

St Paul's Dorking Small Groups – 21st June 2009

More Love, More Power – Empowering Community - Wise Opportunities

Read:

Ephesians 5 v 1-15, Matt 25 v 34-46, 1 John 3 v 18

Key points from Sunday's sermon

Our passage this week helps us look at the sort of community we are, and how we should make the most of the opportunities we have to touch the lives of those around us by living a life of love, and by making the most of the opportunities in front of us to spread the fragrance of Christ's life.

But it also reminds us to be wise, Spirit filled and discerning...Otherwise we are no more than busy fools.

A distinctive community:

- If we desire to give, share and proclaim ... We have to ensure that we have something to offer, provide and demonstrate! Living a life of love, and living a sacrificial, servant life....Would certainly make us distinctive and cause us stand out from the crowd! (v1-2)
- The Christian community is often criticised for being "Do gooders" and "Holier than thou" but Ephesians 5 shows us that we should be more imitators, and reflectors of God's love and "Holier than I was!"
- Our distinctiveness is demonstrated in the choices we make concerning our :-
 - a) Primary motivation- Is our life characterised by love? v2
 - b) Sexual Morality – Is our life characterised by purity? v3
 - c) Attitude to money- Can our lifestyle be described as simple and lacking in greed? v3
 - d) Our choice of words - Pure and helpful? v4
 - d) Our secret life- Is our life straightforward and transparent? v8-14

A diligent community:

- We are to make the most of the opportunities in front of us v16
- We are to be careful therefore ...
 - a) How we live – A work/life balance? v15
 - b) How we think- Are we wise or unwise? v15b
 - c) How we take best advantage of the opportunities in front of us – Ignoring or embracing them v16

A discerning community

- We are to be sensitive to, and in tune with ...
 - a) God's will and calling on our lives -Otherwise we are no better than busy fools v17
 - b) God's Spirit within- Otherwise we are just doing things in our own strength and out of a sense of duty v18
 - c) One another's counsel, wisdom and accountability- Otherwise we lose perspective and are inclined to lose the big picture v19-21



Questions to discuss:

1. **Icebreaker:** Share together what is the best opportunity that has ever come your way ... Maybe someone once offered you a free holiday, maybe you found a £50 note, maybe you were given the opportunity to do something really brilliant at work etc
2. We are called to be a distinctive community. In what ways do you think we are distinctive? In what ways do we too easily blend in with our culture, environment, and values of our communities?
3. David Weston once said "Opportunities come our way to share the love of Christ in direct proportion and to the same extent to which we really want them to come our way". Does that ring true in your life?
4. There seems to be a lot going on at St Paul's at the moment- How do we stop ourselves simply being burdened by "Have to's" and "Must do's". Are we in danger of being just busy fools?
5. On Sunday it was suggested that we might like to commit ourselves practically and prayerfully to at least one area of "Building up activity" and one area of "Building out activity" (See diagram above) . This is not a rule more a principle to help us think about our lives and activities –Is this helpful? Share how this might be working out in your life or plans?
6. Share together if there is an area that God is calling you into at this time - Maybe Besom, Children's work, Alpha, Baby Cafe, Work-Out etc?
7. We are to be careful to make the most of our lives and our opportunities- On reflection would we say our lives are just a chaotic, complex array of busyness? Share practically how we can find a wiser, more measured and Spirit led approach to our lives?
8. We have been learning this term that we can help one another with holy living! As you reflect on this week's study together consider what verse 19-21 is saying to you as a group
9. Summarise together what your key learning's have been tonight, and the new areas you maybe being called into and pray through them together.