Session 6

The Bride Makes Herself Ready

This session covers:

- The call to make ourselves ready
- The distinction between the betrothed bride of Christ and the eternal wife of the Lamb
- Three ways that we make ourselves ready

This session corresponds to:

- Session 6 of Understanding the Bride of Christ CDs

Called to Make Ourselves Ready

1. Out of the Father’s great love for His Son, He is determined to give Jesus a wife worthy of His majestic splendor and great sacrifice.

   - If you were searching for a wife for your son, you would not want him to marry a woman who was unfaithful to him—a woman who flirted with other men, who was captivated by other lovers, or who was deeply enmeshed in the world.
   - You would only give him a wife who was totally devoted to your son, who loved him faithfully, and who severed all ties from every compromising relationship. The same is true with our heavenly Father.
   - The Father will only give Jesus the very best.

2. The Scriptures tell us that every believer who wants to be the eternal wife of Jesus must make themselves ready.

   - Many believers mistakenly think that they have already made themselves ready just because they are “Christians.” Many believe that since they made a
decision to follow Christ, said the sinners’ prayer at the church altar, attend church every Sunday, sing worship songs, say “amen” to the pastor’s message, and are relatively good people, they have already made themselves ready.

- As important as these things are, they do not automatically make you ready as a worthy bride.
- Several scriptures confirm the need to make ourselves ready. A very important one is:

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).

- Another of these scriptures is the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14). Jesus begins this parable by saying that the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. As the story goes, the king sent out his slaves to bring people to the feast. First, he sent them to those who had already been invited but were unwilling to come. He sent other slaves to tell the people that everything was ready, but this group paid no attention to the invitation. The third group who was invited persecuted and even killed the slaves. Finally, the slaves went to the highways to invite all they could find. As a result, the wedding hall was filled with those who accepted the invitation.
- But an interesting observation follows. The king came in to look over the dinner guests and found one man who was not dressed in wedding clothes. The improperly dressed man was immediately removed from the marriage feast. Why? He had accepted the invitation, but he had not clothed himself in wedding garments. That is, he had not made himself ready.
- Matthew 24 records Jesus’ words to His disciples about the events surrounding His second coming. He tells them many things, but one statement stands out. Even though not specifically about His bride, He tells His followers in the end times:

Be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 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 (Matt. 24:42-44).

- Again, the familiar end-time theme emerges: be ready!
- One chapter later, but still a continuation of His message from Matthew 24, Jesus tells the parable of the 10 virgins. As the parable goes,
10 virgins were waiting for the Bridegroom to come for the wedding feast. Five were ready and five were not. Only those who were ready went in. Notice what Jesus says:

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 (Matt. 25:10).

- Once again, we see that only those who make themselves ready will be the eternal wife of the Lamb.

3. **In addition, there are a number of other Scriptures that allude to the bride making herself ready by clothing herself in white garments, fine linen, or wedding clothes.**

- In Revelation, the messages to the churches at Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea all refer to similar concepts, suggesting that only those who overcome will be prepared as a worthy bride for Jesus (Rev. 3:4-5, 3:12, and 3:18-21).
- In the Old Testament, several allegorical pictures from other books make the same point. The bride of Christ must make herself ready.
- Just like a bride in an ancient Jewish wedding made her own dress, we are called to make ourselves ready and “put on our wedding clothes” by living in obedience to the Holy Spirit.
- Revelation 19:8 states, “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.” In other words, the material of our wedding dress is the Spirit-led works that we do out of passionate love for God. Just like an ancient Jewish bride, we have to make our own wedding dress through our “righteous acts.”

4. **Understanding the distinction between the betrothed bride of Christ and the eternal wife of the Lamb helps us understand the need to make ourselves ready.**

- 2 Corinthians 11:2 tells us that we are betrothed as a pure virgin to Christ.
- From Session 2, we know that a young Jewish woman who was betrothed to her husband was referred to as his bride.
- Putting these two concepts together, we see that every born-again believer has been betrothed to Jesus and is considered His bride. If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are Christ’s betrothed bride.
- Nevertheless, Revelation 19:7 states that “the bride has made herself ready” by clothing herself in fine linen.

5. **Examining the two Greek words used to describe a “bride” and a “wife” helps us understand this difference even more.**

- The Greek word commonly used for a betrothed bride is *numphe* (noom-fay').


