

Reconciled Bridal Relationships



RUN AWAY BRIDES MINISTRIES™

Participant's Handbook

Bible Study on accepting and learning how to be a Bride of Christ and how to build relationships with ALL Christians inside the Body of Christ--The Church. The art of receiving and accepting reconciled runaway brides of Christ back into the Church with grace. Learn how and why we must nurture Christian relationships with love and mercy between congregants and newly reconciled runaway brides of Jesus Christ. Leadership tips on how and why all leaders must build strong congregational understanding on valuing the returned brides of Jesus Christ.

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For information:

Country Barefoot Gardens LLC

Ada, Michigan 49301

www.bare-foot-gardens.com

Prologue:

Our Purpose is why (the reason) we are here but our Legacy is what we will leave here once we have gone. God put each of us in this generation for His purpose so that in cooperation with Him a healthy legacy meant for others will prosper and benefit them. We need not look beyond Father Abraham the father of our faith to understand the need and the value God places on Kingdom Kids' Legacies (Destinies) fostered in His heart and pressure-molded in His hands!

What shall I do with this temporary life that is quickly fading? No longer does the mirror reflect the youthfulness of my skin? My eyes need aide to see and my ears miss lovingly syllables spoken. My stride is shorter and my inhale longer. Where then as I travel life shall my earthly tracks take others that will testify to the reason of my earthly existence?

My memory fails not to remind me that once I was a lost and broken and an overlooked runaway bride of Jesus Christ. In the moment of shear jealousy for His own, the Lord removed the mountain of shame from my shoulders and took it upon Himself. In the kindness of one pastor's smile and inside the open arms of a loving sister in Christ, I in the gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit the love of Christ restored me and Abba Father called my name from the Throne of Grace.

I am Pastor Cyndi Higgins and I am a reconciled runaway bride of Jesus Christ. I can say the same as Joseph did in Genesis 50:20, "That which was meant to harm me is now being used by the Lord to save many lives." [Paraphrased by author]

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Genesis 50: 20 NIV

With the faith assignment of "Bringing back the Brides of Christ," comes the responsibility of mercifully and gently merging these beloved reconciled brides into the intersections of healthy and Godly friendships. It is not easy for these darlings to come back into the Church. Oftentimes, it is harder for the receiving members of the Body of Christ (the congregation) to accept them unconditionally. I pray that this handbook helps those returning and those receiving to understand that Christianity is not a religion but a relationship. The ultimate relationship is that between disciplined believer and Jesus Christ.

However, that intimate relationship produces a taproot powerfully rooting vertically and strengthening laterally the Gardens' life. A Church made of many persons forming the Body of Christ and Christ being the Head of the Church is likened to a 'Garden.'

*A **taproot system** contrasts with the fibrous root system with many branched roots. A persistent taproot system forms when the radicle keeps growing and smaller lateral roots form along the taproot. Such as Jesus said He is the True Vine and we are the branches. He is the taproot and we are the lateral roots forming (becoming) as we go connected one to another---I call this coupling such as the Lord told Moses to do with the Wilderness Tabernacle that the curtains had to be coupled together—each one to the other. This reinforcement of coupling the curtains together not only brought protection for the 'holy of holies' but also it brought power, strength, and perseverance to sustain the adversities of weather and of evil.*

As we continue living the Reconciled Brides of Christ's Legacy Lifestyle, lets plan forward for those generations yet to come until the Lord Jesus Christ returns for His Bride, 'The Church'. Our destiny is our legacy. It requires coupling together our spiritual and our generational children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren etc. Through the use of our God-given internal gifts and talents sustained by our external resources, this initial cause will effectively establish not only our own but many others' eternal rewards and treasures laid up in heaven. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Matt 6:19-21

I challenge all of us to live a Legacy Lifestyle!

Love Pastor Cyndi Higgins



Before we begin, let us agree in prayer:

“In Jesus Name, we thank you, Father God, for the doors you have and are and will open on earth, let us PRAISE YOUR HOLY NAME! Bless these brothers and sisters who have opened their hearts to your assignment to gather in the runaway brides of Jesus Christ and to those who are reconciled runaway brides. Bless them, Our Lord; in those ways that you know will give them reason to PRAISE YOU MORE than ever before. Put a testimony in their hearts and on their lips that surely the Presence of the Lord and His glory has fallen upon them.

Lord, stir the spirits and the hearts of men and women that will bring forth provision for the RAB ministry to go forward unto the ends of the earth. Give us we pray, Father, our daily provision and protection. Let the light of the Lord shine forth. Let there be no trouble for or with our families let the hedges of heaven guard them from above.

Oh God Our Father who is in Heaven let your Perfect will be done---And if we go about it wrong---cancel all we have said or done that would harm others or ourselves. We ask you Lord to protect any persons from harm through us---we do not want to be a stumbling block, but we want to show them that Jesus Christ is the Lord and the lover of their souls. That even though they have walked away, our Bridegroom waits for them. He has sent His ushers to bring them home to His love that has never died.

Oh Lord we pray in Jesus' Holy Name, that YOU overcome the workers for your beloved run away brides. We seek your direction, Father, on how we should draw near to those in need. Where shall we go and how shall we proceed to find those, Lord, lost and bereaved. Because of distance from the heart of God, their travels have taken them afar and they are brokenhearted and cast aside by the enemy of their souls. We ask you, Our Savior, to open their hearts of stone and brokenness. Melt away the aged pain that has caused calloused hearts.

We ask that each step we take will bring another runaway bride home to the Lord's embrace. That the words that we speak are of the words of Our Lord and we seek not to please ourselves but rather we choose to bring great pleasure and glory to You. Help us, Lord; to do what you say and when we are asked help us go out of our way. For there is no other just like you and we want others to love you, too. Help us Lord to gather your run away brides and remind them that for them you died. We want to share the Light of the world, who is Jesus Christ Our King. Blessed Savior, we need your blood to cover all things that are from above. We ask in the Name of Jesus Christ that all enemy strongholds be destroyed in advance of our invasion. Help us Holy Spirit to go into war prayed up and that all fronts the enemy is holding will be demolished by Your Spirit.

