

God's Family Plan

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[0:00] Ephesians 5 verse 15!

Be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body.

Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

[1:48] So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself.

And the wife see that she reverence her husband. Walk as wise. There's lots of wise words here.

Wise words for men and women, for families.

Some pearls of wisdom. God's family plan for 2012. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh.

[3:07] I know we've got a couple of men here today that are away from their wives because of having moved countries and waiting for their families to rejoin them, and how that must feel.

It must be quite something to go through. I know if I'm away from Julie very long, it's something that you miss, isn't it?

You miss that companionship. So what is a family? What is a family? There was a Newsweek article with obviously an American slant to it that talked about modern families and said, the American family does not exist.

Rather, we are creating many American families of diverse styles and shapes. In unprecedented numbers, our families are unlike. And it goes on to talk about partners living together, gay and lesbian families, so-called, single parent families are blended families.

Of course, we know that sometimes families do become single parent families, and that's no reflection necessarily on such families. And we know that families do go through break-ups, and sometimes that's just the nature of things.

[4:21] But like someone has said, nowadays a family is a group of people who have keys to the same house. It's like families, whatever you kind of want to make it.

But it's a truth that, as someone has said, no nation has ever prospered in which family life was not held sacred. No nation has ever prospered in which family life was not held sacred.

There's something sacred about the family unit. There's something special about the family. And that's why it's under attack. That's why it's under fire today from the enemy of the family of the enemy of our soul.

And marriage is being redefined so they think that, as if they could even think that they could redefine it. And yet we know that the lawmakers, the governors of the world today are trying to

redefine the family, as if they dare touch that institution.

It's not a state-made institution. It's a God-designed institution. It's not something that is a creation of the state. Marriage is a creation of God.

[5:33] It's God's creation. It's God's plan. It's God himself who says what family is, what marriage is. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife.

And they too shall be one flesh. Many lives are touched by the breakup of homes today. And we're seeing this rising dependence of many on daycare centres.

And you wonder how much care is in such a thing for our little ones at times in such a world. How can we see strong families despite these alarming trends?

Psalms 127.1 it says, Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. It must be built on the solid foundation that God has for the family.

He sets the foundation. The foundation of the family. The family is a foundational issue. And it takes work to build something.

[6:41] It takes work. It takes time. You know how long this particular building took to get off the ground. It takes work. It takes time to build something. And it's the same for a family.

In particular, a God honouring home. That's what we'd all aspire to have. Here's a quote. A wedding is a piece of cake. A wedding is a piece of cake.

It's easy. It just takes a few minutes of time. You know, some splash a lot of cash as well. But marriage and family will take you a lifetime.

A wedding is an event. A marriage and a family is an accomplishment. It's work. It takes work. And it takes a man and woman to work at it.

God's word says, He so findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord. When I asked my wife to marry me, it was a pivotal moment.

[7:48] We went for a day out. We sat on a park bench and sang some hymns. I learnt that she knew more hymns than I did.

And then I popped a question. I asked her, Will you marry me? I was at the very mature age of 18. So I knew everything then. And can you believe that it was our first date?

She wasn't my girlfriend yet. I just wanted a wife. I didn't want a girlfriend. And of course she said yes. Of course she said yes. But she took some convincing and it took a few months to get that answer.

It took a lot of work to win her over. But thankfully she made the right decision. Families take work, brothers and sisters.

Marriages take work. You know, Julie's still working on me. And the average man has probably thought twice about running away from home.

[8:50] Once as a child and once as a husband. Running away from home. The first family was formed by God. It's a cleaving.

Shall be joined. Man to woman. A cleaving. Like super glue. That's the sense of it. In marriage, one plus one equals one.

There's constant adjustments that we make. Julie's constantly having to adjust to my way of thinking. She's gradually getting used to the idea. Of course, I jest.

There's a lot of adjusting on both sides. And there's a constant giving and taking. And I'm the one who has the most to learn. And Julie said, Amen. But it's like that, isn't it?

Life is like that. Marriages are like that. But God's given us a plan for how families can work well. And God's designed an order in the home for all of us to learn from.

[9:52] And we see leadership in the home. We see a headship. A structure. A pattern. A God-given responsibility for all parties. What is God's family plan?

Amen. Husbands. Get a hold of yourself. Love. Husbands. Love. It's a command.

