

International Conversation Cafe

Bible Topic: Harmonious Marriage, Ephesians 5

“Falling in love,” is a term to describe the elated feeling when one becomes enamored with another person. Often it seems that these feelings just seem to come without previous thought. The word, “falling,” suggests something that cannot be controlled, perhaps like falling into a trap!

Is falling in love the same thing as really loving someone? Love can be defined as a commitment to the other person’s good, even if you have to sacrifice your own interests for them. Falling in love, according to author, Scott Peck, is about physical attraction that is very strong in the beginning but eventually wanes.

What do you think about the concept of “falling in love”?

In most areas of western culture, the feeling of falling in love leads to dating which may lead to marriage. In other areas of the world, the feeling of falling in love is not a guarantee for a good match in marriage. Parents who suggest a marriage partner for their children are likely to look for other qualities in a spouse.

What might those qualities be?

What might be the advantage and disadvantage of an arranged marriage?

What might be the advantage and disadvantage of a marriage that is the result of two people meeting and making decisions about their future on their own?

In Bible times, marriages were arranged by parents, though the Bible does not command that marriages be arranged or not arranged by families. But knowing this fact about the 1st century helps us understand Paul’s commands to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5. Also, in the first century, families were organized around the husband who was looked at as the head of the family, responsible for the financial and well-being of everyone in his household.

Ephesians 5, from The Message

21 Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent (respectful) to one another.

22-24 Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering (ruling over) but by cherishing (to care for tenderly). So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit (give respect) to their husbands.

Summarize what Paul wrote in these verses.

Why might these words to the wife be especially applicable in an arranged marriage?

25-28 Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting. Christ’s love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives.

*In your own words, describe how Paul tells a husband is to love his wife.
Why might these words to the husband be especially applicable in an arranged marriage?
Do you think these words apply to marriages that are not arranged?*

In western culture in the 21st century there seems to be confusion over the role of love and sex. In a letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul warned his readers about physical passion or sexual desire outside of marriage.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified (set apart as pure) that you should avoid sexual immorality (what is wrong); that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust (desire) like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ~1 Thessalonians 4: 3-7

*Restate the passage in your own words.
Why do you think that sexual sin is described as taking advantage of someone?*

The following passage describes how people ought to think and treat each other.

Philippians 2

Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be free of pride. Think of others as better than yourselves.

None of you should look out just for your own good. You should also look out for the good of others.

You should think in the same way Christ Jesus does.

*How might this be helpful in marriage?
How do these thoughts affect other relationships?*