

*The Bridal Identity: Growing in confidence to draw near to Jesus as His eternal companion*

**I. REVIEW: JESUS IS OUR BRIDEGROOM**

- A. As a *passionate Bridegroom*, Jesus has loved us with complete abandonment, with all of His heart, soul, mind and strength. He has *deep delight*, *burning desire* and *unquenchable jealousy* for us (Song 2:14; 4:9; Isa. 62:4; Mk. 3:13-15; Jn. 15:9; 17:24; Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; Zeph. 1:18; Jas. 4:5).

***<sup>4</sup> You shall be called Hephzibah... For the Lord delights in you... <sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:4)***

***<sup>24</sup> For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deut. 4:24)***

- B. As the *Divine Bridegroom*, He possesses dazzling beauty of character and wants to share Himself with us. He is seeking friends who would be with Him from the place of abiding release His Kingdom. His unwavering love provides confidence for us to draw near to Him and pursue holiness as we overcome sin and temptation. Jesus will come for a prepared Bride that has matured in love as He loves.

***<sup>6</sup> At midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' (Mt. 25:6)***

- C. Bridal identity transcends gender (Gal 3:28). Men and women are both called the *Bride* and *sons of God*. The *Bride* knows God's heart in an intimate way; His *sons* inherit His Kingdom as heirs. For men, growing in our Bridal identity does not minimize our masculinity. King David slew Goliath; the Apostle John was called a "son of Thunder"—both were very masculine people while relating to the Lord with delight and affection. When speaking of the Bridal paradigm, we reject all sensual connotations to being the Bride of Christ.

**II. BENEFITS OF LIVING FROM OUR BRIDAL IDENTITY**

- A. *The primary reason we come to the Jesus is to enjoy His beauty*: His person and character (Isa. 4:2; 6:1-3; 11:10; 24:24; 33:17; Psalm 27:4; 45:1-9; 50:1-2; 110:3; Ezek. 1:26-28; SS 5:10-16; Rev. 1:13-20). Jesus' one desire was *not for an anointed workforce, but for friends who would behold His glory* (Mark 3:13-14; John 17:24; Mat. 17:1-2).

***<sup>24</sup> Father, I [Jesus] desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me... (John 17:24)***

***<sup>4</sup> One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek... to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. (Psalm 27:4)***

1. Many Christians only relate to God as a king, boss or friend—but not as a glorious Bridegroom, dazzling in splendor and power. The Scripture contains numerous descriptions of Jesus in His glory and power.

***<sup>9</sup> What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women?... <sup>10</sup> My beloved [Jesus] is white [dazzling, majestic] and ruddy [with deep affection], chief among ten thousand.... <sup>16</sup> Yes, he is altogether lovely. (Song of Songs 5:10-16)***

<sup>12</sup>...*And having turned I saw...*<sup>13</sup> ... **One like the Son of Man** [Jesus], *clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.* <sup>16</sup>...**His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.** (Rev. 1:12–17)

<sup>2</sup> *In that day* [second coming and rule on earth] **the Branch of the Lord** [Jesus] *shall be beautiful and glorious...* (Isa. 4:2)

<sup>3</sup> ...*In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You* [Jesus] *have the dew of Your youth.* (Psalm 110:3)

2. We gaze on God's beauty now by meditating on His Word, dialoguing with Him and responding accordingly. This is gazing at Him with the eyes of our hearts (Eph. 1:17–19; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 2:8–10; Ps. 27:4). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, He will transform us as we do this. In the future we will gaze on him with our natural eyes in our resurrected bodies with an increased capacity. We are given more then based on what we do now (Mt. 13:12; 25:29; Mk. 4:24–25; Lk. 8:18).

- B. *As His Bride, we relate to God to experience His love.* We don't come from mere duty, fear, or striving for something (Gen. 5:1; Song of Songs 1:3; 2:3; Psalm 45:2; Phil. 3:8). *Lovers of God always out perform workers.* Like an apple tree provides for those who sit under it, Jesus brings covering, delight, refreshment and rest to His people who choose to be under His leadership. Jesus stirs our inmost being like sweet-smelling perfume. Paul forsook all other pleasures and past achievements to experience the excellencies of Christ.