God's family plan starts with loving leadership. Husbands. Love. And not just airy-fairy, yeah, warm and fuzzy love. But Calvary love.

As Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Agape love.

Nail-pierced love. Unmerited love. And the husband sets the loving tone for the home. Here's a quote that really struck me.

[10:51] For his bride, he left heaven's glory. For his bride, he was willing to die. For his bride, he wiggled in Bethlehem's manger and worked in Nazareth's workshop.

For his bride, he was numbered with the transgressors. For his bride, he endured salvation and satanic temptation in the wilderness. For his bride, he absorbed years of public ministry abuse by a wicked and adulterous generation.

For his bride, he had no place to lay his head. For his bride, he marched fearlessly to Jerusalem's slaughterhouse. For his bride, he broke the bread in the upper room.

For his bride, he was drenched in blood like sweat. For his bride, he said, not my will but thine be done. For his bride, he handed himself over to a kangaroo court.

For his bride, again and again, he was spat upon and struck in the head. For his bride, he stood bare-backed at the pillar, absorbing the blows scourge by scourge.

[12:04] For his bride, he was mocked while holding a reed scepter in his hand. For his bride, he collapsed under the crossbeam as he carried it. For his bride, he was stripped naked.

For his bride, he accepted the spikes into his hands and feet. For his bride, he was lifted up between heaven and earth as an accursed spectacle.

For his bride, he hung his head before the wagging scoffers. For his bride, he gasped for breath and cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

For his bride, he finished it and died. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Christ is the ultimate and absolute example. What kind of love will you love her with? His love was absolutely extravagant.

[13:04] It was fervent. And his bride, for whom he gave up all for, was so unattractive.

From the crown of her head to the sole of her feet, there were wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. But still, he loved her. He loved me.

He loved you. No cosmetics could hide her scars. No plastic surgery could improve her. Still, he loved her.

Calvary love. He loved us while we were yet sinners. While we were his enemies, he loved us. That's the love that a husband should have to his wife.

A preacher told about a man visiting his wife, who was terminally ill in hospital. They entered the ward together and Ted saw her in bed, evidently wasting away, gaunt and yellow.

[14:11] Look at her, her husband said to Ted, the preacher, his face lighting up with delight. Isn't she beautiful? I'll quote again.

Bear with me here. Another quote. Christ knew that every imagination of the thoughts of her heart was only evil continually, but he loved her still.

He knew the very worst about her, so that no new discovery could possibly disillusion him about her. Nothing could quench his determination to bless her.

His love was so generous. He gave his bride every spiritual blessing. He ordained all things should be ours. He works all things together for our good because he loves us.

He bestows the Spirit without measure. He's going to take her to a beautiful place to enter into the glory that he'd had with God before there was a cosmos or a single angel.

[15:14] His love moves his people so much that they lay down their lives for him. They will take the most expensive bottle of perfumed oil and pour it all over his hair.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. That is the model of the love with which every Christian husband is required to show his wife.

And it was God's design before Adam and Eve were even made. Before he'd even breathed breath into Adam's nostrils, he'd got that blueprint of the Eve that would stand by his side.

Way before the creation of Adam and Eve, it was already God's great plan of love.

God's design of marriage. Husbands, love your wives. What is God's family plan for wives? For wives, wives submit to your husbands.

[16:28] It means to obey. As the Lord Jesus submitted to the will of his Father, the church submits to Christ in everything. Now, of course, there's exceptions where you could see that it's in disobedience to God's

will.

As we know, in Acts 5.29, we must obey God first, rather than men. And we don't obey in conflict to God's will. But God's idea is that a home should be a place where there's loving leadership and where there's godly order.

Loving leadership and godly order. And the Word of God addresses women in 1 Timothy 2.10, of the adorning, of the clothing for your life.

It's not going and getting the latest that's walking down the fashion walk or that's the latest in the glossy magazines. But you should adorn yourself in this way in 1 Timothy 2.10, but which become as women professing godliness to adorn yourself with good works.

Clothe yourself with good works. As a woman professing godliness. Godly order in the home. And that speaks to husbands too, that they must not abuse their authority.

[17:46] 1 Peter 3.7, it's very much said of this godly order that the husband has to set. A godly example. In 1 Peter 3.7, it says, Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of God, that your prayers be not hindered.

