

Session Five: Gathered as Jesus' Loving Bride

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[0 : 00] Hey guys, welcome back to Gospel Growth.

This is One Harbour's Life on Life discipleship course. And we've been talking together about how Christians and disciples are gathered around the gospel. We're in the middle of kind of walking through some different pictures of the church and what we see in the Bible.

And man, it's just giving us all these different dimensions of what church should really look like. And each of these pictures is really important. And some of them resonate more with us and some of it a little less.

And some we like more naturally than others. But man, all of these things, they just continue to give us a better and better glimpse of what Jesus had in mind with his church. So far, we've looked at how the church is gathered as a gifted body, a loving family.

It's gathered as God's temple. And all of these things are just amazing. I think if you're like me, when I really stop and think about this stuff, I'm just reminded of how incredible being a part of the church really is.

[1 : 01] There's nothing like the church in all of the earth. There's just nothing like it, right? It's a privilege to be part of Jesus's church. Now, like with anything, there's pain and there's privilege.

But man, the privilege far outweighs the pain. And so maybe it'd be good for you just to take a second right now just to pause and just thank Jesus for making you part of the church. Yep, there's pain.

But man, there's a lot of privilege. It's good to be thankful. Now, we're going to look in this session at another glimpse of the church. And this one, for some, might be a little bit of a struggle.

For others, it might be your favorite one. But I think the more you understand it, the more you really just begin to love it. So that's this idea that the church is gathered as Jesus's loving bride, right? It's gathered as Jesus's prize.

That's what the church is. We're his bride, the Bible tells us. We're the treasure that he went to the cross for. He loves the church. He knows we're messy. He knows we're dirty.

[1 : 56] He knows we're imperfect. But he loves us. And there's nothing to Jesus like his bride. And we are really part of this love story that Jesus loves us and he gave himself up for us.

The Bible sets us up for this because it begins and it ends with a wedding. The very first one kind of went off the rails pretty quickly, if you remember, with Adam and Eve. What you end up with is right away in the Bible, a husband who lets his wife down, doesn't stick up for her, right?

And then he throws her under the bus as soon as possible, right? It's all the worst of a marriage and it ends in pain and just sadness for this couple. But the Bible ends with a husband, Jesus, who knows his bride totally, yet he loves her perfectly.

And he stopped at nothing to win her heart and to set her free. The Bible begins and it ends with a wedding. And I want to just try to show you some of the aspects of being a part of Jesus's bride, the church, and just acknowledge we're not going to get to everything, but I think the stuff we will get to will be really helpful for you.

The first one here is that it's just good to know that Jesus is the best husband and he loves his bride with a perfect love. He's the best husband and he loves his bride with a perfect love.

[3 : 12] When you start talking about marriage, there's not a single one of us who've watched this video who haven't in some way been hurt by a marriage gone wrong. Friends or family or our own marriage or our parents or our kids.

Man, it's just so prevalent nowadays for marriage to be broken and sad that when we come to think about this kind of an analogy, we can start to struggle. I don't think I want to think about Jesus like that because I've been so hurt by other people like that.

And so I just want us to remember that this is not about what we see here on earth. This is about the best of this, the best of marriage. And what we see is that Jesus is the husband and the church is his bride.

Ephesians 5 is so good on this. Let me read you a few of these verses. In verse 23, it says, For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its savior.

It's setting us up for the love and the sacrifice. The savior word there is reminding us that, man, this husband is incredible. Listen to how he goes on in verses 25 through 32 of Ephesians 5.

[4 : 18] Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water of the word, 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.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

He nourishes the church. He cherishes the church because we're members of his body. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. We're right back to the beginning of the Bible, that very first wedding, right?

And they should become one flesh. That's what God said at the very beginning, just as Christ does the church. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. What's Paul getting at there?

He's going, hey, you know, there's this illustration you get of this on earth with husbands and wives, but man, you guys know it's not perfect. In fact, remember how it worked out in the beginning? Yeah, but this is different, because this is about Jesus, and Jesus gave himself up.

[5 : 26] I mean, you know, in fairy tale stories, you always get something of like a knight in shining armor who's rescuing, you know, this princess from, you know, a dragon and a dungeon, and it's kind of the same old thing every one of these movies, right?

And all of those, they're just scratching around. They're starting to get to what Jesus did for us. He didn't just slay our enemy. He didn't just set us free.