<sup>3</sup> **Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, And his fruit was sweet to my taste.** (Song of Solomon 2:3)

<sup>3</sup> ... **Your name is ointment** [perfume] *poured forth...Draw me away!* (Song of Songs 1:3)

<sup>8</sup> *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for* **the excellence of the knowledge** [encounter, experience] *of Christ Jesus my Lord... that I may gain Christ* (Phil. 3:8)

1. Jesus' love is more intoxicating than the pleasures of this world (Song of Solomon 1:2–4; 2:3–6).

<sup>2</sup>...**your love is better than wine.** (Song of Songs 1:2)

2. Paul prayed that the believers in Ephesus would be strengthened to experience God's love (Eph. 3:16–19).

<sup>16</sup> **that He** [the Father] **would grant you,** *according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...* <sup>19</sup> **to know** [experience] **the love of Christ** *which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* (Eph. 3:16–19)

3. Learning to relate to God in His beauty as He said, protects us from burn-out (anger), boredom and empty works as we put first things first (Luke 10:42). He told the Church in Ephesus who appeared fruitful with Christian work that they had failed in putting Him first (Rev. 2:5). He tenderly rebuked them but warned them He would remove their lamp stand if they did not repent (cf. John 15:5–6, 9)

***42 ...One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:42)***

***5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place... (Rev. 2:5)***

4. All the works Jesus did, he did as He saw the Father doing them. This came only from being with the Father. (John 5:19; 6:46; 8:38)

- C. Empowerment to live in whole-hearted abandonment. As we yield to Him as our Bridegroom, our love cannot be dissuaded by sin, pressures or adversity. At the end of the age, the Bride will cry-out with a love that only burns for God (jealousy). Our love for God will one day be all-powerful and comprehensive like death. No one can escape death in this age. Our love will match Jesus' love for us. This truth is amazing.

***6 Set me [Jesus] as a seal upon your heart [our hearts], as a seal upon your arm; for love [God's love in us] is as strong as death, [God's] jealousy as cruel [demanding] as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. 7 Many waters [sin, pressures] cannot quench love [for God], nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised. (Song of Songs 8:6-7)***

1. When we witness His love for us, we are moved to love Him in like manner (1 John 4:9; Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31–32; Mat. 22:37; Mk. 12:30). John took on this identity by describing himself as the one Jesus loved five times (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Understanding the love God had for him allowed John to give of himself to the point of death. This kind of love is only given by God but with what we have been given, we can respond (1 John 3:1; John 17:26; Rom. 5:5).

***19 We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)***

***30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. (Mk. 12:30)***

2. When we realize we are His inheritance we are stirred to wholeheartedness. Even in our weak love, we “lay up” treasure for Jesus that only we can give! (SS 4:16; 7:13; cf. Eph. 1:18; 1 Cor. 3:9–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–10; 1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 3:12–14; Rev. 4:10)

***13 The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you [Jesus], my beloved. (Song of Songs 7:13)***

**<sup>18</sup> ...that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...  
(Eph. 1:18)**

D. Confidence. We feel hopeful and valued as we come before God in our weak but sincere love as we mature.

1. The Devil assaults us with condemnation about our standing before God, so that we define ourselves by our weaknesses and shortcomings. When we agree with accusations against us, we distance ourselves from God and despair. We may quit pursuing the Lord because we believe we are unaccepted before God.

**<sup>10</sup>...for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (Rev. 12:10)**

2. The Lord relates to us from the lens of grace, seeing our sincere hearts to love Him, not defining us by our sins and shortcomings. He sees the moment we seek to obey Him and also the moments we gain victory over compromise and sin. He sees more than just our outward actions but the inward desires of our hearts.

