

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 21st Sept 2008

Loving one another

John 13: 31-38



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

This new Autumn Term there will be various opportunities for us as a Church Family to seek God's guidance in helping us to connect our vision with his specific call to be a church that is committed to being mission minded in all that we do. Next month the PCC have set aside a day of quiet and prayer to reflect on our church's vision and values and to seek God's leading for the future. On Oct 20th there will be an evening set aside for prayer for all in the Church, and each week over this term small groups will be asked to listen out for God's call. After Harvest Festival we begin a new preaching and teaching series 'New Land, New Vision' with the book of Joshua and in so doing have a further opportunity to seek God's guidance as we move on with him.

Over the last two weeks it has been moving to hear the personal testimonies and stories from those in our Church Family who travelled to Kenya over the summer to help with Youth Alpha and the Springs Orphanage. Stories that over time will seep into the life of our church; stories characterized by love, and it is love that is at the heart of God's call on our life together here at St Paul's. At a recent PCC meeting during a time of prayer we were given a picture of a stone being dropped into the centre of a pool of water with ripples spreading outwards - our church was seen as being like that stone with our mission being one that spreads out across the whole pond to reach the outer edges! Ripples of love that begin with our love for God, spreading out to our love for one another and extending to all in God's world. Hence our 3 Loves Vision statement: At St Paul's we believe we are called to:

love God (*worship*), **love one another** (*community*) and to **love all in God's world** (*mission*).
Love that goes up, in and out!

This week we revisit the heart of our Vision Statement as we consider afresh the challenge of the words of Jesus " my children.....a new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." 13:34-35. Here at the final meal he was to enjoy with his friends Jesus took the disciples back to the fundamental command that lies at the root of Christian faith.

What is the command? The command is simply to love one another. It is rooted in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18) but takes on new life through the person of Jesus and his sacrificial love - his glory v31-32.

How should we love? We are called to love one another as Christ loves us. Jesus laid down his life for us, he gave everything up for us and we are called to do the same, going beyond the boundaries, reaching out beyond the norm and that which is expected.

Why are we called to love like this? We are called to love like this so that "all people will know that you are my disciples." v35. How do people we know we are Christians? Church Attendance? Biblical knowledge, Fish Sticker!! It is when people look at us and see a love that cannot be found elsewhere, an unconditional love that is seen in Jesus himself that they will know the reality of our faith and all that is at the heart of our vision.



Witness: questions to discuss

This section over the next term will give more opportunity for a prayerful reflective response to our Word section. At the next meeting of Small Group Leaders on Nov 10th there will be further opportunity for group leaders to share together and pray into all God is saying to us as a Church Family.

1. Spend some time prayerfully considering the picture of the stone causing ripples. Share your thoughts and prayers.
2. Spend some time prayerfully considering our 3 Loves Vision statement. Share your thoughts and prayers.
3. Spend some time prayerfully considering verses 34-35, the command to love. Share your thoughts and prayers.
4. Read through the Welcome Acrostic and discuss!

For further thought: How does the new command of Jesus in John 13:34 – 35 relate to his teaching in Mark about the 'Greatest Commandment' - the OT command to love one's neighbor as one self Mark 12:28-34?

A WELCOME ACROSTIC

(Thoughts about being a welcoming church –from Fiona Simon)

Do we want to be a welcoming church? It is certainly a passion of the leadership that this is what we want St Paul's to be; a welcoming church. You may have noticed this morning that some one outside the church was there to welcome you – hope you felt warmly welcomed, it is something we want to start doing each week to help everyone feel welcomed as they join us for worship.

Next time you come though, I don't just want you to feel welcomed, I want us all to **THINK WELCOME** too. By this I mean think of putting on an invisible welcome badge, and think about what it stands for as you come in. We all need to be armed with these badges if St Paul's is to be a truly welcoming church.

W – Who As you come in be aware of who is there, do you know everyone, or are there people who you don't know or haven't spoken to before?

Where Where are they sitting – go and join them (don't always sit in the same place – doesn't make for a welcoming church)

E – EVERYONE Yes it is up to us all to do this not just the 'expert' greeters, we all need to play our part

L – LET GO OF INHIBITIONS! This stuff is not rocket science but I know for many of us it is not easy to do – it requires a letting go of inhibitions and a launching in! You may think the bit in service where we ask you from the front to turn to your neighbour and talk about x is a complete waste of time, you may hate it – the reason for it is to help you with this stage, helping you cross the first hurdle of starting to talk to your neighbour and getting to know something about them – (If you always sit with friends you miss out on this benefit!). It is then hoped the next phase of welcome after the service is made easier ...this is.....

C – CHAT After a service lots of chatter takes place, but who is it that we are talking to? Lets think of our welcoming role at this stage of the service and think first of those who are new or who are looking a bit on their own. Next to those who we are called to care for (small group, those maybe we greeted for first time last week etc), only then those we could catch up with at another time outside of this service!

O – OFFER A cup of coffee; to get them some information; to introduce them to someone else. Maybe go beyond this and **organise** to meet up with them, have them over for lunch, come along to your small group etc

M – MOVE ON Once you have chatted and offered what is appropriate you can move onto talk to someone else – after all you have just introduced them to some other people who they are now talking to!

E – EYES Look around you, who is God prompting you to greet next?