ChristChurch London Life Group Discussion Outline - 26/08/07

Marriage made in Heaven

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Genesis 24

- see "DISCUSS" headings below for questions

1. Marriage is good

Genesis 2 – not good to be alone. Adam & Eve. V24 – a man will leave his father and mother and be united/cleave to his wife

Hebrew 13:4 – marriage should be honoured by all.

Eph 5 – reflects relationship between Christ and the Church.

So…….marriage is important, marriage is good, marriage is God's idea, His way for one man and one woman in one covenant relationship for life.

2. Priorities in life

Important thing for us to do is to get on with the work which God has given us. If God sees that we need a spouse to help us to fulfil his tasks, He will bring the person to you, who you'll recognise that they are just what you wanted and needed.

Live life with no guarantee of marriage. Live now for Christ.

Isaac himself was unaware of his need: he never asks for a wife. His father perceived the need. Similarly Adam was blind to his need: it was God who saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone.

A man should not seek a wife for himself (1 Corinthians 7:27). A prudent wife is **from the Lord** (Proverbs 19:14): to find such a wife is to find a good thing and receive the Lord's favour (Proverbs 18:22).

A godly spouse should be sought only when it's becoming clearer that marriage will achieve the purposes God has for your lives. Isaac needed a wife because he must become a husband and father to fulfill his part in the outworking of the Abrahamic covenant. This marriage was essential to the work of God in the world.

DISCUSS – in seeking guidance in who to marry, are we asking 'What value to God would this marriage be? How does God benefit?'

DISCUSS - while it's the norm for us to marry, let us not forget that the Bible informs us that it's sometimes God's purpose that some stay single (I Corinthians 7:8-24). Singleness is a gift. Are we living in the good of this, making the most of a single life for God?

DISCUSS - Rebekah didn't realise that she was about to become an integral part of God's eternal plan of salvation by marrying Isaac. She served simply because it was the pattern of her life. Are you willing to serve like Rebekah? Are you one who is known for how you serve? Have you been proven reliable in the small things of life?

3. God's provision and timing

If we are to have a spouse, God will bring you together at the right time. However, you should never think that God failed to provide you a spouse because the one **you chose** was unwilling.

How often men and women have married hastily, fearing that marriage was quickly passing them by. They married those who were unbelievers or uncommitted because they concluded that anyone was better than no one. Isaac was 40 years old when he married. It's well worth waiting for the spouse of God's choice.

DISCUSS - God does not always guarantee to be speedy. Sometimes He desires us to persevere in prayer. How are you praying about decisions you need to make regarding relationships? Have you committed them to the Lord?

Equally be ready for God to move quickly and turn your world upside down!

4. Look at the right person in the right place

A Christian should not be in a relationship with a non-christian. Abraham was strong, The Bible is straight on this. Don't go after an unbeliever and get romantically involved. Serious stuff. What if they might get saved? – Don't go there. Wait until they are saved – and then wait a year. Let them get their own faith, not yours. Let them get into LG's first. Then you get to know someone in the context of a group of friends.

Cf 1 Cor.7:39 – '…..he must belong to the Lord'

2 Cor.6"14 – '…do not be yoked together with unbelievers" illustrated by the agricultural picture of marriage in Mark 10:9, which may be translated "What God has yoked together, let not man separate." Any pair of oxen can be yoked together to plough a field, but the wise farmer chooses to yoke oxen, which are matched for strength, speed, endurance and direction.

In a Christian context, a prospective spouse must not only be a Christian but also should share a common background, maturity, calling and vision spiritually.

DISCUSS – how can we help each other develop biblical relationships?

5. Seek godly qualities.

Stating the obvious, if you want a godly spouse you need to be the kind of person a godly spouse will be looking for. Marriage is for men, not boys. For women, not girls. Marriage doesn't make men or women. Genesis – **man** will leave, then cleave. Get life in order – finance, disciplined, studies, work, character, conduct. Pursue holiness, hard work, humility and hospitality(4 h's). That is very attractive. Focus on godly character and God.