Oh Lord we need GRACE ABOUNDING for our troubled hearts and our weariness of body and soul. Although Lord of the Harvest the work is plenty and the workers and the provisions are few, we ask you Head of the Church, Jesus Christ to provide all that we need to bring in the harvest of your fields and glean every soul for Your Kingdom. In Jesus Name we pray, AMEN!



About the Author

Cyndi is the Founder and International Director of Run Away Brides International Mission's Ministries.™ She is both a National and International public speaker. Cyndi is the wife of John Michael Higgins. John is a solid man of God and a full time crop farmer in Michigan. Together they have 8 adult children and 23 grandchildren. Cyndi owns the business, Exams Express, Inc. a title searching company for real estate matters in Michigan. Only by the grace of God, did Cyndi Harper survive

complications at birth and a violent upbringing. Many would argue that it is out of character that a survivor of both childhood and domestic abuse would love, live, and teach peace as much as she does. Perhaps one needs only to remember the words of Joseph in Genesis 50:20, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Although not legally changing her name, many know her as Pastor Cyndi Higgins.

Before the January 2014 release of her latest book, "Run Away Brides—the Bible Study," she had through her eight children's books, under the name Cyndi Harper-Deiters, taught young children non-violent problem solving methods. Cyndi's successful writing and speaking career began immediately after graduating from the Institute of Children's Literature in 1993. Cyndi skillfully used Jonathan Michael the Resident Rooster, the books' main character, to teach children nonviolence and the art of peacemaking. Additionally, she wrote for young adults the Historical Fiction trilogy, "River Turtle."

Cyndi studied as a volunteer Mediator with The Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, and attended Jordan College. With her business education and experience, she changed her educational interest to literature, and child-development. She uses the knowledge gained by her variety of studies to communicate better through her books, recorded prayers, songwriting, lesson-plans, pastoral counseling, and public speaking. In 2007, Cyndi retired from full time employment at her company, Exams Express Inc. and entered into full time ministry.

Pastor Cyndi is ordained under Dr. Morris Cerullo of Morris Cerullo World Evangelism and Bishop (Dr.) Anthony Yeboah of Free International Missions. She is the Sr. Pastor of Barefoot Gardens Fellowship Ministries in Ada, Michigan (Grand Rapids). Initially her local focus was on the "Rejoice Freedom Recovery Program." She wrote some of the curriculum and lessons plans. However, today she is structuring and writing the curriculum and lesson plans for the International Mission's Ministry, 'Run-Away-Brides (RAB)' which currently covers the USA, five East African Nations, DRC Congo, and Nigeria. Other African Nations are waiting for RAB teams to establish local ministries within their boundaries. Her autobiographical book of a reconciled bride to initiate the cause and inspire run-away-brides to return to Jesus about her life is on her to-do list. With her God-given writing talent, she creatively weaves the beautiful purpose of life. She skillfully uses her God-given gifts and her experiences in introducing God's beloved masterpiece the human-heart, soul, and spirit. Through her use of love, compassion, and understanding in all her communications, the Lord has brought hundreds of runaway brides of Christ back to His embracing arms.

Reconciled Bridal Relationships

By
Pastor Cyndi Higgins

RUN AWAY BRIDES MINISTRIES

Bible Study for Reconciled Brides of Jesus Christ

Participant's Handbook

Dedication

To the BFG family and the RAB International family

It is your constant love, your tireless devotion to the RAB Faith Assignment, and your encouragement that keeps me pushing forward toward the 'legacy of love.' And

To all the: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelist, Pastors, and Teachers, Elders, Deacons, Workers, and all Ministers and all Christians let the words of Apostle Peter ring through our heart of hearts.

1 Peter 5:1-12 NIV

'To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. ⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. ¹² With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.'

STEPS IN THE FIRST CENTURY A.D. JEWISH WEDDING PROPOSAL AND BETROTHAL LIKENED TO HOW JESUS HAS PROPOSED TO US AND GONE TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR US

1. The Bridegroom chooses His Bride
2. The Bridegroom goes to her house with His Father
3. The Father of the Bridegroom does the "Bridal Price" negotiations with the Bride's Father
4. At the PROPOSAL is the bridegroom standing behind his father as his father negotiates. The Bride's father stands in front of her and her mother.
5. The fathers negotiate the price BUT the bridegroom pays it.
6. The Bridal Price "Mohar" is not the sale of his daughter, but she has been bringing in money into the household from her income and her father has to calculate how much he will lose when she is no longer a part of his household.
7. Once the price is agreed upon---THE Bridegroom stands on the right hand side of his father
8. A cup of wine is poured and the mother and the bride stand next to her father.
9. If she accepts the marriage proposal, she lifts the cup and she drinks from it.
10. Then the bridegroom pays her father the "Bridal Price."
11. IMMEDIATELY upon her drinking from the cup and accepting the marriage proposal, she is betrothed (married) to the bridegroom and she becomes the sole responsibility of His Father.
12. The Bridegroom gives her the "Marriage Contract" called a Katubah ---where He has written ALL of His promises to her and she can RELY on this contract. Oftentimes while he is gone preparing a place for her, she reads her marriage contract to comfort herself as she waits for His return. Our Bible is our Contract of Promises from Jesus—God the Word who became flesh---John 1:1-14
13. He CANNOT take her then; he must go back to His Father's household and prepare a place for her. He must BUILD her a house, BUT he will be gone for at least 12 months.
14. He WILL not see her, talk to her, email her, text her, Facebook her, THERE WILL BE NO CONTACT between them for at least 12 months as far as one to the other.
15. To know how she is doing and what her needs are during the 12 months, the BEST MAN (Bridegroom's Best friend) goes back and forth between Him and His Father to her to see what her needs are and how she is doing. John the Baptist was "The Friend of Jesus" John 3:29-32. Now, the Holy Spirit is our best man. He prays for us for we know not what we ought to pray!
16. The bridegroom does not know when He will return for her because it is His father who decides when it is time to send His Son for His Bride.
17. After 12 months, the bride begins to prepare herself daily for her bridegroom in case it is TODAY that He returns for her. FINALLY, she hears the Bridegroom Coming as He comes for her!