It cost him his life. He, as Ephesians 5 says, he gave himself up for his bride. He's sanctifying us. He's making us pure and spotless. He's making us better than we could have ever been on our own.

He nourishes us. He cherishes us. He's committed to us to the very end. Jesus is not going anywhere. He's not going anywhere. He's never going to forsake us. This mystery of the two becoming one, Paul says, it speaks of Christ and the church, that we have been united to Jesus, that we've been made one with him, right?

And that his church longs for the day when they can be with him, and he longs for the day when he can be with them forever and ever, right? It's this incredible picture that resonates with all of us in some way or form.

[6 : 35] We've all seen a wedding or been at a wedding or it's been our wedding, and this revokes some emotion, but we're just starting to scratch at the beauty of the gospel and how this works with Jesus and his church.

Listen to the language that Jesus gives his disciples as he's preparing them for him, him departing from earth. He says in John 14, verse one, let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God.

Believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? Would I do that to you? Would I hang you out to dry?

Would I promise you something I'm not going to fulfill? He says, if I go to prepare a place for you, I'll come again. I'll take you to myself that where I am, you may be also. So this language Jesus uses really refers to a Jewish wedding feast.

And what would happen is the husband would be, when the couple were engaged, the groom would go and he would now work on a place for him and his wife to live. And the father of the groom would be the one saying, hey, now it's time to go get your bride.

[7 : 37] Now the house is ready. And so Jesus is going, hey, look, I don't, he said, I don't know the time, right? It's set by the father, but I'm coming back for you, right? And he would, he would come back. And when the father said it was time, he would, he would return, but he would be promising her, I'm coming back for you.

That's what Jesus is doing with his disciples. He's bringing comfort to them. They're, they're scared. They're terrified. You know, what if you don't come back? What if you forget about us? What if you find someone better than us? Right? And Jesus is saying to them, look, I'm, I'm, I'm going to be back for you.

I'm going to go work on a place for us. I'm going to be back for you. And when I come back, I'm going to get you. And no one's ever going to take you away. No one's ever going to take you from me. This is just incredible language of love.

You can't make this kind of stuff up. Even, even the best fairy tale, even your favorite chick flick won't come close to this, right? This is the most incredible thing. And it's Jesus and his church. So quickly make a couple of the implications we need to remember as we think about this.

Firstly, you can't love Jesus and not love the church. I mean, if that's his, if that's his bride, if that's his girl, you cannot love Jesus and not love the church. It's just not, it's just not possible.

[8 : 43] And there's some ideas of people would say things like this. Even books have been written along these lines. But the reality is, you know, you can't have a real relationship with someone and hate their spouse. I mean, you just can't. I mean, you know, it's like trying to have a friendship with me, but you hate Jill, my wife.

Now, no one hates Jill. And I'm sure it's the other way around. People want to be friends with Jill and they don't want to be friends with me. But imagine that, imagine what kind of relationship would you and I really have if you were like, look, Donnie, I like you a lot.

I want to be friends, but I'm not into Jill. So I don't ever want to see her. You can't bring her around. I mean, and I'm nothing like Jesus. I haven't died to give Jill everything. I don't love her with a perfect love like Jesus.

I don't see her as spotless and blemishless like Jesus sees his church. I'm a sinful person. And I'm so far away from what Jesus does. And still, if you tell me you don't like Jill, me and you are not going to be friends.

Right? That's just how it goes. So you can't love Jesus and not love the church. Secondly, man, it is wrong to love Jesus. I'm sorry, it's wrong to love leaders more than we love Jesus.

[9 : 44] Right? We shouldn't do that. Right? We shouldn't love the leaders in the church, community group leaders or pastors or whoever. We shouldn't love them more than we love Jesus. Let me give you a great example of this. In John 3, 29, there's a really lovable guy, big crowd following named John the Baptist.

And this is what he says when he sees Jesus and his disciples going to join Jesus. He says, the one who has the bride is the bridegroom. All of his followers are going to start following Jesus.

And John says, the one who has the bride, he's the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, that's me, who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

Man, that just gives me chills. That's John the Baptist saying, you know what? I love when I see that people are more excited about following Jesus than they are about following me. Because I'm not the bridegroom. I'm rejoicing that the bride is meeting the groom.

Because that's what I'm here for. I'm here to introduce them. I'm here to bring them together. He points out something we need to hear, though. It's possible for disciples to fall for the best man or groomsmen in the wedding, to use an analogy.

