

Session 15: Beginning the Journey of Bridal Readiness

I. The Invitation to Pursue Bridal Readiness

1. When the bride is made ready, Christ will return in a triumphal entry to the earth and ultimately into Jerusalem.
 - a. This final session of our Forerunner School class, *A Theology of the Bride*, presents an overview of the invitation to bridal readiness and six foundational pursuits which will start the believer on the journey toward readiness.
 - b. As Revelation 19 tells us when the bride is made ready in sufficient numbers, then Christ will return. Revelation 19:7-9 reads,

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God" (Rev. 19:7-9).

- c. Two verses later, the scriptures record Christ returning to earth at His second coming,

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:11-16).
 - d. We know from this and other passages that Christ will return to earth, defeat the antichrist and his army and ultimately establish His throne in Jerusalem. Moreover, we know that one major event which will trigger the second coming of Christ is the bride being made ready.

2. In Christ's first triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He invited His followers to pursue bridal readiness.

- a. The last few days before Jesus went to the cross are recorded in much detail in the gospels. The gospel of John tells us that Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem five days before he was crucified at Passover (Jn. 12:1-22). The gospel writers record much about this five day period of Jesus earthly life, and we can learn much from studying the principles recorded in the four gospel accounts of this brief time period.
 - b. For our purposes, we will focus on Matthew's account of this last week beginning in Matthew 21. In Matthew's account, we observe Jesus' cleansing the temple for a second time, His confrontation

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with the Pharisees, and several important parables, two of which discuss the bride being made ready (Mt. 22:1-14 and Mt. 25:1-13).

- c. Contained in all He spoke during that time, three themes stand out: 1) the exhortation to remain alert for His second coming (Mt. 24:42-43; Mt. 25:13); 2) the call to be found so doing what He instructed when He returns (Mt. 24:45-51), and 3) the command to get ready for His second coming. In this session, we will focus on the third of these exhortations to get ready for His second coming. Note these verses,

For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will (Mt. 24:44).

And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut (Mt. 25:10).

- d. During the last week Jesus would be with His disciples before going to the cross, He shared those things that were the most important and included in His exhortation to His followers was a call to readiness, that is, a call to get ready for His second coming and, more specifically, a call to get ready as a worthy bride for Him at His second coming.
- e. To make sure we understand clearly, when Christ returns, the bride will have made herself ready, and He will return riding a white horse as conquering King and loving Bridegroom. Those who will accompany Him on His triumphal entry at His second coming will be the bride who has made herself ready. In comparison to His second triumphant entry, on His first triumphant entry, He will ride on a donkey inviting those present to get ready for His second coming. He is also speaking to everyone throughout the centuries including believers to make themselves ready, with two of His parables focusing on bridal readiness. From the moment we are born again until we meet Jesus either through our death or His second coming, we must be pursuing bridal readiness.
- f. As you can see, there is a close connection between the bride actually having been made ready (Rev. 19:7-9) and the invitation to readiness recorded in the gospels. It is important that we are aware of the connection between the bride being made ready at His second coming and the invitation to make ourselves ready as His bride. We must be found so doing, that is, on the journey of wholeheartedly pursuing bridal readiness.
- g. With that understanding, we will devote the remainder of the session to six foundations for beginning (or if we are already on the journey, going deeper into it) the journey of bridal readiness.

II. Foundations for Beginning the Journey

- a. I have been focused on understanding the bridal paradigm and pursuing bridal readiness since the mid to late 1990's. In a way, I think of it as my life's call. Over that time period, I have discovered several lifestyle choices or foundational pursuits that are necessary foundations for anyone who wants to be made ready as a worthy bride for Christ and to become the eternal wife of the Lamb. We will devote the remainder of the session to these six foundational issues. I present them in no particular order.

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1. The journey toward bridal readiness begins when we completely surrender our life to Christ.
 - a. The scriptures are filled with the exhortation to surrender one's life to the lordship of Christ in which He leads and we follow; in which He commands and we obey; and in which we are His bondservant. Of course, it takes a lifetime to live out this decision. Nevertheless, the journey begins when we make this level of commitment to allow Christ to have complete control of our lives.
 - b. I want to make one point clear before continuing. I am not addressing here the subject of being born again. I will leave that for another place and time. However, I am saying that we will not begin the journey toward bridal readiness without this level of commitment.

The general call to surrender

- a. Several scriptures record the words of Jesus regarding discipleship and commitment to Him,

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Lk. 9:23-26).

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions (Lk. 14:25-33).

