

Word notes Sunday 9/11/08 Simon Matthews
Co-Habitation, Divorce & Remarriage

Summary

God loves us and longs for intimacy with us, that love is based in and on covenant relationship. Man (men and women) has a need for intimacy, body soul and spirit. Covenant relationships with God or between people seal the relationship and sustain it in the tough times – “for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health.” Putting the relationship beyond doubt enables it to grow and develop as it should, difficulties surmounted serve to strengthen the relationship.

Intimacy without covenant is preparing the way for disaster but when we look around we see that people these days seem to want intimacy (to meet the need they have) without covenant.

Do we judge and condemn those who co-habit – no! Instead we say “why not get married” and enrich what you already have. We should speak of the benefits of marriage: Vows made before God receive His affirmation and support; Legal benefits protect the relationship; divorce is not an option in God’s thinking sustaining our commitment; it models something good to our children.

On divorce and remarriage Jesus sets out God’s view in Matthew 19. Divorce in the circumstances of adultery is an abuse of intimacy and trust, we can extrapolate to other forms of abuse: emotional, physical, and understand that God’s intent is not that two should stay together in an abusive relationship. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul sets out some fairly tough criteria summed up that if there is no possible way to retrieve the relationship then divorce is reluctantly accepted.

Application:

Both Jesus and Paul are very careful not to condemn but to say what is good in God’s sight and also what is practical or allowable because of the fallen state of man and the world.

Discuss section 1 or 2 below, whichever seems more appropriate to members of the cell:

1, What should our stand be in relation to a person in a co-habiting relationship becoming a committed member or being involved in front-led ministry of the church? Should we be rigid and if so why?

2, As your children grow up what will your attitude be should they enter into intimate relationships outside of marriage? Some with grown-up children may be able to offer wisdom to those whose children are still young. Discuss some scenarios such as:

- “I’m staying out at a party tonight”
- “Can my boy/girlfriend stay over?”
- “I’m moving in with my boy/girlfriend”
- Your son/daughter has been co-habiting for a number of months/years – do you have them to stay and do they share a bed? If time is a factor what period qualifies the relationship as valid?

(You may not think these situations will come your way and we pray they don’t, forewarned is forearmed however and can save emotional reaction destroying relationships)

Witness:

Nov/Dec Task: Be thinking about the Christmas season – probably the best time to mention the ‘J’ word (Jesus of course!). What will the cell do to open up their celebration of Christ’s birth to un-churched people?

The Christmas Celebration meeting is on Sun 21st Dec at 5pm – start thinking of who you can invite, maybe hand out invites at a party or other Christmas related activity the cell holds.

Who would like to support (with cash and time) sending a Christmas card and CD to the houses on Studlands – we could do it for about £275. Talk to a leader.