

Weekly Newsletter: 7th February 2023

Reflection: 7 Ways to Daily Communion with Jesus as the Bridegroom

By Joe Barnard

One of the marvels of the gospel is that it reveals Jesus to be the husband of the church. In saying this, we need to understand just how surprising this insight is. According to Paul, Jesus and the church are the ground, end, and fulfilment of what it means to be bride and groom. All other marriages are a pale reflection, at best, of the covenant between the Saviour and his bride. It is not as if Jesus is 'kind of like' a husband, and the church is 'kind of like' a bride. Something much more profound is true. The fullness of marriage is disclosed only in and through the relationship between Christ and his people.

Now, once we understand this, it leads to an important question: *what exactly does it mean to relate to Jesus as the bridegroom?* If 'groom' is one of the primary roles in which Jesus makes himself known to us, it is of great spiritual importance that we as Christians know how to relate to him and love him as his bride.

Here are seven ways that Christians can express their spousal love to the groom, Jesus.

1 – Keep Company with Him

In Song of Solomon, we read, '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' (2:3) As difficult as it may be to believe, Jesus does indeed delight in spending time with his bride. John Owen, a Puritan sage, once said that every day for Jesus is his wedding day. The statement is true. His banner over us is love.

Knowing this ought to change how we view our morning devotions. A quiet time is not just about recharging depleted spiritual batteries. A quiet time is about keeping company with the groom who is eager to spend time with his bride.

2 – Rest in and Delight in His Love

Little is more frustrating than trying to express love to someone who is unwilling to receive it. Hurting people often refuse a warm embrace. As an example, just think of how common it is for a troubled teenager to resist the loving gestures of a parent who just wants to bring comfort.

Such stubbornness is often seen in the spiritual lives of Christians. Jesus looks at his people and says, 'Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves' (1:15). We need to make sure that such tender words do not fall on deaf ears. To be the bride of Christ is to delight in the love of Christ. His embrace should be the bedrock of our joy and the pillow of our rest.

3 – Tell Him that You Love Him

Newlyweds do not tire of telling each other about their love. There is something about joy that is incomplete if left unexpressed. The happiness of love is sustained when, like a dance, two hearts circle- one around other- each taking a turn declaring its affection.

We need to see the relevance of this to our relationship with Jesus. To receive his love is to return his love. As difficult as it may be for many to believe, Jesus really does delight in hearing his bride express her devotion to him. In Song of Solomon we hear the beloved say, 'Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful'. We need to not shy away from such exclamations. Our declarations of love are a pleasing aroma to Jesus.

4 – Esteem Him above All Else

Psalms 45 is a wedding hymn. In the Psalm the bride is exhorted, 'Listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father's house; So the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him'. The idea of forgetting one's people and family is a picture of re-ordering the heart around a new object of love. This is exactly what the church needs to do with respect to Jesus. God has filled the world with a lot of wonderful things. But the Father desires his Son to be esteemed as preeminent above all else. For us, this means that Jesus, the bridegroom, needs to reign as the highest object of our devotion.

5 – Recognise the Gracious Provision of Jesus

All of the grace of God is purchased for us by Jesus and communicated to us through Jesus. For this reason, we can say correctly that Jesus is the grace of God.

Knowing this should inspire an attitude of humble gratitude in the church. Too often, our love for Jesus is soured by a spirit of complaining. We allow ourselves to think and feel as if the provision of Jesus is somehow inadequate. We need to see the ugliness of such an attitude. Jesus is a husband who provides perfectly for the needs of his household. At times, we may not understand his grace, but we can always rest in it. His love will never fail us nor forsake us.

6 – Keep Yourself Holy and Pure for Jesus

Chastity is a concept that the church needs to recover. One definition of chastity is disciplining desire for the sake of love. It is the work of chastity to check any passion that would compete with or defile the purity of devotion.

To know Jesus as groom is to jealously guard one's heart. The hope of the gospel is that one day we will see our husband face-to-face. That promise should be motive enough to inspire us to fear promiscuity and to confess promptly any lapses of fidelity.

