

There is an old story about an older couple having dinner in a restaurant. The wife sees another couple about their age sitting in a booth nearby. She sees the husband sitting close to his wife, with his arm around her. He is whispering things in her ear, and she is smiling and blushing. He's gently rubbing her shoulder and touching her hair. The woman turns to her husband and says, "Look at the couple over there. Look how close that man is to his wife, how he's talking to her. Look at how sweet he is. Why don't you ever do that?" Her husband looks up from his Caesar salad and glances over at the next booth. Then he turns to his wife and says, "Honey, I don't even know that woman."

☞ **Be the Church**

☞ Last week... **Church, we are the family of God. He is our father** who loves us more than we can imagine. We follow his example and show **love and respect** to each other. We put up with each other; we submit to each other; we work to understand each other; we encourage each other and we forgive each other.

☞ **The Church is; we are the Bride of Christ, Ephesians 5:22-33**

Now here's a picture of the love the Lord has for us and our identity in Christ.

☞ **John 3:29**

The bride belongs to the bridegroom.

When the love in a relationship is strong, this belonging is a good thing. We belong to the Lord. He provides for us and protects us like a good husband. Like a happily married man, he looks forward to getting together with his bride. He wants a close, intimate relationship with us. Now, men are flawed and there is no such thing as a perfect husband. But Christ ☞ is that perfect one. **His love and leadership for us are exactly right!**

Let's talk about the groom first...

v. 25 Christ loved the church

☞ He gave himself up for her = **sacrificial love**

The small boy had been consistently late for dinner. One particular day his parents had warned him to be on time, but he arrived later than ever. He found his parents already seated at the table, about to start eating. Quickly he sat at his place, then noticed what was set before him - a slice of bread and a glass of water. There was silence as he sat staring at his plate, crushed. Suddenly he saw his father's hand reach over, pick up his plate and set it before himself. Then his dad put his own full plate in front of his son,

smiling warmly as he made the exchange. When the boy became a man, he said, "All my life I've known what God was like by what my father did that night."

v. 26 to make her holy

To cleanse her with the word

(reading the bible is not just for information, but for transformation)

Stainless; wrinkle-free; pure; holy; blameless

In good relationships, we bring out the best in each other. Jesus sacrificed everything for **☞ us**. He brings more to the table than we ever could, so **he brings out the best in us** as we submit to his leadership.

v. 27 to present her to himself

This speaks of the lopsided nature of this relationship. We have nothing to offer him, so **he ☞ does all the work** to make us an acceptable bride.

☞ v. 29 He feeds and takes care of the church

v. 31 to become one with

That is Christ, the groom. He's the perfect husband to his bride, the church.

And now, the bride...

☞ v. 22 submit. That's our response to him. When we truly understand how much he loves us and wants the best for us, this becomes easy. It's easy to follow someone who always makes the right decisions. Husbands and wives notice this... never does the bible instruct the husband to force submission from his wife. It is a choice each wife needs to make on her own. It's the same for the church. Christ does not force our submission, but we need to willingly submit to his leadership and work in our lives.

All the things we've already discussed that Christ does for us and in us require our submission. He makes us holy... we submit and cooperate. He makes us pure... we submit and cooperate. He presents us to himself... we submit and cooperate.

☞ v. 33 respect. This means to show reverence and be in awe of him. It's easy to respect and submit to someone who always has my best interests in mind. That's who Jesus is!

An office manager was complaining in their staff meeting that he wasn't getting any respect. The next day, he attached a small sign to his office door: "I'm The Boss!" Later

that day, he returned from lunch to find that somebody had written a note over his sign. It read, "Your wife called. She wants her sign back."

We honor and respect Jesus. We stand in awe of his goodness to us.

☞ **Proverbs 31:10-31 The wife of noble character gives insight into our role...**

What kind of characteristics does the Lord find attractive?

☞ 11 Her husband has full confidence in her = we are to be **trustworthy and reliable**

To be reliable: Keep your promises; Under-promise & Over-deliver; Always do your best; Finish what you start; Be punctual; Be consistent; Take responsibility; Be honest; Show up.

☞ 12 She brings him good not harm, all the days of her life. = we **honor and praise Jesus**
Remember, he gave himself up to die in our place.

It is said that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once had captured a prince and his family. When they came before him, the monarch asked the prisoner, "What will you give me if I release you?" "The half of my wealth," was his reply. "And if I release your children?" "Everything I possess." "And if I release your wife?" "Your Majesty, I will give myself." Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. As they returned home, the prince said to his wife, "Wasn't Cyrus a handsome man!" With a look of deep love for her husband, she said to him, "I didn't notice. I could only keep my eyes on you - the one who was willing to give himself for me."

When we truly understand all that he has done for us it inspires honor and praise.

☞ 13 She...works with eager hands. = we are **diligent servants**

16 She considers a field and buys it;

26 She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

☞ = we are **wise**; we are **good stewards**

☞ 20 She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. = we are **generous**

Someone has said, there are three kinds of givers -- the flint, the sponge and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it. And then you get only chips and sparks. To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you use pressure, the more you will get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?

21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
25 she can laugh at the days to come.

☞ = we are **prepared**

☞ 22 she is clothed in fine linen and purple. = we are **righteous and royal**

25 She is clothed with strength and dignity;

Revelation 19:8 (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

☞ **The Wedding Ceremony reveals characteristics of the Bride:**

☞ **White dress – purity**

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Philippians 2:14-15

Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure...

☞ **Veil – modesty**

☞ **“Blushing” – innocence**

Romans 16:19

I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

☞ **Ring – covenant; belonging**

John 3:29

The bride belongs to the bridegroom.

☞ **New Name – identity and status**

Revelation 3:12

(to him who overcomes) I will write on him the name of my God

☞ **Preparation**

1 Peter 1:13

prepare your minds for action;

Titus 3:1

be ready to do whatever is good,

Matthew 24:44

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

☞ Loved by the groom

Song of Solomon 1:15

How beautiful you are, my darling!

Song of Solomon 4:9,10

you have stolen my heart... How delightful is your love

And then, after the wedding there is life together. In a good marriage husbands and wives just grow closer and closer; their love becomes deeper. Ultimately, husbands and wives become more and more alike. Naomi and I can often finish each other's sentences. Sometimes, one of us will bring up a subject and the other will say, "I was just thinking about that." Some couples, because of all the years of sharing life and sometimes imitating each other, actually begin to look alike. That's what's supposed to happen for the ☞ church as well. We are to **become more and more Christlike.**

Revelation 1:15

his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

Revelation 19:6

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters ...

Church, we are the bride of Christ.

☞ **Remember who you are!** You are **the bride of Christ!** He loves you intensely! He wants you to be pure and holy; a trustworthy and wise servant; generous and thoughtful; honoring and submissive to him; becoming more like him. Church, we are his bride! We are marrying into a royal kingdom. And he is full of love for us!

Before you go, remind those around you that God loves them!