

GIVE it up!

Serving and Standing With One Another

This morning I want to take a look at our theme for 2006 – “Give It Up!” I sense that there are three areas in which God wants us to focus on and that is in “Service, Surrender, Sacrifice.”

1. **GIVE it up (Serve)** – Finding a place to serve people, to serve our community, and to serve our world.
2. **Give IT up (Surrender)** – There are things or areas in our lives that we need to submit to God. Areas of sin or strongholds, areas that are in question, areas that we have become dependent upon and in which we may turn to instead of relying upon God - knowing that God has called us to obedience based on love and not on demanding compliance.
3. **Give it UP (Sacrifice)** – living our lives in an attitude of worship or praise. Taking everything we do and focusing it towards God - A heart of worship.

I want to look specifically this week at the first one. Serving and standing with one another. As was studying for this week, I was again drawn back to our study of the book of Ephesians and therefore my text will be found this morning in the **Ephesians 5:21-33**.

In order for us to understand what Paul is trying to communicate here we need to see the context in which the subject of the husband/wife relationship is being brought up. Although we teach out of this text about marriage, the context is that Paul is using marriage as an example of his point.

Paul is wanting to show us what a transformed life looks like. He has up to this point talked about growing and maturing. He tells us in **Ephesians 4:15**:

15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

*23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. **Ephesians 4:23-24***

*31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. **Ephesians 4:31***

2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. **Ephesians 5:2***

Paul is speaking of a transformation of the heart at the time of salvation. Old sinful man to a new man created to be like Christ/God in nature - a nature that displays righteousness, holiness, forgiveness and sacrificial love. Paul uses relationships as an

example of how our hearts should change. The relationship of Husband and Wife, the relationship of Parent and Child, and the relationship of Slave and Master. This is where we pick up Paul's words in **Ephesians 5:21-33**. Read this with me if you would:

*21 And further, **submit to one another out** of reverence for Christ. 22 For wives, this means submit your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. 25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word.* 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body. 31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."* 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

What Paul is trying to communicate here is an example of that change. Since we have Christ and His Holy Spirit living in us, we are to live differently. Even just beginning this portion with the idea of mutual submission in verse 21 was a radical change in the culture to which Paul was writing – especially in a husband/wife relationship.

In the old Hebrews culture the woman was seen as a secondary class citizen, one who was to be ruled over, who was beneath the man – a sense of superiority. You can even look at eastern countries today and see that men rule and treat women as object or even property. God wants the marriage relationship and even our relationships within the church to change from being “one up and one down” to that of coming alongside each other. **Submission is a choice to come alongside and stand together equally and voluntarily.**

We find that the greatest idea of mutual submission in the relationship between Jesus and the church. Jesus said it himself in **Mark 10:45**:

45 “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

He didn't come just to tell us what to do, but to give us help, to provide a way out of our predicament into a new way of life in the Spirit. That is why Paul write in Ephesians 5:21 that our motivating factor of mutual submission is reverence for Christ. **My submission is based on Christ's submission and service to me.**

It would be one thing if Jesus would ask us to do something that he himself wouldn't or didn't do, but he has modeled for us how it is that he wants us to live. As I understand what Jesus has done, as I see his continued involvement in my life, as I see his faithfulness, it stirs within me a desire to do more for him, to be more involved in the lives of others, to become more and more faithful to him. **God's actions should spark our reactions.** In **Romans 2:4** Paul writes:

4 Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

1 As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. **2 Corinthians 6:1***

Do we understand what Christ has really done for us? Simply look at your own life and you will see. How you live your life today is reflective of what you understand about God and about what you have because you have embraced Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Jesus stands by us with his righteousness, holiness, forgiveness and sacrificial love and now invites us to embrace the same character traits within our own lives. We now are to be righteous, holy, forgiving and love sacrificially.

The Example in Marriage:

Although this is a great model for marriages to follow one cannot deny that this is merely an example of a changed life.

*22 For wives, this means submit your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. **Ephesians 5:22-24***

The Heart of Submission

We are to submit to the structure of authority established by God (Coming alongside them in support). We serve a God of order, who puts into place people of leadership, to direct and most importantly, to serve. Jesus said it himself in **Matthew 23:11-12:**

11 The greatest among you must be a servant. 12 But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Leadership is about servant-hood (Service) which is modeled through Jesus Christ. **People do not follow a demand but instead an act of love in action.** Love chooses to submit (Love does not demand its own way).

In Marriage, the husband must establish his love and value of the wife before he is able to function as the leader of the home and before a wife will ever be able to come alongside

him. How many of us here who are married can agree that marriage doesn't work unless we are willing to come alongside and work together? In fact, many times divorce happens simply because one side refuses to work with the other.