7 – Be Faithful in the Small Things

The symptoms of a healthy marriage are not expensive date nights and fancy anniversary celebrations. They are much more commonplace. Simple gestures of kindness, gratitude, appreciation, and service do more to strengthen the bond of marriage than any grandiose display on Valentine's Day.

There is a lesson to glean from this for our relationship with Jesus. The best way to express our love to him is not to undertake long prayer vigils, go on mission trips, or make wild promises of asceticism during Lent. A better path is to show up regularly for worship on Sunday, to keep a simple routine of daily devotion, and

to take advantage of little opportunities to love a next-door neighbour. Each mundane act is a way of saying 'thank you' to the groom- and 'thank you' is a phrase he never tires of hearing.

Prayer Meeting – this week



The prayer meeting this week will be in person at the church at 7pm. Lorna Ferguson will be joining us to share more about the work in Japan and how we can be praying.

We will have a Zoom option available for those who want to join from home. The codes will be sent out as usual on Wednesday morning.

Mission Prayer Meeting

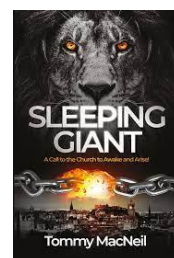
Our next Mission Prayer Meeting will be on **Saturday 18th February** at 9am on Zoom. Our focus at this meeting will be on the Holyrood missionaries (Lorna, James and the Sorsamo family) and to enable them to have time to share with us.

The following Mission Prayer Meeting will be on **Saturday 29th April** and will be for all our mission partners. This will give us the opportunity to hear an update on the work they are doing and pray together.

Book Group

The Book Group this month is on **Saturday 25th February** at 3.30pm and we will be reading *Sleeping Giant* by Tommy MacNeil.

Please note that the meeting this month will be at Sue Holloway's house. Further information from AnnCRIS (anncris@gmail.com)



Queensland Theological College

QTC had their thanksgiving and commencement service on Monday. It was wonderful to be able to support them through the Christmas Appeal and, if you're on Facebook, the service can be viewed [here](#). Gary writes, 'Thanks so much for all your support through these days.'

Church Barbecue – Save the date!

We've booked the Newlands Centre on **Saturday 17th June** for our annual church barbecue. Save the date and start training for the tug of war...

Raising Kids for Christ in a Confusing World – Saturday 4th March

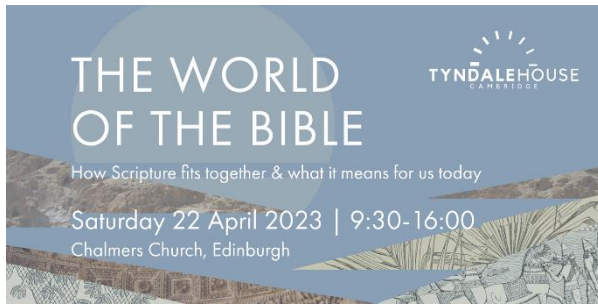
We're excited to have Mel Lacy (from Growing Young Disciples) speaking at our parenting conference on **Raising Kids for Christ in a Confusing World** on Saturday 4th March. The conference will run from 9.30am until 3.30pm and is free to attend.

Mel is one of the most helpful voices in the UK in terms of helping parents navigate the difficult waters of identity, technology, sexuality, and the basics of raising children for Christ. It promises to be a great day!

Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) to book and anyone is welcome to attend so please pass on the details to family or friends who may be interested.



The World of the Bible – Tyndale House



Tyndale House are having their Edinburgh Day Conference on 22 April 2023 looking at **'The World of the Bible – how Scripture fits together & what it means for us today'** It promises to be a great day of teaching from Tyndale House researchers. Take a look at the talks they have lined up [here](#). Tickets (Full price £15; Live stream £5) are limited and can be booked [here](#). Location: Chalmers Church, EH10 4AZ

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Monday:
 - Baby & Toddlers Group from 10 - 11.30am
 - Warm Space from 12.30 – 4pm
 - Youth Discipleship Meeting at 7.30pm on Zoom
- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm in person and on Zoom
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Home Groups



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