18. While he is gone preparing a place for her, she is going through her beautification and purification treatments such as shown in the Book of Esther. Ephesians 5:25-32 Tells us we are being washed with water through the Word, so that Jesus can present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle.... but to be holy and blameless. She is also preparing for the Wedding Supper, making the clothes and such.

19. At the Wedding Supper they will drink a second cup of wine. This is why Jesus said, He would not drink of this Vine again until we were with Him in His Kingdom.

"My Father's House has many rooms..." John 14:2-4

"I freely lay down my life..." John 10:17-18

JESUS IS THE CHURCH'S BRIDEGROOM—WITNESSES

PART ONE:

Jesus said, "In your own law it is written that the testimony of two is true." John 8:17

1-Jesus is His first witness, and calls Himself the Bridegroom, Mark 2:18-20

2. John the Baptist Calls Jesus the Bridegroom, John 3:22-30

3. Apostle Paul calls Him the Bridegroom. Romans 7:4 KJV "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that **ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead** that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

4. Apostle Paul says, "He promised them to one bridegroom (husband) Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:1-3

5. Apostle John is the 4th witness in Revelation 19:6-9 when he tells of the Lamb's Marriage Supper and we the bride has made herself ready. She has been granted that she would be dressed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.

WHY DID JESUS LEAVE US?

PART TWO:

1. Matthew 9:15 Jesus calls Himself the bridegroom and tells them "The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

2. John 14:2-4 Jesus said, "I am going to My Father's house to prepare a place for you. And that He will come back for us."

3. John 10:17-18 Jesus said I lay down my life nobody takes it from me, I lay it down on my own accord and I will take it back up again. This COMMAND I received from My Father.

4. John 8:27-28 "When you have lifted the Son of Man (crucified) up then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught Me.

5. We must be careful and remember the story of the ten virgins, Matthew 25:1-13, so that we are ready when Jesus Returns.
6. The last words Jesus spoke in the Scriptures to us is Rev. 22:20 ***"Yes, I am coming soon."***

HE WARNS US TO GO BACK TO OUR FIRST LOVE, HIM!

Revelation 2:1-5 "You have forsaken the love you had at first...If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON WE CAN RETURN TO HIM—He is waiting! Luke 15:11-32

BUT Let us NEVER be like the other brother---who was mad that his Father had thrown a huge Banquet because of his brother returning!

James 15:19-20 says we are to go after those who have left the Truth.

SESSION ONE IS CHRISTIANITY A RELIGION?

Session One: Part One

Question #1:

Is Christianity a Religion?

Christianity oftentimes referred to as a “Religion” defensively rebukes the claim in argumentative response. However, according to man’s understanding, its external expression broadcasts “Religion.” Articulated through individual believers, the Church, and denominational practices the Lord’s matrimonial ‘covenant relationship’ between God and man deteriorated from its intended love-union to dutiful-obligatory tradition. Practicing regulations to and before God as demanded by man makes religion! Practicing relationship with Jesus Christ—The Savior is what makes Christianity non-religion.

Background Check:

First Corinthians was written approximately ten years before the writing of the Gospels. Additionally, it came about twenty years after Christ’s ascension. During the absence of written instructions, it was common among believers and the Churches to rely upon oral transmissions of what Christ did and said. Even Paul states in this letter to the Corinthian Church in chapter fifteen under verse three that he, too, received oral teachings from others and he preached what he received to others passing it onto them. He makes it clear the foremost message in all of these things is that Christ died for our sins according to what God spoke through the prophets foretelling in the prophetic Scriptures. He not only died but they buried Him and from his grave He rose on the third day and appeared not only to the Apostles, but to others and in one setting He appeared to more than five hundred people.

Traditional Example:

“In a marriage relationship, there is authority from Christ to husband, and from husband to wife. This is basically the origin of these customs we have of women wearing head coverings, who far too often butt heads with each other, submit their ‘heads’ to the Head; God. Don’t you agree there is something naturally powerful in the symbolism—a woman, her beautiful hair reminiscent of angels, praying in adoration; a man, his head bared in reverence, praying in submission? I hope you’re not going to be argumentative about this. All God’s churches see it this way; I don’t want you standing out as an exception.” 1 Corinthians 11:3, 10, and 16. (The Message)

Jesus found Himself being questioned by others about traditions that neither He nor His disciples were practicing. These traditions had become the “Religion” that Judaism

established by God the Father was not. God did not found a Jewish religion. He purposed a relationship between Himself and mankind through Abraham and his descendants not a set of meaningless rules and regulations canceling the meaningfulness of God's love-union intentions.

Matthew 15:1-3 *"Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!' Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?'"*

In Luke we see that Jesus did not practice this tradition either. Luke 11:37-40, and 52 and 12:1. *"When Jesus had finished speaking a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. Then the Lord said to him, 'Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering'"*
"Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples saying, 'Be on your guard (first of all, be on your guard) against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'"

Paul acknowledged tradition BUT he also stated it was tradition not COMMANDMENTS from the Lord God.

Commentary:

"All God's churches see it this way." Let's take a closer look at what is happening today inside the Church of Jesus Christ that Apostle Paul addressed for the early Church. His investigative nature and understanding of 'the law' and oral traditions including those passed around about Jesus' teachings took the listeners to the heart of the matter rather than the matter itself. He begins by establishing the God-given hierarchy inside a natural marriage and the supernatural marriage. He explains the purpose of the custom in verse 9 and 10 that woman was created for the sake of man and since man is above angels, she is to have a symbol of authority on her head before the angels. However, he then states women are not independent of men nor are men independent of women.

Paul is an expert on Jewish culture, Jewish traditions, Judaism, and the Mosaic Laws. He tells us openly that he is a Hebrew of Hebrews born of Benjamin's Tribe. He even said in regards to the Mosaic Law, I am a Pharisee. The Pharisees were a legalistic and self-ruled group who strictly kept the law and the unwritten tradition of the elders."

