

WE ARE THE BRIDE

Part 1 of CHURCH 101. Ephesians 5; John 14; Revelation 19.
Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. August 21, 2022.

I LOVE THE LOCAL CHURCH

My story:

The Bible teaches us two bedrock principles about the local church:

- The local church is the hope of the world.
- The best life is one fully engaged in the life of a local church.

In this series, we will study three metaphors for the local church:

- The Body
- The Bride
- The Building

The Bride metaphor tells us:

- We experience God's love in the local church.

NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS

What is the ultimate symbol of love between a man and a woman?

The Bible calls the church the Bride of Christ because:

- The local church is the best place on earth to experience God's love.
- There is no greater love than Christ's love for his Bride.

CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE

The context of Ephesians 5:

Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

The teaching of Ephesians 5:

- How should husbands love their wives?
- How does Christ love his church?
 - Verse 25: Christ loved the church.
 - Verse 25: Christ gave up his life for the church.
 - Verse 26: Christ saved and sanctified his church.
 - Verse 27: Christ will make his church beautiful.

CHRIST AND HIS WEDDING DAY

Jesus will return for his wedding day.

- The marriage customs of Jesus' day.
- Jesus referred to his return in terms of those marriage customs:

John 14:1-3 (ESV) Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

- Jesus' point was:
 - He is engaged to us in a marriage covenant he will never break.
 - We are to wait for him as a faithful bride.
 - Jesus will return for the marriage celebration.

Jesus' return for his Bride is pictured in Revelation 19:

Revelation 19:6-7 (ESV) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 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 ... Verse 25: ... Is not life more than food?

LOVE THE LOCAL CHURCH

NEXT STEPS - THIS WEEK

During the week, take some steps to reflect on and apply today's Bible teaching. Pick one or more of these questions to consider:

Revisit Ephesians 5:25-27. Read it a couple of times and prayerfully write down what it teaches about Christ's love for his church/bride.

Imagine the moment that Christ returns for his Bride (Revelation 19:6-8). What do you think it will be like to experience Christ's love in that moment? How will it be any different to your experience of his love now? What changed?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-4. Consider using more than one translation to gain a fuller idea of what Paul was communicating. Based on the passage, what are some ways you might become an unfaithful fiancé or fiancée to Christ? What are some ways you have found to stay faithful as you wait for his return?

Read Ezekiel 16:1-14. This is a picture of God's great love for his people, his bride. It's also behind the Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19 passages. This is a picture of what God's love has done for us in Christ. Prayerfully soak in this.

Meditate on the lyrics of this 19th century hymn by George Robinson and use its words to soak in the love of Christ for you and his church:

Loved with everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 1:3-5),
Led by grace that love to know;
Spirit, breathing from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so.
Oh, this full and perfect peace!
Oh, this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.