So there's a giving honour to the wife. So it's a reciprocal thing. And again in Ephesians it says, submitting yourselves one to another. It's not a dictating or dictatorship.

There's a mutual submission, even of husband to wife, to a degree. But there's a godly order that is designed for the home. Where the husband has a loving leadership role, the wife has a respect, a wisdom, a purity, a responsibility to take care of the home and of the children.

As we read in Titus 2, verses 4-5. Where it says, The older women should teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste or pure, keepers or managers at home.

Good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not life's fiend. There's a sense where the woman is meant to be a keeper at home. There's a responsibility. The wife has the management of the day-by-day home life, if you like.

[19:21] She knows best how to coordinate and keep the home. And so there's a godly order, a place of respect, of support. Loving leadership, godly order and lastly, the place of honour.

You see the addressing of children in Ephesians 6. It says, So there's a respect, there's a support of husband to wife, of wife to husband.

Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.

And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So there's a respect, there's a support of husband to wife, of wife to husband, of parents to children, of children to parents.

And God's got this wonderful family plan, if you like, of this nature of the home, of the building up of the children, as ideally godly parents will bring godly instruction and discipline.

[20:32] That springs from love. We know there's many undisciplined households today, where children grow up and they feel unwanted, unworthy, because there's no direction, there's no framework that has been built there.

And so they lack self-control and they rebel, and lack respect for authority, whether it be parental, or society, or God's authority.

It speaks to parents. In this verse, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It's speaking to fathers here. We know it's challenging, being a dad.

It gets harder, Michael. You're going to get all gray hairs. It gets harder as you get older. But we can only try to set the scene, to set the parameters, to set the godly structure and order to the home.

[21:47] Someone has said there's four E's, if you like, about being a parent. Number one is parents are to enrich their children. It talks about bringing them up. There's an enriching, there's a nourishing, like a tender plant, so that they can be all that they can be.

That means time. It means investing our lives. It means taking that quality time. It's been said that the average American father spends a whopping 3.7 seconds with his children every day. 3.7 seconds every day. I'm sure Aussie fathers are a lot better than that. So, it's a tragedy, brothers and sisters. We need to be aware of that. Is it any wonder that we see a generation of juvenile delinquents?

Parents, enrich your children. Bring them up. Nurture them. Educate them is the number two. Educate them. It's nurture. It's instructing. It's a bringing up and instructing in the ways of life, in the ways of the Lord.

Because children are watching role models. And that means you and me as parents. Number three is encourage. Encourage your children. The word here is admonition.

[23:02] It means a counsel. It means an encouragement. A discipline. As parents, we're to give direction for life. And that means encouragement and discipline. All in right measure.

And lastly, number four is evangelize. Evangelize your children. It's a bringing them up. Of the Lord. It's a nurture and admonition. Admonition. That is of the Lord.

As the word of God guides your life, it will help you as you guide the lives of those in your care. Those youngsters that God has placed in your care. But they will grow up to live lives that glorify and honor God.

It's our great privilege as parents to raise children. Of course, we know they'll choose their own direction. We can only set the framework.

But God helping us will have a home with a loving leadership. Husbands. A godly order.

[24:02] Husbands, wives, parents, children. And there'll be a place of honor there. A place of honor where we'll see that children do honor their mother and father.

And we that are older, let's honor our fathers and mothers. And maybe our children and grandchildren will see that same spirit and catch on as to what is the godly way to treat our elders. And that we can see a way that our children will obey their parents in the Lord. Because that is right. I just want to leave you with that encouragement today.

To consider the love. It's not just an airy fair. It's not a Hollywood kind of love. It's not a feel like it kind of love. It's a self-sacrificial love.

It's the love that took our Savior to the cross. That's the love we're talking about. There's a submitting. Not to a nasty dictator type under your thumb thing.

[25:09] But it's a godly order and structure to the home. Of course we know that sad things happen to homes. And sometimes that's of no fault of any party to pay any blame.

But God helping us, He can help us to rebuild and to make a go of it. When tough things happen and families are constantly facing testing and trial.

While it's constant and you might have good days and then bang, something bad happens again. Press on. Find God's plan and stick to it.

Ask God to give you the strength and help. Help you to apply the scriptures. Help you to see it through. As godly parents, you might have challenges. The children may not go the way you'd like them to see them go.

But the example of your life will speak to them. Let us pray.