- *Numphe* is used to describe a bride or a young wife and is probably connected with the Latin *nubo*, which means “to veil” since the bride was often led veiled from her home to meet her bridegroom.¹
- Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines this word as “a betrothed bride or a young wife.”²
- John uses this word to describe the bride in John 3:29 when he writes, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom.”
- The Greek word translated as “bride” in Revelation 19:7 is not *numphe*; it is the word *gune* (goo-nay’). This word is used for a woman of any age, married or unmarried.
- Moreover, it is normally used to denote a woman who lives in a consummated marriage relationship with her husband (1 Cor. 7:3-4; 1 Tim. 3:11).³
- Whereas *numphe* is used in some instances to indicate a woman in a consummated relationship, *gune* is never used in the New Testament to refer to a betrothed woman who has not consummated the marriage bond.
- For example, when the Angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, he tells him, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife (*gune*)” (Matt. 1:20). That is, he tells Joseph not to be afraid to consummate the marriage with Mary, his betrothed bride (even though there were no sexual relations until after Jesus was born).
- Notice that the Greek word used for wife is *gune*—the word that is never used for a betrothed bride who had not consummated the marriage relationship. Also, keep in mind that Joseph was already betrothed to Mary. Therefore, from this example, we see that *gune*, not *numphe*, was the Greek word chosen to refer to a betrothed bride who will consummate the marriage relationship and live as the life partner of her husband.
- That is why, when translating Revelation 19:7, several translations use *wife* rather than *bride* to describe the one who has made herself ready; others add a footnote to make the distinction.⁴
- When we accept Jesus as Savior and are born again, we are immediately betrothed to Him as His bride, his *numphe*.
- However, the ones who will be the eternal wife, the *gune*, of the Lamb—the ones who will consummate the marriage with Jesus at His second coming and rule the nations with Him—are the ones who have made themselves ready.
- To summarize, Jesus’ betrothed bride must make herself ready to be His eternal wife.⁵
- Most of us will be given 70 to 80 years to make ourselves ready for eternity and ready to be the eternal wife of the Lamb (Ps. 90:10). What an awesome privilege and responsibility!

**Rising above the Multitudes**

1. **Those who want to be a worthy bride must rise above the lukewarm church and abandon themselves to Jesus.**

   - Esther had to leave her home to be selected as the queen.
• Ruth had to leave Moab to marry her kinsman-redeemer.
• The maiden in the Song of Solomon had to leave her comfort zone and follow the leading of her beloved as he cried out, “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along” (Song. 2:10).
• Likewise, we must arise from the compromising church and follow our Bridegroom down the path of preparation.
• In the Song of Solomon, the beautiful allegory of Jesus and His bride, King Solomon tells his beloved, “Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters” (Song. 2:2, NKJV). Throughout this book, Solomon contrasts his bride to the daughters of Jerusalem, who were the rest of the young ladies in the land. In comparison with them, his bride is like a beautiful lily among thorns: sweet, lovely, kind, and soft—not hard, prickly, and independent.
• Similarly, when we awaken to our bridal identity and begin to make ourselves ready, Jesus views us differently than He does nominal Christians who are content with a free ticket to heaven.
• Those who want to be a worthy bride must rise above the compromising church and make themselves ready.

2. Abraham’s quest to find a wife for Isaac is a picture of how we become the wife of Jesus.

• As Abraham grew older, he sent Eliezer, his servant, back to his homeland to find a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24). He warned Eliezer not to take a wife from the land of Canaan, but from among his own people.
• Eliezer questioned, “Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?” (Gen. 24:5). Abraham’s answer was a resounding no—“Do not take my son back there” (Gen. 24:6).
• With those directions, Eliezer departed to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, where Abraham’s extended family lived. The city of Nahor was a pagan city where the people worshiped the moon god.
• Eliezer took ten camels filled with gifts for Isaac’s future wife. When Eliezer reached Nahor, he went to the well where all of the young ladies gathered to draw water.
• Immediately, Rebekah stood out among the young virgins. She was beautiful and she was submissive. She willingly cooperated with Eliezer’s requests for water and even offered him a place to stay.
• In faith, Eliezer bowed low, worshiped the Lord, and said, “The God of my master Abraham...guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son” (Gen. 24:48).
• Eliezer then went to Rebekah’s home and asked that she become Isaac’s wife. She willingly agreed, and they departed for Canaan the next morning.
• This story paints a beautiful picture of how we become the wife of Jesus. Allegorically, Abraham is a picture of the Father, Eliezer the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit, Rebekah is a picture of the willing bride of Christ, Isaac is a picture of Jesus, and Abraham’s family dwelling amidst a pagan society is a picture of the compromising church.
The Father has sent the Holy Spirit to invite the compromising church to separate from our godless culture and become the wife of the Lamb. However, saying “yes” to the invitation is not enough. Like Rebekah, we must leave our ungodly environment, our friends and relatives immersed in cultural Christianity, and even the comfort of our own compromises to follow the Holy Spirit fully.

