**Series: #Life Together**

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

Ephesians 5:21

March 9-10, 2013

**“The Power of Yielding To Another”**

One of the things I have learned in playing competitive tennis over the years is that after a brief exchange of pleasantries

-comparing racquets—sharing what profession we are in

-we line up on opposite ends of the court and immediately begin sizing up one another

-play to his forehand or backhand?

-does he hit with topspin—or hit flat?

-does he avoid the net—stay on the line-can he run?

-does he have a short temper—get impatient?

-can I play with his mind? Drive him insane?

-HOW CAN I BEST IMPOSE MY WILL?

-in our culture—we’re used to this

-we have been raised to aggressively compete, get to the top, capture the flag, establish turf

-Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together* notes that “it is a *man’s tendency* to look for a *strategic position* he can *assume* and *hold over* *another*

-be it on a court, in the boardroom, in the home

-even in the most polite or pious environments—we look for ways to hold over another

-Jesus’ own disciples often saw themselves in a contest to determine which one amongst them was the greatest –who should have the authority—be the leader—have the power?

-but all of this runs contrary to what the church should look like—*read Ephesians 5:15-21*

-Paul’s words were a radical departure from the ways of Roman culture—impressed with power, seeking to impose dominance, establish control, demand obedience

-those in Christ have a different aim—what Paul refers to as *mutual submission*

-which—if practiced—will heal most relationships, restore most marriages, bring sons back to fathers, make Washington run effectively, create churches that are whole, change the work environment into a place we want to be

1. WHAT DOES MUTUAL SUBMISSION REQUIRE OF US?
   1. A Radical Reorientation

-for (and let’s get this out in the open)—our inner spirit is repelled by the demand

* + 1. *submission, compliance, acquiescence, deference*—are often associated with weakness
    2. they contradict out most natural and powerful inner drives
    3. they threaten our individual wills—we are called to throw over the whole egotistical project of selfhood in favor of identifying with others
    4. submission disturbs our comfort

*(but then—these one anothers were never intended to create a “comfort station for the saints”)*

-they represent a systematic program of deliberate and thorough going self-sacrifice

-each week—they call for something of our self-centeredness to die

* + 1. mutual submission, in particular, runs counter to a contemporary culture that prides itself on personal rights, individual autonomy
  1. A *Giving Oneself Over to God*

-Paul makes this clear in the context

* + 1. submission will require different a way of walking, a kind of wisdom, a life surrendered to the will of God—5:15-17
    2. more—it will not happen apart from first submitting to allow God to have the *fullest control* we are conscious of—a sort of *reckless abandonment*—a throwing ourselves upon God—making ourselves fully present—5:18

-this is the main verb from which everything else flows

-a daily placing of one’s life under the Spirit’s jurisdiction—control

-becoming full of God’s presence and power is the condition for mutual submission

* 1. An *Unnerving Fear of God*

-just because it is here in the text

-refusing to submit—choosing to dominate, impose our wills has its own consequences

1. *WHAT DOES MUTUAL SUBMISSION LOOK LIKE?*
   1. A *Radical Shift in Posture*

-a “rearrangement under”—this is the essence of its meaning

-one who submits is one who has placed oneself at another’s disposal

-renounced one’s will for the sake of others

* 1. A *Seamless Order in Relationships*

-mutual submission makes no exceptions based upon age, rank, role, citizenship, gender—*we’re all in this!*

-it does not deny the need for order—for roles—for leaders and followers

-but each have the same responsibility to submit

-Paul illustrates this in verses 22-6:9

-he moves into the world in which we live—our kitchens where we cook, our bedrooms where we sleep—to the places where we rub shoulders with the world

-and shows us what submission looks like for those in a more dominant role and those who are in a subordinate one

1. *Mutual submission in a MARRIAGE—5:22-32*

-Paul begins here—perhaps to underscore that a married couple sets the pattern of mutual submission for the whole body of Christ