Then what are **you** looking for in another? Abraham's servant didn't evaluate Rebekah on the basis of her physical appearance. If he had she would have passed with flying colours. To the servant, beauty was a desirable thing, but it was not fundamental. The woman he sought must be one who trusted in the God of Abraham and who had maintained sexual purity. Fundamentally, she must be a woman who manifested Christian character as reflected in her response to the request for water. Just being a woman who believed in the God of Abraham was not sufficient. Just because one is a Christian does not make them a good candidate for marriage.

Look for character qualities in another you could live with for a lifetime. See 1 Cor. 13; Ephesians 5; Proverbs 31, 1 Peter 3.

- qualities of willingness and a lack of fear of hard work, a functional spouse rather than a trophy or an ornament, doing the job they should be doing, one who would show mercy to a stranger, and who is willing to do far more than they are asked.

- Real beauty is internal - her heart (compare 1 Samuel 16:7 – choosing David, heart, not outward) - willing, hard working, possess purity and an inner beauty that stems from contentment, sense of purpose and pure heart.

DISCUSS – what godly qualities are you displaying? What are you looking for in another?

6. Heed family…. and Church family

Notice how little Isaac had to do with the process of finding a wife. Isaac, if left to himself, may never have found Rebekah. The first pretty woman to profess a faith in God might have seemed adequate. The servant was unwilling to settle for second rate. Not only were Abraham and his servant a part of the process, but Rebekah's family also had to be convinced of God's leading. Anyone who fails to heed the counsel of godly Christians who are older and wiser is on the path to heartache.

Women should be courted through the family…….here in the city, church family may need to be the context. Older and wiser Christians. Christchurch marriage preparation course. Don't need to be engaged.

Point is - have others been involved? This guards you. If someone is unwilling to meet family, LG leader etc, run a mile.

Not to be over-reliant on others. You need to make a decision – yes or no – be straightforward. Speak to the person, not through a 3rd person.

DISCUSS – how can we as a church support relationships, developing an open context for them to flourish, giving advice without being overbearing?

7. Leave the old life behind

8. Guard your emotions and let love grow

No sexual contact before marriage - Ephesians 5:3 – "must not be any **hint** of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity". It's nothing now, then everything in marriage. No making out or groping.

Rebekah didn't practice "safe sex"; she practiced "save sex" for marriage. She understood that sex was a gift from God, to be enjoyed within the commitment of marriage.

Make a covenant like Job – 31:1 – I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

Have a renewed fear of God in this area of purity. We ask not "how far can we go", but rather "how safe can we stay".

1 Tim. 5:1-2 *"Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger men as sisters, **with absolute purity**".* – affects touching and kissing

Maybe you're thinking, "That's nice to preach, but I have already made those mistakes. What should I do?" First, seek the forgiveness of God. Then make a new commitment to God and to the person who would be your spouse. Begin practicing God's standard for moral purity.

DISCUSS – how can we help each other to be pure?

9. Commitment

A man must choose the women he loves and love the women he chooses.

Our culture – fall in and out of love. Not Bible love – Eph.5 – husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church – that means all the way and all your days. A covenant commitment that endures come what may.

SUM UP

A huge opportunity to be biblically different in the City. Must understand these life principles. We come from a corrupted paradigm. Too late? – no – forgiveness of sin, grace. Empowering grace to lead a new life, to be a different person to have a renewed mind.

Men – be men of God, pure and holy, lead marriages and families. Women – be women of God, be those with a beautiful spirit and build beautiful marriages for God's glory.

Today, God asks: Will you trust me? When it seems like there is no way I can come through, will you look doubt and fear in the face and say, "I **AM** trusting the Lord"? This is God's explicit will for you. As you seek to find God's will in marriage, first find God and stick especially close to Him.

Let us go as missionaries into our workplaces, clear on our biblical values on singleness and marriage, clear on our behaviour, clear on purity and holiness. May God be glorified.