the devil out of the bedroom and out of the kids' rooms by not letting the sun go down on your anger in as much as it lies within you.

Last illustration. Leadership in physical protection. This is too obvious to need illustration, but we live in such a cockeyed culture, I better say it.

There's a sound downstairs. It's 12 o'clock. You're startled.

What's that? Door jiggled. Window jiggled. Maybe broken glass.

Now, guys, nobody in this room, please, is going to say, this is an egalitarian marriage. I went down last time. I hope you keep laughing because that's really alive in our culture.

Well, they might say, she's got the black belt in karate. Okay, let's just deal with that. She's got the black belt in karate.

You're going down there. She's following you. You're going down there, and you're dealing with this guy, and when you're unconscious on the floor, she takes him out.

But if you're not unconscious on the floor, you're no man. So I don't care anything about competencies at this point. When it comes to protecting our women, we're stepping up.

And woe to the husband, and woe to the nation that send their women to fight their battle. Conclusion. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, she sinned first.

When God came to call them to account, what did He say? He said, Adam, not Eve, where are you? So when He comes to my house, He may have an issue with Noel. I'm sure He would have an issue with Noel. We're all sinners.

And when Noel opens the door, and He says, Hello, my daughter, Noel. I'd like to talk to the man of the house. That's not an insult.

That's a weight for me. Is there an issue in this house? I'll talk to the man to see what he's done to address the issue. Then I'll come back and we'll work on it one by one through the family.

When a man joyfully bears the primary God-given responsibility for Christ-like servant leadership, provision, protection in the home. When he bears primary responsibility for spiritual well-being of the family, for the discipline and education of the children, for the stewarding of the money, for the holding of a steady job, for the healing of discord. I have never met a wife who is sorry she married such a man.

Because when God designs a thing like marriage, He designs it for His glory and for our great. Copyright © 2020 Mooji Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

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