As we obey the Spirit’s leading, He will prepare us for our amazing eternal destiny.

How We Make Ourselves Ready

1. What must we do to prepare ourselves?

After awakening to the call to make yourself ready, the question naturally arises: “What must I do to prepare?”

To answer this question, let’s first look at what it is not. It is not doing more work for the Lord. Most of us know believers who wear themselves out serving the Lord and the church they attend. They are present at every work day. They volunteer for every activity. They try to do it all.

Don’t misunderstand. These people with a servant’s heart are a great gift to the Body of Christ because they help keep the church functioning.

Sometimes, however, people work like this to show the Lord they love Him and hopefully to be rewarded in heaven. But being made ready has very little to do with this type of activity.

The parable of the talents gives us some insight into being made ready. In this parable, which is set in the context of the end times, Jesus says, “Well done good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21).

Observe that He says “well done” and not “much done.”

Jesus tells the faithful servant “well done” because he was a trustworthy steward. He was faithful with what had been entrusted to him.

Three Ways We Make Ourselves Ready

Instead of doing more works, we are called to do “righteous acts” (Rev. 19:8), which are the accumulation of daily choices and decisions to love Jesus and obey Him.

1. Pursue an intimate love relationship with Jesus.

If you are married, think back to the time when you were dating your spouse. You wanted to be close to each other, and you were lovesick when you were apart. You desired intimacy with one another. In the
same way, as we pursue a bridal relationship with Jesus, we desire to hear His voice and enjoy His presence.

- The importance of an intimate relationship with Jesus is suggested in several of the Old Testament pictures of the bride.
- Esther was selected to be the wife of the king because she pleased him in the secret place.
- The Song of Solomon shows the maiden going into the king’s chambers, feasting with him at the banquet hall, enjoying his presence, and longing for his kiss.
- Hosea 2:14-21, a prophecy to Israel and a picture to us, shows how the Lord will allure us to the wilderness and “speak kindly” to us during intimate conversations (Hos. 2:14).
- The passage that most clearly reveals the importance of intimacy with Jesus is the parable of the 10 virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). In this parable, all 10 virgins received an initial supply of oil to keep their lamps burning. However, only the wise virgins who bought more oil during the Bridegroom’s delay were allowed to enter the wedding feast. The oil, hidden in the internal parts of the lamp, symbolizes a hidden, intimate relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit.
- How do we know that the oil symbolizes intimacy with the Holy Spirit?
- First, oil is frequently used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture (1 John 2:20).
  
  Second, Jesus tells the foolish virgins, who did not have sufficient oil, “I do not know you” (Matt. 25:12). Throughout Scripture, knowing is connected to intimacy—both physical intimacy between a man and his wife and spiritual intimacy between Jesus and His followers. So, Jesus was informing those who wanted to enter the wedding feast and become His wife that intimacy with Him in this life is an essential ingredient to being ready.

- Other Scriptures also suggest that intimacy is a critical part of being ready. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus connects dining with Him in deep fellowship and intimate communion as the key to overcoming lukewarm apathy and to receiving the reward of sitting down with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21).
- Another part of overcoming and being ready is returning to our first love (Rev. 2:1-7).
- All of these Scriptures drive home the truth that developing an intimate relationship with Jesus is a critical part of making ourselves ready.

2. Overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

- Overcoming every entanglement is another major part of making ourselves ready.
- Esther submitted to a twelve-month preparation process, which removed the impurities of her past, in order to be made ready for the king.
• In the Song of Solomon, the bride had to go into the wilderness of preparation in order to mature in love for her Bridegroom King.
• In Hosea, the Lord will send Israel into the wilderness to make her ready as a bride in the end times.
• All of these examples suggest the need for the betrothed bride to overcome.
• We see the need to overcome even more clearly in the book of Revelation. As we have already seen, Revelation 19:7 calls the bride of Christ to make herself ready,
• But in the immediate context of this verse, it does not say how to make ourselves ready. Why? Because Jesus has already shown us in Revelation 2-3. In these two chapters, Jesus calls the end-time church to overcome six different things.
• These are: 1) the loss of our first love, 2) trials and tribulations, 3) compromise with the world, 4) the influence of Jezebel, 5) spiritual slumber and apathy, and 6) pride, self-satisfaction, and indifference. To be ready, we must confront and defeat these six obstacles.
• Twice in this book, John promises great blessings to those who “keep...the prophecy” (Rev. 1:3, 22:7), meaning that we need to do as Jesus instructs and overcome the obstacles He mentions.
• Without a doubt, the greatest blessing that we will receive for keeping the prophecy is the honor of marrying Jesus!
• In addition, there is a call from heaven for the bride to come out of Babylon. John wrote, “I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities’” (Rev. 18:4-5).
• Later in this chapter, he said, “And the light of a lamp will not shine in you [Babylon] any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery” (Rev. 18:23).
• To be made ready as a worthy bride, we must come out of Babylon. We must separate from the ungodly influences of our culture and overcome everything that would defile or entangle us.

3. Grow in authority and power.

• Growing in authority and power is another aspect of making ourselves ready.
• Once again, we see references to this throughout the Old and New Testaments.
• Esther was granted the golden scepter—a picture of authority—to defeat Haman and his 10 sons.
• Eve partnered with Adam in their God-given authority to take dominion over the earth.
• Jesus said that the church will do even greater works than He did (John 14:12).
However, more than any other place in Scripture, the book of Revelation reveals the power and authority that will be given to the bride in the end times.

As the end-time Tribulation unfolds, Satan and all his demons will be cast to the earth and he will give his throne to the Antichrist (Rev. 12:9, 13:2). Multitudes of demons will also be released from the bottomless pit and much of the world will worship Satan (Rev. 9:3, 16). The saints will overcome Satan, however, by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and because they will be willing to die rather than compromise their beliefs (Rev. 12:10-11).

At that time, the praying church will defeat Satan and his antichrist system through the great power and authority that God will grant to His end-time bride (Rev. 5:8; Rev. 8:1-6). Talking about this concept, Mike Bickle states:

The Praying Church will overcome Satan and the Antichrist (Rev. 12:11; 15:2; 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). The miracles of Exodus and Acts will be combined and multiplied on a global level. Fear need NOT dominate our spirit and extinguish our faith. We need not fear the Tribulation as powerless victims seeking to escape it. Jesus wrote, “The works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do” (Jn. 14:12). End-time believers will engage in the prayer of faith to bind and loose according to God’s will. This passage [John 14:12] is fulfilled on earth in the Tribulation with a victorious Church operating in power.

Pursuing intimacy with Jesus, maturing as an overcomer, and growing in power and authority are essential dimensions of being made ready as a worthy bride for Jesus.

Beginning the Process

1. We must say “yes” to being made ready.

   - Looking at the church today, especially in America, most believers are not actively and purposefully making themselves ready as a worthy bride. So how do we get started?
   - First, we must say “yes” to being made ready.
   - Wade Taylor in his book, Unlocking the Mysteries of the Kingdom, writes in a simple yet comprehensive manner what it means to accept this invitation:

      Those who are making themselves unconditionally available to the Lord in every aspect of their being and life experience are
being made ready to participate with the Lord in the outworking of His end-time purposes. This requires our having a single eye in order to hear and respond to His work of preparation, and our spirit set toward the Lord, so we can obey all that is required of us. Only then will we be ready in that day to be lifted into a cooperative relationship with our Lord....This process will begin when we acknowledge our unconditional dependence upon the Lord, giving total, unqualified permission to Him to do with us all that may be necessary, so we will not only be able to sing this song [the song of victory recorded in Psalm 149:5-9], but also actively participate with the Lord in its full outworking.8

2. **To be made ready as a worthy bride, we must pursue God’s grace aggressively.**

- Every work of God in our lives is accomplished by God’s grace.
- Simply defined, grace is God’s power released into our lives to accomplish His purposes in and through us (2 Cor. 12:9).
- However, a false view of grace has crept into the church. The thinking goes something like this: *God is in control; therefore, He will work out everything He wants to do in my life. I will just sit passively and let Him do whatever He desires.*
- This type of passive attitude does not activate God’s grace in our lives. When we are passive, things rarely change. This attitude toward the grace of God is unbiblical. Instead, we should pursue God’s grace aggressively.
- We must aggressively desire change, aggressively pray for change, and aggressively make changes in our lifestyle.
- Realizing that we are helpless to change on our own, we aggressively cry out for God’s grace, and the changes we need will occur.