1 Corinthians 11:2 *"I commend you because you remember me in everything and **you maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.**"* NIV

Therefore, just as Jesus addressed man made traditions with the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, Paul addressed traditions that developed after Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Although traditions possess merit, they morph from one generation to the next and alterations replace authenticity. Traditions create RELIGION. RELATIONSHIP causes prosperity in the 'covenant of a love-union'.

We must, however, validate oral traditions:

However, we must validate oral tradition, because that is how the Good News went from city to city, region to region and country and province to beyond the seashore. 95% of the population during the first century did not read or write. Paul spoke to Timothy about the ALL IMPORTANT NEED to be absolutely careful and cautious about spreading the Gospel Truth, spread it truthfully and accurately. 2 Timothy 2:2 "And the things that you have heard from me among witnesses, commit these (what you have heard) to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (___) added by author.

Without the written New Testament, they carried the Message of Jesus Christ's Good News through oral transmission. The Disciples and Evangelists and the Christians carried the Relationship Value of Christianity from house to house, city to city, region to region, country to country, province to province and beyond the seas. Lives were challenged and changed from the message of love. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. Love one another as yourself! Love, bless, pray for your enemies. Offer them more than what they ask for. Obey your governmental officials. Live peaceful and honest lives.

Through the covenant The Lord of Hosts made with Abraham, He actually established a love-union relationship that could not be broken because only the Lord entered into the covenant-contract. This covenant never saw its end because it is not the end it was simply the means (the Way) to the end, which is Christ Jesus. The love-union covenant we believers possess with Christ Jesus is endless. It contains eternal irreversible clauses which the Lord cannot break or change since it is against His nature to go against Himself. 2 Timothy 2:13-15 *"Here is a trustworthy saying; if we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also remain with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful, **for he cannot disown himself.**"*

Today we believers and followers of Jesus Christ are under a new love-union relationship with Christ Jesus. He calls it an everlasting blood-covenant. He entered into it without our consent so that our souls were marketable through His redemptive purchase. Before Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, our souls' wages were only death. The Bible says the wages of sin is death and since we are born into the original sin through the fall of

Adam and Eve, we all fall short of the Glory of God and destiny looked the same for all, eternal death and damnation.

Timothy, it is a relationship with Christ Jesus, Fellow Servants, and New Converts and Potential Converts.

What do you believe is the danger of either making, adopting, or practicing religious traditions not of God? _____

The danger, I believe of replacing the intended love-union relationship between God and man with man's traditions and/or regulations is counteractive and destructive. It breaks down the Lord's purpose and changes it from expectant bride status to slave/master status. When one becomes a slave to regulations and fails to uphold them, he feels humiliated and in some settings others punish him publicly to shame him. Some religions practice requirements that are man-made and not of God. Can you think of some? Let's work together as individual teams and see what we come up with. Then rejoin the group and have an open and lively discussion.

Investigating other Religions and Traditions and Regulations:

1. Islamic religion practices being called to prayer five times a day (called adhan). Each time prayer is required, a caller (called out by a muezzin from the mosque which has now been replaced by loudspeakers in the streets) calls out the prayer time. This call summons all Muslims to mandatory prayers. ***It is required.***
2. Judaism requires being called to prayer three times a day corresponding to the three patriarchs, the three times of temple sacrifice (tamid offerings) and the Biblical examples. These three times are accommodated by three prayer services offered on a daily basis. Most synagogues have a chazzan (cantor) who is a professional or lay-professional singer employed for the purpose of leading the congregation in prayer. ***It is required.***
3. Jehovah Witnesses practice filling their individual assigned monthly witnessing quota as part of their regulated salvation plan. Distributing as a loyal spokesperson their watchtower literature is part of their 'sacred duty', a requirement that they believe and teach is required to maintain their salvation for eternal life. ***It is required.***
4. Some Denominations practice communion is required and the people are to agree that the wine is supernaturally turned into Jesus' blood and the bread is supernaturally turned into his body [called transubstantiation] believing they are actually drinking his blood and eating his body.
5. Some Christian Denominations state smokers who do not quit will not enter heaven, because it is a sin. While such an activity as smoking can have harmful

physical effects, it is not listed in the Bible as an offense meriting damnation. Although the Word tells us our bodies are the temple of God and we would do well to take good care of it. Sexual immorality is the listed sin against the human body--that brings eternal damnation.

6. Can you think of religious traditions or practices or regulations that you know of? _____

CHRISTIANS CAN REJOICE:

“Christians can likewise rejoice in knowing that they are not responsible for earning salvation by adhering to an extensive list of regulations. While actions are a sign of a person’s saving **love-union-relationship** with the Lord, Christians know that it is faith in Jesus Christ that leads to salvation, (Romans 3:28). In this way, Christians ‘work out [their] salvation with fear and trembling’ by bearing the fruit of their relationship with Christ in the world, and always remaining humble in the awe-inspiring knowledge that God uses his people to accomplish his purposes, (Philippians 2:13).”

Excerpt from the book, “The Watchman Expositor---Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

By Jason Barker

Romans 3:28 NIV *“For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”*

Philippians 2:13 NIV *“For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”*

Group Discussion: Have a lively discussion about your answers. **Additionally,** did any of the group members come from a Religion that had specific requirements/regulations/man-made traditions that had to be practiced?

Session One: Part Two

READ 2 Timothy Chapter 2 (the entire chapter). Answer these questions as a group and discuss what you believe they mean for our lives as we await the return of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church.