**<sup>5</sup> I am dark, but lovely... like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. (Song of Songs 1:5)**

3. God wants to free us so we obey because we love from delight and security, not obey from fear (1 John 4:18; Rom. 8:1, 34–35). Although fear-based obedience is Biblical, some of the fruit it produces is not good.

**<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear... (1 John 4:18)**

4. When we don't live in fear or condemnation before God, we are confident to be vulnerable before each other. God has chosen that most of the time *healing comes through the Body of Christ* (1 John 1:9; James 5:16) and for *maturity to be worked out among believers* (Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:3). Our identity is found now in a new family, the Family of God (Eph. 4:4-6).

**<sup>16</sup> Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.  
The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)**

**<sup>4</sup> There is... <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.  
(Eph. 4:4–6)**

E. Transformation. As we listen to Him and agree with what He says about us, He transforms us into His image.

1. God transforms us by telling us who we are in Him and calling out the budding virtues of our lives *before* they mature (Eph. 5:25–27; SS 1:15; 2:10, 14; 4:1–15; Rom. 4:17). Jesus presents us to Himself. He bought us, He washes us, He then presents us to Himself on that Day. He is the leader and source of our spiritual journey from beginning to end.

**<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,  
<sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...  
(Eph. 5:25–26)**

2. In Song of Solomon chapter four, the Lord highlights eight character-traits He wants us to mature in but does so by *praising them in their budding state, not their fullness*. He does not reprimand us for our immaturity. (The virtues are: *single-minded devotion, dedication, developed life in the Word, godly speech, intimacy, godly emotions, our will to obey and our ability to nurture and empower others*).

***<sup>1</sup> Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair!...<sup>7</sup> You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you...<sup>9</sup> You have ravished [stolen, NIV] my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes... (Song of Solomon 4:1–10)***

3. When we see how our weak, immature love moves God, it brings freedom from performance, trying to be good for acceptance (SS 1:5; 2:14; 4:1, 7-10; 6:5, 9). God is looking for real love from us. *Sincere, voluntary and weak love is real love—this moves Him*. Each one of us can only give Him our own love—it's extremely precious to Him.

***<sup>5</sup> Turn your eyes away from me [Jesus], for they have overcome me. (SS 6:5)***

- F. *Provision*. Godly attributes take God working in us for them to grow (Rom. 5:5; John 15:5). God's grace transforms us, but transformation takes our participation. Paul said he worked hard, but it was not really Him but God's grace that did the work. It still took Paul's "yes" and resolve not to quit (1 Cor. 15:9–10).

***<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me [Paul] was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all [apostles], yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Cor. 15:10)***

***<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)***

- G. *Partnership*. This age started with a marriage and the next age will begin with one. The Garden of Eden was a prophetic picture of what we will experience with God in the coming age. Just like Eve was brought forth from Adam to join him in ruling creation in the Garden of Eden, we are brought out from Jesus *to partner with Him forever*, to rule over the new heavens and new earth (Gen. 2:21–24; John 19:34; 1 Cor. 15:45, 49; Eph. 5:30–32; Rom. 8:29; Col 3:10; Gen 2:8-10; Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35; Rev. 22:1-5; Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:10).

***<sup>32</sup>...I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:32)***

- H. *Preparation*. We are all in a *time of preparation* for the wedding (Psalm 45:10, 13-15; Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Eph. 5:25-27, 32; Rev. 3:4-5; 16:15; 19:14). Preparation includes "pruning" or "discipline" where God invites us to participate with Him for our growth in love (John 15:2; Rev. 3:19-21; Heb. 12:5-11). "Pruning" involves God removing distractions, cutting back opportunities so that our love can grow in fuller measure. "Discipline" addresses areas of deficiency that we are not in agreement with Him. He disciplines us because He loves us and wants to spare us the pain of embracing sin and it's long-term destruction.

***<sup>13</sup> The royal daughter [Bride] is all glorious within the palace... <sup>14</sup> She shall be brought to the King [Jesus] in robes of many colors [beautiful, righteous wedding garments]... (Psalm 45:13-14)***