3. **The Holy Spirit is calling the end-time church to “eat the book” and to “keep the prophecy.”**

- Revelation 10:9 states, “So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, ‘Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.’”
- In Revelation 22:7, Jesus says, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (NKJV).
- When Jesus returns, He will reward us for studying His end-time plan (eating the book) and for overcoming whatever entangles us (keeping the prophecy) (Rev. 22:12).
- As we dig into the book of Revelation, along with other end-time Scriptures, and as we obey what is written, we will grow in intimacy with Jesus, we will mature as an overcomer, and we will have greater power and authority in ministry. In other words, we will begin our journey of making ourselves ready.
Let's begin this journey today by aggressively pursuing the grace we need to be transformed into a bride who is worthy of the Son of God.

Notes


4. The King James Version, American Standard Version, and New King James Version all use the word “wife.” The Open Bible adds a footnote describing bride as wife.

5. There is some disagreement on the idea that gune, as used in Revelation 19:7, should be cited to make the point that the one who would be consummated in their marriage relationship has made herself ready. The argument is based on the fact that the words gune and numphe are used interchangeably. Let me explain why I believe that gune refers to the wife who would consummate the relationship. The Greek word gune (Strong’s number 1135) is used in 223 verses of Scripture in the New Testament. In the King James Version, it is translated slightly more often as woman or women than wife or wives. In the approximately 100 times it is translated wife or wives, it is always used to refer to a woman living in a consummated marriage relationship and is never used for a woman who is not living in a consummated marriage relationship. On the other hand, numphe is used 9 times in the New Testament. In these nine uses, it is used to refer to a young woman in a consummated marriage relationship (Matt. 10:35; 3 times in Luke 12:53; Rev. 21:2, 21:9) and 3 times in a betrothed relationship (John 3:29; Rev. 18:23; 22:17). So whereas numphe is used to refer to a consummated relationship, gune (the word used in Rev. 19:7 to describe the one who has made herself ready) is never used of a betrothed bride. Also, the verse of Scripture where a betrothed bride and consummated wife are used together, gune was the word chosen for the one who has made herself ready. Therefore, it is my belief that in Revelation 19:7, John purposefully used gune instead of numphe to make a distinction between the betrothed bride and the eternal wife who has made herself ready.


Review Questions

True or False

1. The Scriptures tell us that every believer who wants to be the eternal wife of Jesus must make themselves ready.

2. We make ourselves ready by believing that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

3. The parable of the wedding feast teaches that we must make ourselves ready by putting on wedding garments.

4. Knowing God intimately is one way that we make ourselves ready.

5. The parable of the 10 virgins teaches that the wise virgins made themselves ready for the Bridegroom by pursuing an intimate relationship with Him.

6. Obeying the Lord’s words in the book of Revelation helps us to overcome the influence of the devil, but it does not make us ready as a bride.

7. In Revelation, the messages to the churches at Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea suggest that only those who overcome will be prepared as a worthy bride for Jesus.

8. Second Corinthians 11:2 teaches that every born-again believer is betrothed to Jesus as His bride.

9. The use of two Greek words, γυνή and νυμφή, help us understand the distinction between being betrothed to Jesus as a bride and being made ready as His eternal wife.

10. According to Jesus, believers who do not pursue intimacy with Him are foolish and they will not be ready when He returns.

Fill in the Blanks

11. The Greek word commonly used for a betrothed bride is _________________.

12. The Greek word used for a woman of any age, married or unmarried, is _________________.

13. The Greek word used for “bride” in Revelation 19:7 is _________________.

14. _________________ is the Greek word normally used to denote a woman who lives in a consummated marriage relationship with her husband.
15. Whereas ____________ is used in some instances to indicate a woman in a consummated relationship, ____________ is never used in the New Testament to refer to a betrothed woman who has not consummated the marriage bond.

Match the statement on the left with the appropriate way to make ourselves ready on the right (You can use an answer more than once).

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Possible Matches for 16-20

a. Pursue an intimate love relationship with Jesus
b. Overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil
c. Grow in authority and power