

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

5



*Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;*

Revelation 19:7 (ESV)

*Any bride preparing for her wedding day has to see to many demanding details.
Yet they should not be a burden to her, but rather expressions of her love
for the bridegroom. As Christians, we have a glorious
wedding day to look forward to.*

David Watson

INTRODUCTION

One of the images that the New Testament uses for the Church is that of a bride in anticipation of her wedding day. The subtitle of this entire series is rooted in that concept. Consistent with that imagery, the Church as the bride of Christ has much to do in preparation for that day. In this session, we will focus on two of those things. The first is carrying out the mission that Christ gave the Church before His ascension, to make disciples of people from all nations. We call this the *Great Commission*. It is the primary vocation given to the Church to carry out as we wait for Christ's return.

The second, like for any bride, is preparing herself for the bridegroom. Paul had great concern that the Churches he wrote to should be prepared to be presented to Christ on that day. Holiness and obedience have corporate community aspects not just individual ones. This is not how we are used to thinking, but we will strive to continue to make progress in thinking of ourselves as a people and not just a collection of individuals. As you work through this session, keep in mind that though there are individual ramifications for us, the command of the Great Commission and the exhortations given to the Church as the Bride are given to us corporately as the people of God and not just as individuals.

Helpful Definition

ETHNOS - The Greek word translated as *nations* in the Great Commission. Emphasis is on ethnic people groups and not geo-political identity.

♦ **PRE-CLASS PREPARATION**

- 1) Read "World Mission", Chapter 6 from *Total Church* by Tim Chester and Steve Timmis found in the Small Group Readings guide that accompanies this study.

- 2) A large portion of the New Testament is made up of letters written to Churches by the Apostle Paul or, in the case of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the Lord Jesus himself. Most of these letters contain both words of affirmation and commendation as well as admonishment and condemnation. You might look over the examples from Revelation chapters 2 and 3 to notice this pattern.
 - If the Apostle Paul was to write a letter to TBC in our context in modern America, can you think of a couple of things he might affirm in us and a couple of things he might admonish us about?

 - How do you think our modern congregations would respond to the authority Paul often exerted in his letters?

❖ **GROUP TIME TOGETHER**

- 1) Watch the Session 5 video clips "Missions Exists Because Worship Doesn't" by John Piper, and "State of the World" and "What is UPG?" by Global Frontier Missions.

- 2) Read Matthew 28:18-20.

- What exactly is Christ commanding them to do in this passage? What is a disciple?

- How does the Church carry out this command?

*Missions is not the
ultimate goal of the
Church. Worship is.
Missions exists because
worship doesn't.*

John Piper

2) One of the word pictures the New Testament uses for the Church is the Bride of Christ. Look up the following verses and note what attributes of a bride are being emphasized?

- 2 Cor 11:2
- Eph 5:25-27, 31-32
- Col 1:22-23
- What do you see as the practical implications for the local Church if the members fully understand they together are the bride of Christ?

3) Share your thoughts from the Pre-Class Preparation question 3 regarding what issues you think the Apostle Paul might affirm in us as a Church in our current context and what areas he might admonish us about. Below are some categories organized around our Core Values. What might he say to us corporately about these areas?

- Surrender
 - Submission to Christ (*John 14:15*)
 - Denial of Self (*Luke 14:25-27*)
 - Moral/Doctrinal Purity (*2 Cor 11:2*)
- Community
 - Love for One Another (*John 13:31-35*)
 - Other Centeredness (*Phil 2:4*)
 - Unity (*John 17:20-21*)
- Mission
 - Making Disciples (*Matt 28:18-20*)
 - Global Missions (*Matt 24:14*)
 - Counter Cultural Impact (*Matt 5:13*)

4) Read the letter or letters you receive from Church leadership this week aloud in the group. These letters will be from people serving in roles of spiritual authority that know our Church. More details will come with the letter. Try and put yourself in the position of the early Church receiving such a correspondence. Spend some time discussing the content.

5) Close in Prayer.

◆ **DIGGING DEEPER**

If you would like to explore this topic in more detail *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* by G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim or *Let the Nations Be Glad* by John Piper (2003) are great resources.