- b. In the above listed passages, Jesus made it clear that a full commitment of one's life is necessary in order to become a disciple of Christ. In addition to Jesus' and the apostles' general exhortations to complete surrender, there are also several New Testament passages and Old Testament types and shadows which speak of complete surrender in the specific context of the bride being made ready. Earlier sessions dealt with bridal readiness in Jesus' parables about the bride, the bride in the book of Revelation, and the apostle Paul's writings on the bride. I want to mention two more here.

The call to surrender in the book of Ruth

- a. The book of Ruth which we devoted an entire session to earlier in the class (Session 12) presents the story of a Moabite woman who follows Naomi from Moab to Bethlehem and ultimately becomes the wife of Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer. This beautiful love story portrays in type and shadow form the bridal journey of every believer from the land of compromise to ultimately being married to

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Christ. In the context of a believer's commitment to Christ, Ruth begins her journey toward becoming the bride with this declaration to Naomi,

Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

- b. When Ruth made this sixfold commitment to Naomi who is a type of the Holy Spirit, she lived in Moab, a land of great compromise. It was this declaration that allowed her to leave Moab for Bethlehem.
- c. Ruth's first declaration was "where you go, I will go." Like Ruth, we must commit to and live out the idea of, "I will go where You tell me to go, and I will do what You tell me to do." We are all faced with decisions from time to time to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In some cases, the decisions are easy, but others require major acts of surrender. Going where the Holy Spirit leads us is not just being open to geographical moves, it includes as the Holy Spirit leads going from secular employment to ministry; going to a specific event; and many other types of things. To pursue Christ, some are called to lay down jobs, abandon career paths for ministry, surrender personal comforts or pleasures, even placing Christ above the desires of spouse or family. Even though living out this commitment is at times very difficult, it is absolutely necessary to follow the Holy Spirit on the journey of devotion to the Lord.
- d. Ruth's second declaration was "where you lodge, I will lodge." When we say this to God, we are vowing to accept a lifestyle of waiting on Him. Even in seasons of silence when we can't hear His voice or in times of confusion when we don't know which direction to turn, we must wait. We decide that we are not going to do our own thing. We are not going to act on what we think or what we feel. Instead, we are going to wait on God until He speaks.
- e. Ruth's third declaration was "your people shall be my people." Quite possibly, Orpah did not follow Naomi because she did not want to leave her friends and family—even though they were involved in pagan activities. However, for us to develop a life of devotion to our Bridegroom, we can't emulate Orpah. We must leave behind any relationships that would ensnare us in a lifestyle of compromise and worldliness. When I first came to the Lord, I had to leave several friends behind. I was still friendly to them, but when they went to places that I would not go or did things that I would not do, we eventually grew apart. Pursuing Christ requires us to put Him ahead of all other relationships (Luke 14:26).
- f. Ruth's fourth declaration was "your God will be my God." To make this declaration real in our lives, we must forsake every god or idol that takes priority over our relationship with Christ. Most of us don't keep wooden idols on our mantle or burn incense to a statue, but we can make idols out of things like recreation, pleasure, jobs, and possessions. God wants us to enjoy life; but, when any of these hinder us in our pursuit of God, we must lay them down.
- g. Ruth's fifth declaration was to die where Naomi died. For us, this means that we must make a commitment to embrace the cross. The Holy Spirit will regularly take us to the cross to die to sin and self. Even daily, the Holy Spirit leads us to take up our cross. Moreover, from time to time, He leads us to encounter major issues in which we are called to surrender. Things like jobs, pleasures, or

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relationships. In addition, we are on many occasions faced with a decision of whether to act to love others. Often there is an issue that we must choose—do I do what I want or lay down my life in love. With many of these things, there is a death to self involved. Even so, we must “die where the Holy Spirit leads us to die”.

- h. Ruth’s sixth declaration was to be buried where Naomi was buried. Likewise, we must bury our life in surrender. Jesus said that a grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die—implying that it must be buried—in order to bear fruit (John 12:24). Explaining what He meant by this, the Lord said, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (John 12:25). If we want to be like Ruth and live totally devoted to our Bridegroom, we must surrender our life daily in order to follow Him fully.
- i. You can go to Session 12 of this class to hear more about Ruth and her journey. It really is an exciting one. However, here is the point for this session. You will not begin your own personal journey toward bridal readiness until you make this type of commitment with determination to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit regardless of the cost.