[10 : 51] I mean, imagine the bride and the bride and the groom are separated. It's not the wedding yet. And while waiting for it, the bride falls for the best man. She falls for groomsmen.

I mean, these are terrible. And she's, these guys are so nice. They're so helpful. She begins to forget what her groom is really like. What I'm getting at is that leaders in the church, we have to really remember soberly that that's not our place.

That's not our place. We're not the groom. And the church loving me or loving any other leader more than loves Jesus is bad. It's very bad. Because, one, it's wrong.

And, two, it's going to disappoint the heck out of everybody. If they start loving me more than Jesus or loving another leader more than Jesus, you're only going to set yourself up for heartbrokenness and disappointment because no one is as good as Jesus.

It also is good for the church to remember our place. We're not Jesus. I'm not Jesus. And so, I'm remembering that. But, man, the church has to remember that too, right? That leaders aren't Jesus.

[11 : 50] We love you, but we're not Jesus, right? We're just not him. And sometimes you're going to get disappointed in us. And that's actually, I mean, we don't want to disappoint you, but that's actually an okay thing.

It's actually a good thing because in moments like that, it can make you go, well, you know what? I'm not marrying him, right? At least I don't have to spend eternity with him. I mean, you kind of get what I'm saying there, but that's really a helpful thing for us to remember is, man, we shouldn't love leaders more than we love Jesus.

A couple more quick ones. If you're part of Jesus' bride, the church, you are so loved. You're so loved. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. Jesus so loves his church.

He loves you. He sees you as perfect. He can't wait to be with you forever and ever. He wants to come back and take you home, and he wants to wipe away all your tears, and he wants to make it where you never hurt ever again.

I mean, you are so loved. And the moment the enemy wants to tell you that you're not, man, you need to remember, I'm part of his bride. He's coming back for me. He loves me. He gave himself for me. And then lastly, you know, with this illustration, I think it's just good to remember, we don't want to be like the bride who's dreading the wedding day, right?

[12 : 59] In this analogy, just consider that in a tragic situation, a bride is actually dreading the wedding day. She's come to love her singleness and her freedom, and she kind of likes being on her own.

Or maybe she really loves staying at her parents' house. She doesn't want to move, you know? That's sad. That's tragic. She loves this guy, and she just doesn't want to be stuck with him forever, you know, that sort of thing, man.

We've got to watch out for that. I think sometimes we can be like that. We wouldn't admit it, but I think some of us, if we were honest, we wouldn't want anybody to know, but when we consider forever with Jesus, we wonder, are we going to be happy?

You might have found yourself praying things like, Jesus, just hold off coming back for a little bit. I want to have some more fun. Because in our mind, the idea of being with him forever isn't fun. Imagine if a bride said that to a groom.

Can we just hold off on the wedding? I'm just having the best time of my life. I don't want it to be over yet. It's heartbreaking. You know, Jesus can't wait to be with us. And we're meant to be longing for his return.

[14 : 02] In fact, that's really how the Bible ends. I told you it ends with a wedding. It ends with the bride saying, come back. Come back. Listen to this. In Revelation 22, 17, the spirit and the bride say to Jesus, come.

Come. Come back. Let the one who hears say, come. Come back. And then it picks up this in verses 20 and 21. He who testifies these things says, surely I am coming soon.

Right? So this is back and forth between the bride and the groom. Come back. I'm coming soon. Amen. So be it. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. That is how the Bible ends.

With the bride saying, come back. And Jesus say, I'm coming soon. There's this. That's what it's meant to look like between us and Jesus. We wake up every day and we go, come back, Jesus. We're ready to be with you forever.

We it's like a bride waiting for a wedding day. And we know Jesus is saying, I'm going to be back soon. Right? That is incredible. And that's how Jesus loves us, the church. So in your discussion time, consider if you're acting like the bride who has fallen for others or if you're acting like the bride who's not really excited about our wedding day.

[15 : 09] Think about those things. And consider if you really lost your first love. And that's in Revelation 2. And think about, man, where is your love now? Is it solely devoted to Jesus?

Have you realized how he loves you? And have you forgotten that? I mean, these are just some of the things you can talk about. Have you found yourself enamored with leaders or preachers more than Jesus? Talk about this stuff and pray for one another and remind each other of how good Jesus is.

And we're really excited for that. We're praying for you guys to have fruitful, awesome discussions. We love you and we hope this has been helpful. Thank you.