* 1. a WIFE is to submit to her husband—honoring him as the head—5:22

-just as she does to the Lord—just as the church submits to Christ

-willingly, openly, respectfully

*-she submits to “support a man’s involvement in life in a way that encourages his godliness”—Crabb*

* 1. but coming out of 5:21—a HUSBAND is also to arrange himself under his wife

-mutual submission means that *he does not come to impose* his will, overpower, dominate, or force entrance or silence

-like his wife, he too comes to submit—recognizing that headship is not so much a power position as a provision position

-that love is largely about submission—for it requires that he too place himself under the needs of another

-arranges himself under to supply what the head is called to supply—life, grace, affection

-yielding one’s time, one’s interests, one’s assumptions—one’s unrealistic expectations

-loves as Christ loves the church (24)

*-submits in a manner that enables a wife to reach her God given potential, maximize her God—given beauty—5:28*

Paul then moves to illustrate mutual submission in parenting

1. *Mutual submission in a FAMILY—6:1-4*
   1. a SON/DAUGHTER is to submit to parents—with a readiness to obey (arranged ears under)—6:1

-giving them weight, honor (6:2-3)

-weight to their counsel, to their authority, their God sanctioned role

* 1. so a PARENT arranges oneself under a son/daughter

-submitting to the demands that raising up another requires

-providing a safe environment, building one’s skills, modeling character

-drawing boundaries—being boundaries

-submitting to their need to be heard

-submitting to who God made them to be—not what I want them to be

-submitting to the demand to lift their hearts—not crush their spirits—Colossians 3:19

-submitting to the great commission—my very best discipleship begins at home

1. *Mutual submission in the WORKPLACE—6:5-9*
   1. an EMPLOYEE is to submit to one over him—rendering service that honors God—diligence, integrity—6:5-7
   2. so an employer is to submit to his staff, his employees

-submitting one’s resources, one’s attention to ensure that people are working in their strengths, becoming a success

-treating those under them with dignity and respect—fairness and justice—without threats—6:9

1. *Mutual submission in OTHER PASSAGES*
   1. PETER commands the younger to follow those called to lead the church—and in the same verse he exhorts leaders to *humble themselves towards those who follow—*I Peter 5:5
   2. PAUL exhorts the Galatians to serve *one another*—5:13

-commands the Philippians to *regard one another* as more important than yourselves-2:3

* 1. no one illustrated mutual submission more than CHRIST

-who though everything was, is, will be under His feet—yet He came and *submitted Himself* to our needs, dying on the cross as the highest expression of submission

-did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped—but emptied Himself for us—Philippians 2:5

-came not to be served—but to serve—Mark 10:45

1. *WHAT WILL MUTUAL SUBMISSION ACCOMPLISH?*
   1. If we—the body of Christ—were willing to mutually submit—it would go a long way toward the healing of relationships—divorce attorneys would go out of business
   2. It would correct the natural abuses that occur in ordered relationships

-if both those above and those under practiced mutual submission

-it would check selfishness, defy coercion, root out imposition, break a dominant spirit, and diminish intimidation

-rid the world of repressive households!

* 1. It would make for the most powerful community

-in a community of mutual submission—people would no longer come for their individual needs and walk out

-it would counter what may be killing the church the most today—autonomous individualism that submits to no one but self

-imagine a culture where people arranged themselves under God on a daily basis

-submitted their rights, their bodies, their sexual preferences to God—holding none of these as their own

-congregants submitting themselves, their differences, their preferences, their gifts and talents and resources to God and one another

-pastors and elders submitting to the needs of a congregation

-a congregation submitting to godly leadership

-generations serving one another

-brothers serving sisters—sisters serving brothers

-worship leaders serving the body—the body submitting to the worship team

-the married submitting to the needs of singles—and singles submitting to the needs of married

-cultures serving one another

-to live out the one anothers—particularly this one—if done well—has a chance of transforming the social order

* 1. It would become our compelling witness

-it would be countercultural for the common good

-set apart the church as an amazing witness of the transformative power of Christ