CHRISTIANITY: It is About Relationships NOT Regulations:

1. You are a good soldier of Jesus Christ
 - a. He is your commander **Verse#**_____
 - b. Soldiers don't question commanders. **Verse#**_____ They do what they are told to do. The commander's objective is two-fold, destroy the enemy but keep his soldiers alive and safe, therefore, follow the rules. **Verse#**_____
 - c. Any soldier will tell you in warfare, you must share sufferings **Verse#**_____
2. Do not entangle yourself with the affairs of this life. **Verse#**_____
 - a. This pleases the commander who enlisted him as a soldier **Verse#**_____
3. Remember according to my Gospel (what you heard from me among witnesses) Jesus Christ, the seed of David was raised from the dead! **Verse#**_____
4. Remind them (the faithful fellow-servants who will be able to teach others also) of these things. Charging them before the others and the Lord not to strive (argue) about words to no profit. But to the ruin of the hearers (weaker believers, new, and potential converts) **Verse#**_____
5. Flee from youthful desires. **Verse #**_____
6. With those who call on the Lord (fellow-servants) with pure hearts pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. **Verse#**_____.
7. Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes. **Verse#**_____
8. Do not quarrel with each other, servants of the Lord. **Verse #**_____
9. Servants of the Lord must be able to teach. **Verse #**_____
10. Servants of the Lord must be gentle to all. **Verse #**_____
11. Servants of the Lord must be patient. **Verse #**_____
12. Servants of the Lord must correct opponents in humility. **Verse#**_____

Timothy, it is a relationship with Christ Jesus, Fellow Servants, and New Converts and Potential Converts. Timothy, you must live daily one through twelve above because Christianity is RELATIONSHIP NOT REGULATION. Timothy, if you do these things I have told you the result is love-unions with others all leading to Jesus Christ. These steps are necessary to having a 'real intimate' relationship with Jesus, the Church's Bridegroom!

"Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:25-26 NIV

Read 2 Tim 2:25-26 and describe what the result for others will be if we like Timothy can hold unto what Paul taught us. _____

BEWARE: 2 Timothy 3:1-5 *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God---having a form of godliness but denying its power.*

Have nothing to do with such people.”

* There will be those who deliberately try to make a relationship with you. They may seem godly but they are not. But you can know who they are. They take advantage of gullible women—women loaded down with sin---easily led away by ALL types of fleshly lusts (addictions, hang-ups, bad habits, self-indulgence Church tourists). You can identify them because they always RESIST the truth. They, both men and women corrupt minds. They always seem to be learning, but they are NEVER able to come to the knowledge of truth. They’ll not get very far because their folly will be clear to everyone. As far as ‘the faith’ is concerned, the relationship will be REJECTED!

Group Discussion:

Have you encountered people such as listed above? _____ What did you do? _____

Was it uncomfortable? _____ Are you still in relationship with them? _____.

Have an open talk with your group leader(s) and find out ways to handle severing the relationship(s) but maintain a ‘watchman’ perspective to help them when the Lord tells you to.

Session One: Part Three:

CHRISTIANITY: It’s About Relationships NOT Regulations:

Christianity is not easy like religion is. Christianity requires relationships with a variety of personalities in and outside the body of Christ. Religion is simply regulated routines. Following regulations and keeping order according to the regulations is far less internally and externally personal and therefore less intrusive. That is why so many people prefer religion over Christianity. **HOWEVER**, we have watched the deterioration of the Christian body of Christ with the on-set of ‘user-friendly’ practices whereas people don’t have to connect and become a member of a local body. They can easily attend assembling themselves together unnoticed.

As a Group discuss the above statement and write in your own words how you see this playing out in the twenty-first-century: _____

_____ Why do you think Christians (Brides of Christ) are drawn to this type of assembly? _____

_____ What do you believe the danger is for the individual Christian (Bride of Christ)? _____

Relationships require contemplation and consideration of others. Healthy Christian relationships are a requirement for every Christian. We are told in relationships, which are the center of our faith; we must always put the Lord first above everything and everybody. This is 'risky business' because our family members feel slighted. However, in putting ALL others before ourselves, we are not allowed to put ourselves first. Therefore, when we are pursuing Jesus we have to be in relationship-balance. We cannot deny our family's and other's needs to pursue Jesus. But we cannot deny our spiritual needs to pursue our family and other's needs either. Additionally, we must frequently assemble ourselves with other believers. What do you do to be in relationship-balance?

This is especially difficult for spiritual leaders. Therefore, the Lord told us through Apostle Paul we are going to have trouble. We will not get it right all the time, but we won't get it all wrong either. Paul said put on the Armor of God---daily! Prepare yourself that you as a Christian and a Christian leader will be persecuted because our faith is relationship based. The more you want to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus, the more you will be persecuted. But don't back-up. In the midst of evildoers and imposters and deceivers, continue in what you have learned and have been convinced of because you know those from who you learned it from.

Personal Questions: If you feel free to share your answers with the group or with your team you may. Testifying is necessary in the reconciliation ministry we are all called to. However, some people are too shy or not quite ready to share, so sharing is not required.

Have you ever been tempted to back-away from living a Godly life in Christ Jesus because it just seems too hard? _____ What happened? _____

What did you do to stay in 'the faith or come back to the faith? _____

Are you glad you did? _____.

1. Paul said to Timothy, look you know all about my teachings my way of life, sufferings, and what has happened to me elsewhere. But you know the Lord rescued me from all of them! Now from infancy (spiritual birth for some of us) you have known the Old Testament Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Always be ready to preach/teach the Word
2. Always be ready to correct, rebuke, encourage with great patience and careful instruction. All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant is thoroughly equipped for every good work. So just Go!

Luke 24:45. *"Then Jesus opened their minds [the disciples] so they could understand the Scriptures."* You may ask Him to do the same for you today and every day. Just maybe you have not because you have asked not.

Conclusion for Question #1 "Is Christianity a Religion?" NO Why?

Question #2:

What does Judaism have to do with Christianity?