The call to surrender in the Song of Songs

- a. There is one more type and shadow I want to mention about surrender in the context of bridal preparation. This time we go to the Song of Songs. The Song of Songs records a love story between King Solomon and the Shulamite maiden. It is also an allegory of the journey of bridal love between Christ and the individual believer. About halfway through the book, the maiden says this to her bridegroom, “Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense” (Song 4:6). In essence, the maiden typifying the believer desiring to be married to her Bridegroom King is saying she will go to the cross for Him. She is telling Him she will surrender her life to Him completely to have Him. Immediately following her declaration, the Bridegroom refers to her for the first time as His bride (Song. 4:8).
 - b. Summarizing these passages, the bridal journey begins when a believer truly and completely surrenders their life to the Lordship of Christ to be His and to follow His leading for the rest of their life. Along the journey there will be failures and victories but the commitment to follow Christ fully must lead the way.
2. The journey toward bridal readiness requires a believer to develop a wholehearted and intentional pursuit of Christ *as Bridegroom King*.
- a. I mentioned a moment ago the maiden in Song of Songs committing to go to the cross for her Bridegroom King. It is interesting to note that one specific event that leads her to go to the cross for Him was that she received a revelation of the king as her Bridegroom as well as getting a glimpse of her wedding day with Him. Note how it reads, “Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze on King Solomon with the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of his gladness of heart” (Song 3:11). In this short verse, we see that the maiden gets a revelation of the glory of the King adorned for His bride on the actual day of their wedding. As a result of seeing this, she says “I will go to the cross for You”. A glimpse of her wedding led her to the cross so that she could have her king as her bridegroom.

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- b. The betrothed bride must pursue making herself ready as a bride for Christ in a radical manner. The betrothed bride cannot be lukewarm toward pursuing Christ. Every believer who wants to be the wife of the Lamb must radically pursue Him as her Bridegroom. Over my almost 40 years of ministry, I have performed a lot of weddings. One thing I have learned is that every bride is focused. Their wedding day becomes the most important day of their life. There is nothing that can distract them from getting ready for that day. I would say most are radical in their pursuit of that day. Every believer must be like that bride getting ready.

- c. The book of Hebrews makes abundantly clear the truth of radically pursuing the bridal relationship. Let's examine a few examples of saints of old to see how they pursued making themselves ready as a bride and the radical pursuit they lived by as they pursued the bridal relationship. To illustrate the radical pursuit of making ourselves ready as a bride, we will use the idea of the pursuit of the bridal city, the New Jerusalem. The Apostle John wrote, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready *as a bride* adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). Likewise, Christ is the focal point of the new Jerusalem. In recording this truth, John connected the new Jerusalem to the bride. Thus, as we observe saints of old pursuing the man Christ Jesus and pursuing the eternal city, we see that they are also pursuing becoming the eternal wife of the Lamb. Just as these faithful witnesses pursued their bridal relationship with the Lord, in a similar manner each of us need to develop the same faith and same attitude in our life.

Abraham left everything to pursue the bridal city

- a. Let's look at Abraham's journey to the Promised Land. When God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 12 to leave his homeland and come to a strange land, Abraham obeyed and went to what eventually became the Promised Land. However, his act of obedience involved much more than the search for a piece of land in the Middle East. He was on a journey to the eternal city, the new Jerusalem.

- b. At some point in his journey whether at the beginning of his call or as he went, God gave him a vision of much more than a piece of property. God revealed to Abraham the city of which the architect and builder is God. Read this passage from the book of Hebrews,

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; *for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).*

- c. The vision of the bridal city is what drove Abraham for the rest of his life to lay down every earthly possession and purpose so as to pursue his inheritance—the eternal city of God. When you read the story of Abraham, you see that he went through trial after trial. He made mistakes and sinned along the way. But he never gave up and never turned back. If it had been only a piece of land he was looking for, he might not have thought it worth the laying down of his life. But he had received a glimpse of the bridal city—the new Jerusalem. Because God had revealed it to him, he was determined with all that was in him to reach this goal, and he pursued it with radical abandonment.

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A great cloud of witnesses

- a. A great cloud of faithful witnesses have also pursued the bridal city in spite of trials, tribulation, persecution, and hardship. Hebrews 11 and 12 speaks of a great cloud of faithful witnesses who like Abraham went on their own personal journey toward the bridal city. Note these verses,

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, *they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for *He has prepared a city for them* (Heb. 11:13-16).

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; *for he was looking to the reward* (Heb. 11:24-26).

- b. Hebrews 12 reveals to us the reward that Moses and the other witnesses were pursuing. It reads,

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them...But you have come to Mount Zion and *to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:18-24).

