



The Church as the Bride of Christ

(Note to leaders - when a question in the study is followed by possible answers, these are for your benefit, try to encourage your group to come up with answers for themselves)

Q Can you remember your wedding day? What vows did you make to each other?

Q What is the significance of marriage?

- Marriage is a covenant relationship where two parties make solemn and binding agreements and become one flesh

Genesis 2:24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

First Old Testament wedding narrative

A covenant like vow/poem:

Genesis 2: 23

The man said,
"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

Q Did God make a covenant with Israel?

- Moses was the mediator of the Old covenant which was made between God and Israel
- He would be their God and would lead and protect them
- and they His people and would obey and follow Him

Through the Old Testament God's relationship with Israel is described as that of a husband with his wife.

Isaiah 55:5

For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

Q Was Israel faithful to God?

Jeremiah 3:20

Surely, as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so have you been treacherous to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.

The Old Testament speaks of Israel being unfaithful to God by following after other gods (idolatry) and rejecting Him. The book Hosea is a picture of their adultery. God was faithful but they were faithless.

Jesus and his bride: His journey to the cross

This picture continues into the New Testament, where now Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is the bride.

Jesus, reaching out to his bride, left the royal palace and the throne to pursue his bride - to woo his bride.

John the Baptist speaks of this in John 3:26-30

²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷ John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' ²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

Q How does he describe Jesus and what is his role?

- Jesus is the Bridegroom
- He is preparing the way for the Bridegroom
- He now had to make way for the Bridegroom

Jesus left all the privileges of the kingdom as "prince" and stooped down to his bride.

Jesus and the cross:

Q What was the purpose of the cross for Jesus' bride?

- Paying all her debt and setting her free from slavery
- Wooing her even at a huge cost
- At the cross he laid down his life for his future bride - The church

Jesus could have ignored the bride who was impure and full of blemishes, but he chose her for himself.

Jesus and his bride now

1. The bride can't beautify herself:

Ephesians 5:25-33

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and

hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Q how does Christ clean up the bride?

- *Washing her with the Word*
- *Nourishes and cherishes her*
- *Loves her - her response is to be devoted to him*

2. She shall be holy

Paul also used this image:

2 Corinthians 11:2

² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Q What has upset Paul in the Corinth church?

- He, like a matchmaker, had been instrumental in bringing the Corinth bride to Christ
- They were being led astray by false teaching
- Turning away from pure devotion to their groom

Q What characteristic does this church need?

- Faithfulness to our groom

3. Jesus is waiting patiently

2 Peter 3:9-10

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Q Why doesn't Jesus come sooner?

- He is patient - his desire is for more to come to him

Q When will he come?

- No one knows - it will be a surprise, like a thief

Q What should this lead to in our lives?

- Preparation - we want to be pure brides
- We don't want to be found sleeping!

1 Thess 5:23-24

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Q What was Paul's prayer for the Church?

- God would sanctify them completely
- They would be blameless in readiness for the Bridegroom's arrival
- He is faithful - he will do this through his Spirit in us

4. Everlasting honeymoon

Rev 19:6-9

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Q How do you feel knowing you are part of the church - Christ's bride?

Q How should it impact our lives?