It has everything to do with Christianity. *"Jewish Christians, also Judeo-Christians, were the original members of the Jewish reform movement that later became Christianity. In the earliest stage the Christian community was made up of all those Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and was thus equivalent to all Christians. As Christianity grew and evolved, Jewish Christians became only one strand of the Christian*

community, characterized by combining the confession of Jesus Christ with continued adherence to Jewish practice such as Sabbath observance and observance of the Jewish calendar, observance of Jewish laws and customs, circumcision, and synagogue attendance, and a direct genetic relationship to the earliest Jewish Christianity. The Term “Jewish Christian” appears in historical texts contrasting Christians of Jewish origin with Gentile Christians, both in discussion of the New Testament Church and the second and following centuries. It is also a term used for Jews who converted to Christianity but kept their Jewish heritage and traditions.”

However, as Christianity grew throughout the Gentile world, Christians diverged from the Jewish and Jerusalem roots. Jewish Christianity initially strengthened despite persecution by Jerusalem Temple officials. However, in time during the Jewish Roman wars (66-135 A.D.) and the growing anti-Judaism, it fell into decline.” Article by Alister McGrath, former Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford University.

The book of James is an example of a Jewish Christian---James the brother of Jesus Christ was considered the leader of the Church of Jerusalem and although he converted to Christianity, he also continued to practice all of Judaism as well. Read the book of James and discover it for yourself.

Judaism pointed to Jesus Christ, it was the means used to the end which is salvation through Jesus Christ. However, the end is not truly here. There is not end to those who believe in Jesus Christ. There is an end to the life as we know it here on earth, but life here is nothing compared to what is coming for us my beloved brides of Christ. Are you ready? Are you excited?

CONNECTORS:

In the Book of James let’s find some connecting Jewish traditions with Christian traditions [beliefs].

This book, the epistle [letter] of James, is the earliest *direct* evidence we have of Jewish Christianity after the Jewish War of 70 CE. The letter of James is a Jewish-Christian document. We can connect this to the Jewish Christianity of James and the Jerusalem Church.

The epistle portrays a deep sympathy for the poor and persecuted (James 2:2-3, 5:1-6), while at the same time criticizing the rich (James 4:13-17). This is again strongly reminiscent of what we know about the original Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem, where the term **the poor** was commonly used to describe the community.

James 2:2-3, 5:1-6, 4:13-17 NIV“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁹ Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high

*position. Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ² Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴ Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵ You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you. *Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."* ¹⁴ *Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."* ¹⁶ *As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them."**

Many of the details in James have parallels in Rabbinic Judaism. For instance, the *Tractate Avot*, (The Fathers) a collection of Rabbinic sayings from the second century, shares these similarities with the epistle: A collection of similar ethical exhortations, some examples: practicing what one preaches (James 2:14-26), avoiding perjury (James 5:12), almsgiving (James 2:16), avoiding jealousy and greed (James 3:16) and avoiding envy (James 4:1-5). These ethical exhortations are also in the 'Avot.' In English it is called the **Chapters of the Fathers**. It is a compilation of the ethical teachings and maxims of the Rabbis of the Mishnaic period. Because of its contents, it is also called **Ethics of the Fathers**. The Mishnaic period covered the years of approximately 10-220 CE. This period is also known as *Tannaim* and it lasted about 210 years, during Jesus' lifetime and about 200 years after His death and resurrection.

Notes: _____

Question #3:
Does He love me? Do I love Him?

Today's perceptible interactive relationships masquerading as intimate coupling only arouse the five senses and thus replicating the true spiritual state of our bridal relationship with Jesus Christ, the bridegroom of The Church. This is what we are going to investigate through a mutual discovery in the rest of our lessons.

SESSION TWO:

FALLING-----BEING-----STAYING-----IN LOVE WITH JESUS CHRIST

Falling-----Being-----Staying----In Love with Christ Jesus

Session Two Part One:

It should not be a shock to any society in the world that little girls grow up wanting to be married to a king. She wants to be a princess and marry a prince and eventually he will be a king. This is exactly why all the eyes of the world are captivated about what happens in the royal families around the world. It is the inner-spirit that has such a desire. A heart's desire comes forth from the innermost person---the spirit of man. The Lord gives you the desire of your heart." Psalm 21:2. Additionally the Lord asks, "But who knows the spirit of a man?"

Furthermore, it should not surprise you that most little boys, when asked, what they want to be, oftentimes if they know what a king is, they'll respond a king! If in fact, this kingdom desire for little girls and boys escaped them in childhood, look no further than young adulthood. Notice in speaking with teens when asked why they hang out with certain people, not the likely source of companionship, you will get varied reasons, but it all adds up to the kingdom hopeful love language.

Young women date guys that have kingship qualities. It has nothing to do with social status or if they are societal 'good boys---bad boys,' it is in their qualifying characteristics. We stuffy adults won't see what the young girl sees because we view others through our baggy (baggage) eyes. Nevertheless, these young men exercise the pseudo 'Jesus personality.' He may not look like it and to older generations, he does not act like it. However, she sees the 'knight in shining armor' that we adults cannot.

How is Jesus Christ the Lord returning to avenge His people? For sure, He is coming back riding on a white horse---"hello---must I say more?"

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God." Revelation 19: 11-13 NIV

If wanting to be rescued by a 'Knight in Shining Armor' or being the "Valiant Rescuer on a White Horse" sounds like you, then prepare yourself for your eternal spiritual-marriage to the High

Priest and King of Kings! _____

PROMISED ETERNAL HIGH PRIEST, JESUS CHRIST

And

PROMISED ETERNAL KING FROM DAVID, KING JESUS CHRIST.

Jeremiah 33:17-18 *“For this is what the LORD says; ‘David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Israel, nor will the Levitical priests ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices.’”*

Burnt offering: Voluntary act of worship, atonement of unintentional sin. In general, it expresses the person’s devotion, commitment, and surrender to God.

Grain offering: Voluntary act of worship, recognition of God’s goodness and provisions; devoted to God.