- c. All of the great cloud of witnesses, whether they knew it or not, were on a journey to the bridal city, and they pursued it with radical abandonment throughout their life. They laid down their worldly possessions, their desires for this life, their ambitions, and their life in general to allow Christ to fully have control of their life so as to receive the reward of their inheritance—the eternal city of the new Jerusalem. They lived a life as follows,

...who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, *so that they might obtain a better resurrection*; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground (Heb. 11:33-38).

- d. They lived this way to receive *a better resurrection*, the resurrection as Christ's bride, and to experience the ultimate reward—to inherit the bridal city, the new Jerusalem.
- e. God is calling believers to pursue the bridal relationship with Christ with the same radical fervor as did Abraham, Moses, and the great cloud of witnesses. Rick Joyner wrote an allegorical book about the journey to the eternal city titled *The Path*. In the book, He compares the majority of the church to people on a cruise ship who devote their life to cruising up and down the coast with no real purpose or destination to their journey. In his book, he contrasts those on the ship with a few who

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wake up to the reality of the eternal city and leave the comfort of the cruise ship to go on a path through the wilderness toward the city.ⁱ

- f. Just like in the book, there is a real temptation for all of us to stay on the path on which we are currently—on the cruise ship of our life. It is easy to cruise in our relationship with the Lord without really pressing in to Him in deeper ways and into a more focused life, one focused on our Bridegroom King and on making ourselves ready for Him.
- g. Here is what the author of Hebrews wrote concerning the need to pursue the bridal city,

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).
- h. Believers must develop a lifestyle in which they *radically* pursue making themselves ready as a bride.
- i. Let us all choose to radically pursue our bridal relationship and the eternal dwelling place of the wife of the Lamb, the eternal city.

3. The journey toward bridal readiness requires a believer to accept the truths that they are loved, accepted, and righteous in the sight of God.

- a. Our Lifeschool class, *The Indwelling Life of Christ*, speaks of the believer having righteousness imputed to them when they are born again. The word “impute” means to ascribe, attribute, or credit something to someone whether it is true of them or not. Romans chapters 3-5 speak of righteousness being reckoned or imputed through faith to believers resulting in believers receiving at the moment they are born again, the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17).
- b. Because of this wonderful and essential truth, a holy God who hates sin can draw close to us even in our weaknesses, immaturity, and sin. In fact, when we come to the Lord in a truly born again relationship, we are justified. That is, we are treated as if we had never sinned. Of course, this does not give us permission to continue to live in sin, but it does allow believers to be accepted by God and into the family of God as a full member and experience God’s love and nurture.
- c. The journey of bridal readiness is one that will lead a believer from the legal position of imputed righteousness to the living condition of realized righteousness. If you will remember, Revelation 19:8 states that the bride made ready is clothed with the righteous acts of the saints. “Righteous acts” is actually one word in the Greek which has a foundational meaning of a “concrete expression of righteousness”. This is the goal for every believer—to express in and through their life the righteousness of Christ. However, believers do not have to wait until they actually express this level of righteousness to feel the love and acceptance of a loving God.
- d. Instead, believers are loved and accepted all along the journey of readiness, and, in fact, it is imperative that believers accept this truth in faith. Otherwise, they will always feel condemned and unworthy of God’s love and acceptance. Therefore, to go on this journey of readiness, believers must accept in faith no matter how they feel, the truths that they are loved, accepted, and righteous

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in the sight of a holy God, and that they can draw near to Him in worship, prayer, and for transformation.

4. The journey toward bridal readiness requires a believer to have faith that God will make us ready if we trust Him to do so.

- a. Revelation 19:8 states that “it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean”. When one reads this phrase as translated here, it suggests that the bride was *given an assignment* to clothe herself in fine linen. However, other translations and the meaning of the word translated “given” leads to a different meaning. George Eldon Ladd summarizes the meaning of this phrase in his commentary on Revelation. He writes, “While the bride must make herself ready for the marriage, her glorious raiment is not something she can acquire for herself; it must be granted her, i.e., given to her as a divine gift.”ⁱⁱ
- b. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon includes this definition of the Greek word used here: to give one according to his works, to render to one the reward of his deedsⁱⁱⁱ, leading to a common way Revelation 19:8 is translated, “And to her it was *granted* to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev. 19:8, NKJV).
- c. Summarizing this phrase, at this point in the book of Revelation the time for the marriage of Christ to His bride has come and the betrothed bride has made herself ready in full measure. As a result, she is to be given eternal bridal garments of fine linen. She can’t put them on herself, only God can do that. However, her preparation during her life and corporately during the church age has positioned her to be granted bridal garments. She has successfully made her wedding dress.
- d. We also see the idea of only God can make us ready in other places in the scriptures. For example, Paul wrote,

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

- e. Notice the two aspects of the journey toward maturity. First, believers are charged with the command to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling”. In other words, we must take very seriously the task of working out the righteousness that has been imparted into our spirit into our soul and actions. At the same time, we must believe that as we put energy and effort into it, God will be at work in us both to give us the desire to be made ready and He will also be at work in us to make it happen.