Jesus has already done that for us – he has shown his pursuance, his love, his forgiveness and his provision through the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, as a leader God has shown himself willing to serve both now and into eternity. He is one who is worthy of respect and honor and isn't asking us to do anything that he himself isn't willing to do. He has credibility, just as a husband must also gain credibility with his wife.

Application:

Although there are leaders, we are all to be equally submitted to each other. It is a call to serve each other, come alongside each other, support each other, equip each other, and admonish each other. We are to see the value of people through the eyes of God who views everyone of us as the same. (Verses: All have fallen short. Not one of us is righteous, not one. That none should perish yet all find salvation). **Jesus didn't think it too highly of himself to partner with the church to reach mankind, we shouldn't think it too highly of ourselves partner with God or even come alongside each other.**

25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. Ephesians 5:25-27*

Love (Agape)

The type of love mentioned here is a “Sacrificial Love” that is shown through the seeking of one's wholeness. It is not merely the emotion of ones heart, but the unlimited pursuance of accountability and restoration. Sacrificial love is radical. Jesus said in **John 15:13**:

13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Paul said in Romans 9:2-3:

2 My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief 3 for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.*

Our lives should be about helping others find wholeness through the message and life altering power of Jesus Christ. Our goal is bring as many people as we can to Christ through sacrificial means – our resources, our time, our effort, our SERVICE.

Love is the drawing point. People don't care what you know until they know that you care. We are talking about relationships not just in the church but in our community as well – they need to see our love for them.

In a marriage relationship we understand that it only works when both sides are willing to give unconditionally. As both sides come to an agreement they are able to establish a compromise that meets the needs of both instead of just one. Our goals should be a healthy marriage instead of just one of us getting our own way. It is a mutual working together.

Practical Application:

We need to lead lives that draw people – the kind that's sacrificial and concerned. Sacrificial love develops a sense of urgency and authentic investment.

1. That they would understand the work of Jesus Christ. 2. They would embrace to his hope and plan for their life. 3. That they would grow and mature as they allow his truth and the power of the Holy Spirit to work within them.

28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body. Ephesians 5:28-30

Responsibility

The husband and wife are to commit to walking through life together. **Taking care of each other truly does benefit each other.** How many of us understand that taking care of our spouse really does make a difference? When they feel neglected nothing seems to go right, or nothing you say seems to matter. **As long as each party is doing their part, then the needs of the other will always be provided for.**

Practical Application:

Our love for ourselves and others go hand in hand. When providing for ourselves, when feeding ourselves, when clothing ourselves, we can become very creative in getting what we need. And yet it should be the same when dealing with other people. It's all about effort, is it important enough etc. (Early church – gave to each other - This is true love) **You won't feel responsible until you come to understand that you are needed and valuable.** I am not talking about being self-centered but about seeing that I have purpose and responsibility for others.

31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. Ephesians 5:31-32*

A man's identity changes when he gets married. He is no longer viewed as being under a parent, his spouse takes on a new name, and both come together to begin a new way of life. I think there are three things we can extract from here in regards to serving one another.

Community:

We are all in this together. **Your success in your walk with God will impact my success in my walk with God.** What I do effects you and what you do effects me.

Representation:

When people think of Jesus Christ the first place they look at is the church. Their perception of the Gospels effectiveness and truth is based on how they see the church instead of realizing that all are sinners and that the Gospel is based on God's kindness and purposes and not man's ability to keep a list of rules and regulations.

Those who are not growing, maturing and feeding themselves spiritually, and who live their lives contrary to how scriptures prescribes, yet call themselves Christians, are placed at the same level as those who are developing and growing, bearing good fruit, showing evidence of authentic faith. **How you live out your faith greatly effects how people will see my faith.** How you live for Our God, greatly effect how people will see the God that I serve.

Purpose:

You cannot take Jesus Christ out of the church. **Religious activity, social interaction, community service is useless unless the message of Jesus Christ is a part of each.** To feed physically without feeding spiritually serves no eternal and lasting value. The same can be said about community service and relationships. To leave out the one thing that gives us hope, the one thing that bring peace, the one thing that reconnects God with man, is only to be focused on the temporal existence.

Paul uses the example of the husband/wife relationship to paint a picture of the transformation of one's character due to the influence of Jesus Christ. Our heart is to turn from one that receives to one that gives and serve. How can we serve each other?

- Submission (mutually standing alongside each other)
- Sacrificial love (doing whatever it takes for you to grow and mature in the things of God)
- Responsibility (taking care of each other is really in our best interest)
- Community, representation, and purpose (That we are given a sense of identity and purpose).