“In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father. And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.” **Hebrews 5:5-6 NIV**

1. Re-read Hebrews 5:5-6 now write in your own words how this proves to you that Jesus, The High Priest, is forever. _____

2. Please read John 1:1-5 and Colossians 1:15-20 and **discuss together** when did Jesus Christ begin? It was not at His conception inside the womb of a virgin named Mary. “

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:1-5” ¹⁵ *“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Colossians 1:15-20”*

PROMISED ETERNAL KING FROM DAVID, KING JESUS CHRIST

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” Revelation 22:16 NIV

3. Re-read Revelation 22:16 now write in your own words how this proves to you that Jesus, The King, is forever. _____

**Session Two Part Two:
‘JESUS THE HIGH PRIEST’**

God loves us (Jew and Gentile) so much, He said to the prophet Jeremiah 33:19-21 *“The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah; “This is what the Lord says; ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne.”*

His Mercy is CRAZY MERCY---His Longsuffering IS CRAZY LONGSUFFERING

Again in Jeremiah 33:23-26, *“The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. Have you not noticed that these people are saying, “The LORD has rejected the two kingdoms he chose? **So they despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation.** This is what the LORD says; ‘If I have not made my covenant with day and night and established the laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them (and bring them back from captivity).***

Believe it or not you and I were captives and we had to be set free by the only one that could set us free. Jesus said He came to set us free. Free from what?

1. Read Isaiah 61:1-3 NIV *“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.”*

2. Now Read Luke 4:16-30: Who wrote this book of the Bible? _____
Of course, all the authors wrote these books under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶ *“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim*

freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn't this Joseph's son?” they asked. ²³ Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

²⁴ “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.”

3. What is similar? _____

4. What did Jesus add when He read Luke 4:21? _____

5. Why did that upset the listeners? _____

6. Who was Jesus implying He was? _____ It was prophesied in Isaiah 42:1-7 (one of many places Jesus' coming is prophesied in the Bible). 7. Read Psalm 22:16-18. Who is talking in this Scripture? _____

“Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.”

8. In your own words, tell when this prophecy was fulfilled?

9. What Scriptures in the Gospel(s) fulfill this prophecy?

10. Who wrote the book of Isaiah? _____

11. When was it written? _____

(TIP) Look in the introduction of Isaiah and it will tell you when it was written) **Facts:** During B.C.E. = Before Common Era, the years went backwards and most times we say just B.C. (we make it easy by saying BC=Before Christ, however that is inaccurate). We also say A.D. means after death referring to the Savior's death---not so, Jesus was born in 6/5 B.C.E. Meaning it was approximately 24 A.D. when He began to preach and it was between the years 27-28 A.D. when He was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead and returned back to the Father, whence He came from. Therefore, 2014 is not two thousand thirteen years since Jesus died. It has been approximately One Thousand Nine hundred and eighty-six years since He died, was buried, and rose from His grave and went back to Heaven and now sits as our King, High Priest, and Lord--ever interceding for us---that is your math lesson for today. Isaiah prophesized Jesus' first coming 735-736 years before He came.

1.) Is Jesus a High Priest?

The answer is yes. Thirteen times Christ is called or referred to as our "High Priest" in Hebrews of the New Testament: Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5-10; 6:20; 7:26-28; 8:1; 8:11; 8:25; 10:21; 13:11. The Church's Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is the only high priest that is forever. All the other high priests were men and in time they died and according to the law the position passed down to his descendants. See Exodus 27:21 ²¹*In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.* AND Exodus 28:43 ⁴³*Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the tent of meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. "This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants."* However, God the Father calls Jesus Christ "A Priest FOREVER."

"So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him; 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you;,' as he says also in another place, 'You are a priest forever,' according to the order of Melchizedek. Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He entered once for all into the Holy Place (the greater and perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

*So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him!***

Hebrews 5:5-6, 7:23-26, 9:12-11(b), 10:19-23, and 9:28 NRSV

2.) How many brides does Jesus Christ have?

The answer is one. The high priest according to Leviticus 21:13-15 could only have one wife, therefore the high priest is monogamous and so were many of the Old Testament leaders. Although Old Testament Jewish law allowed polygamy, it was the exception and not the rule. The Scriptures in Leviticus chapters deal with the rules of the priests. By Mosaic Law given by God Almighty it states very clearly 21:13-15 NIV *“The woman he (high priest) marries must be a virgin. He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, so that he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the LORD, who makes him holy.”*

(_____) added by author

Revelation 22:17, 21:9-10, 21:2-5, 21:27, 22:6, 22:1-2, 22:12-14, 22:20 NIV

“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”

“He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations.”

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life

and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexual immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

*“He who testifies to these things says,
“Yes, I am coming soon.”*

The New Holy City Jerusalem as it shines with the glory of God and its brilliance is that of a very precious jewel like jasper, clear as crystal with its great high wall and its twelve gates is not the Bride of Christ. The residents are the bride of Christ. Jesus is not marrying walls, streets, gates, and foundations of the city of the New Jerusalem even though it is built with every kind of precious stone and pearls and pure gold and ever so much more as told to us in Revelation 21. New Jerusalem is going to be the home of His bride, The Church.

Write in your own words by reading Revelation Chapter 21 how it makes you feel knowing your eternal life is lived in such amazing beauty.

Let us consider how we know, Jesus’s bride is not the “New City of Jerusalem, but rather the Residents of the New City of Jerusalem.

Examples: In America we call Las Vegas, sin city. Is it the streets, the buildings, the sewage and water systems, the infrastructure itself that sins? No, it is the residents and the visitors who practice sin. The Lord told Abraham that He had come down Himself to investigate the complaints of His people about the wretchedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. *“Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” “The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing---to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” The Lord said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”* **Genesis 18:20-26 NIV**

Was it the city of walls, buildings, and streets of Sodom sinning? No it was the residents of Sodom. The two angels that went into Sodom (Genesis 19) told Lot to get every family member of his in the city that belonged to him and take them out of the city of Sodom. WHY? *“Because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord **against its people** is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.” Genesis 19:13.*

A well-known evangelist by invitation from the mayor of the City of Las Vegas went to “Sin City,” and preached to thousands in a huge auditorium. Her plane was met by the then owner of Caesar Palace, and he accompanied her in his limousine and showed her many of the city’s sites. When the New York media asked her, “How can you go to Sin City and be with those people?” She comically but truthfully answered somewhat like this, “You must be referring to where it is I just left, New York City.” She then explained to them, the city is not the sinner. The sinners are the residents, the visitors; the people in the cities and every city in the entire world is filled with sinner residents.