5. The journey toward bridal readiness is sustained when the believer desires Christ more than the world.

- a. A principle of life is that we will only do things over a prolonged period of time that we desire or enjoy. This is true in a lifelong pursuit of bridal readiness. Over time, we will focus on making ourselves ready for Christ when we love Him, desire Him, and enjoy Him. Many come to Christ because they fear the consequences of not coming to Him or they have such overwhelming problems in their life, they need Him. In addition, most people when they come to Christ in salvation

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love the things of the world just as much as they love the man Christ Jesus. At times the things of the world are sinful activities and for some they are not necessarily sinful but they are activities that distract us from Christ. This probably characterizes many believers. However, these reasons will not sustain a decades long pursuit of the Person of Christ.

- b. Only love, desire, hunger, and thirst for the Man Christ Jesus will sustain the journey toward readiness. Only a desire for Christ that exceeds worldly pleasures will sustain the lifelong journey toward readiness. We need the attitude of King David when he wrote, “You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever (Ps. 16:11).
 - c. The maiden in Song of Songs expressed this same desire at the beginning of her journey toward bridal love, maturity, and union with her bridegroom king. She wrote these words as she started her journey, “May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, your name is like purified oil; therefore the maidens love you. Draw me after you and let us run together!” (Song 1:2-4). With “wine” in this passage referring to worldly pleasures, the maiden begins her journey by telling the bridegroom king that she wants him more than all worldly pleasures and asks him to draw her to him. Prior to the beginning of the Song, something has happened in her heart which awakens her to a desire for her king that surpasses all worldly pursuits. It is this type of love that carries her through the good times and the hard times as she journeys toward maturity and full union with her Bridegroom
 - d. In a similar manner, we too must ask the indwelling Christ—the Holy Spirit—to produce this attitude in our hearts. Only God can do this in us, and He will do it as we ask Him.
- 6. The journey toward bridal readiness requires believers to develop a growing and deepening personal relationship with Christ.**
- a. Most who are taking this class understand the necessity of a believer having a personal relationship with Christ. The scriptures are clear on the importance of this. Luke wrote about Mary and Martha emphasizing the importance of believers “sitting at the feet of Jesus to listening to His words” (Lk. 10:38-42). This passage and many others declare the importance of believers setting apart time to sit with Christ with the scriptures and to seek Him with personal times of devotion.
 - b. The apostle John wrote in John 15 the importance of another aspect of a relationship with Christ, that is, abiding in Christ. Said another way, to remain connected to Him throughout the day and night. In other words, the scriptures call on believers to seek Christ and to remain connected to Him twenty-four/seven.
 - c. This is a crucial part of our relationship with Christ on many levels. I will mention just two here. The indwelling Christ, the Holy Spirit, is the leader of the journey toward bridal readiness. As the Spirit leads, we are to follow Him. As we do so, He will lead us to be made ready as a prepared bride for Him.
 - d. A second reason for a relationship from which we read and study the scriptures is that a we get revelation knowledge of the Person of Christ, His words, and His ways. From this, we love Him more and follow Him more closely.

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- e. It is only out of a relationship which includes seeking and abiding will we hear His voice, know His words and directions, learn of Him and His ways, and be empowered to believe and obey Him. It is my conviction that many believers miss the journey toward readiness because they don't take the time for Christ on a moment by moment or even a daily basis. Many believers go to church faithfully each Sunday but don't consider Him throughout the week. A lifestyle like this will hinder the readiness process and might even thwart it completely.
- f. Therefore, our last of our six principles is to develop your personal relationship with Christ and follow Him as He leads you toward bridal readiness. As you pursue this principle and the other five, the Holy Spirit will lead you on a journey of readiness. There will be many stops along the way. Some will be joyful and others difficult. There will be times when the Holy Spirit takes you to the cross to die to aspects of your self life and flesh. There will also be times of great joy as you see His hand of favor over you.
- g. Therefore, with that being our call, let us all join the journey toward bridal readiness.

ⁱ Rick Joyner, *The Path*, (Fort Mill, SC: Morningstar Publications, 2013), pp. 33-45.

ⁱⁱ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI., 1972, p. 249.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strong's NT: 1325, Granted, Thayer's Greek Lexicon, PC Study Bible formatted Electronic Database. Copyright © 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)