

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups July 9th 2006

Live a new life! – Marriage!

Ephesians 5:22-33



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Paul wrote into a deeply patriarchal society, which Jesus broke into and took apart through his teaching on the Kingdom of God. Setting women on an equal basis as men.

Note that verse 21 should run into verse 22: 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ 22 Wives, to your husbands as to the Lord. This is in the context of all submitting to one another and then is particularly is concerned with marriage, family life and work.

Submit = voluntary yielding, respect that elevates the other. Husband is head of wife: head is metaphor (can therefore mean different things according to context): head and body complete each other, head means source, implies responsibility. Paul using words in common parlance but giving them a new meaning. To understand marriage not in pagan cultural terms but in terms of Christ's love of the church, His bride.

He does not mean ruling, it is about quality of self sacrifice, submit does not mean obeying but the quality of giving up ones wishes or rights. Goal is the growth of your loved one. Marriage is about becoming one flesh. A mystery but it is about the merging of two people, not just bodily in sexual union, but the joining of persons. We are not to try to find roles here for each partner. You work that out in your own relationships. But husbands love their wives as their own body. In marriage you are united in the greatest intimacy.

This can be abused. And one dominates the other. Like one person bending over the other to keep them in their place. We are called to stand upright under god facing each other in our relationships so that we are honest, exposed and able to give to one another: In this way love can endure.

Such love encompasses: Communication. Commitment and trust; Comfort and Caress: to receiver from Christ and from the Church.

When growing a plant in the garden, a hydrangea, it may become restricted by another plant growing faster and so covering it. That plant needs to be tied and held back, to yield to the Hydrangea struggling to find light. The Hydrangea may find a tree near by overshadowing it and blocking rain and sun. That tree will need the ends of a branch cut away to allow the Hydrangea to grow and blossom. IN our marriages - in all our relationships - we need to yield.. to hold back.. and we need to lay down in self-sacrifice, our own ways and plans so that she or he whom we love and care for can blossom and flourish.



Witness: Questions to discuss

1. Verses 18-23 are all one sentence: how do you think verses 22-24 are affected by verse 21?
2. Sometimes the personalities of husbands and wives are such that the wife will take the lead in the relationships, and they are both happy with this pattern. Is this against scripture and should they change?
3. Where do those of us who are no longer or who have never married find the comfort, care and communication that those of us who are married could have?
4. How do we yield in our relationships and how do we lay down our lives, is there a limit?
5. What are you like at communication, what makes it difficult, what can we do to help one another communicate more openly in our relationships?
6. What can husbands do practically to allow their wives to develop their full potential as people?
7. What are the differences of this biblical view of marriage and the view of marriage in the culture around you?