Apostle Paul said, *“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to knowledge of truth. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” 2 Timothy 2:24-25 and Romans 3:23.*

Therefore, we can better understand that the Lord’s Bride is the Residents of His Glorious New Holy City, Jerusalem. Those residents are the blessed ones ***who washed their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. This is a profound mystery---but I am talking about Christ and the Church.***” Revelation 22:14 and Ephesians 5:25-27 and 5:32

- a. Are we each individually a bride of Christ? _____
- b. “The _____ of Jesus Christ” is His bride.
- c. The _____ make up the body of Christ which is the Church
- d. We can safely say then that _____ believer is a _____ of the Universally Church of Jesus Christ; therefore, we are individually and collectively the Bride of Jesus Christ.

For a further study on this, ‘The Bride of Christ’, you may study out the following Scripture: Revelation 21:9-11, Revelation 21:27, Isaiah 52:1, Joel 3:17, Revelation 21:1-4, Revelation 22:14 and 22:16, and 3:5.

Answers: a. yes; b. Church; c. people; d. each---member.

Session Two Part Three:

The conditions of the high priest's bride According to God's Law (Mosaic Law)

3.) The conditions of the high priest's bride are very strict as we can see from Leviticus 21:13-15, she MUST be a virgin and she MUST be from his own people. Paul calls the Church/the saints, the promised bride to one husband, Christ Jesus, in his letter to the believers at the Church of Corinth and the Christians throughout Achaia (the Roman province comprising all of Greece south of Macedonia). 2 *Corinthians* 11:2 NIV "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." Paul takes the position of their spiritual father as he so calls them his children in 6:13 he wrote, "As a fair exchange---I speak as to my children---open wide your hearts also."

a. **Points: Kindred, Virginity, and Love Grows:** Marriage Customs during Jesus' time on earth oftentimes included 'arranged marriages.' This in Aramaic is called "Shiddukhin" meaning tranquility. Young couples rarely chose their spouse, therefore marriage came first and then their love grew for each other through time. Marriages were arranged, if possible, with members of one's own kin. Rebekah who is the granddaughter of Abraham's brother, Nahor, became Isaac's wife.

Genesis 24:4 NRSV "Go to my country," Abraham said to his servant, "and to my kindred and get a wife for my son Isaac." ALWAYS REMEMBER JESUS SAID I CHOSE YOU, YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME!"

FIND THE VERSE TOGETHER AS A GROUP: _____ WRITE IT OUT

_____ (John 15:16-17) NOW START BELIEVING IT! And do not let the enemy steal this from you, again.

b. **Points: Bridegroom's Friend, Mohar Price, Bridegroom's Father, and Payment:** Either the bridegroom's father or his representative oftentimes being a friend of the bridegroom negotiated on behalf of the prospective bridegroom with the bride's father or a representative of the bride's father the arrangement. The 'mohar' [bride's price or work compensation] to the bride's family and a dowry had to be agreed upon and paid to the bride's father. He could use the interest from the dowry but could not spend it (Genesis 31:15) as it was kept in a trust for the bride in case she was ever widowed or divorced. Mohar also called the dowry or bride's price was due to the Jewish understanding that each family member worked and brought the earnings back to the entire household to be used collectively. Now, with a

daughter gone, so would her financial contribution to her family be gone. Genesis 24:10 and 53)

- c. **Points: Shared cup of wine, Bridegroom Prepares, and The Bride Prepares:** Once the arrangement is agreed upon with the contract (Katubah which means the writing) signed and given to the bride, only death of either of them or a divorce (by him) broke the betrothal contract. The Betrothal is binding and permanent and follows the marriage arrangement. A shared cup of wine between bridegroom and bride sealed the betrothal. The betrothal period in Jewish marriage custom is called the “Kiddushin” coming from the Hebrew word meaning ‘sanctified or set apart.’ Betrothals lasted at least twelve-months giving the bridegroom time to prepare the home for his bride. The bride used this time to prepare the wedding clothes, begins the purifying and beautification process [Esther 2:12] and her parents prepared for the wedding festivities. {Accepting the Salvation call is saying ‘yes’ to the proposal}.
 - d. **Point: The written contract:** “The Katubah” is and was the only written contract that the bride had to guarantee that her bridegroom was coming back to get her for the ‘wedding day.’ Without a Katubah she had no proof of his intentions and the promises and the terms he offered that she had accepted. Therefore, a written agreement called the Katubah promised his return to his bride. She kept the Katubah with her during the betrothal period and she possibly read it many times reminding her and assuring her that he would return for her. {The Bible is the believer’s (brides of Christ) contract}.
 - e. **Point: The Second Cup of Wine:** *The Wedding* includes the sharing of a second cup of wine between the bridegroom and the bride. This wine is called ‘The cup of Joy’ which symbolized the completion of the agreed upon marriage. {*Jesus said He would not drink from the fruit of the vine again until the disciples were with Him at His Father’s Table.*}
-

BREAKING DOWN THE JEWISH MARRIAGE CUSTOMS WHICH JESUS DESCRIBED IN HIS WRITTEN WORD TO PURCHASE, BETROTH, PROMISE, AND FULFILL FOR US!

Points: Kindred and Virginity:

- f. **Jesus is the firstborn of the brethren and we, believers, are the brethren.** *“While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.’ He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that*

he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, He says, I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises. To the Church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Able.” Romans 8:29-30, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 2:10-12, Hebrews 12:23-24, and Matthew 12:46-50 **Note:** God is responsible in bringing those He predestined to glory. The individual person cannot make him/herself into the justified person we need to be to get into His glory. Our part is to surrender just like you do when you fly in an airplane. You surrender the flying of the aircraft to the pilot and co-pilot. Conformed to His Son’s image, is a process. A potter starts a project and a visitor looks at it and asks, “What is that going to be?” The potter replies, “A bowl.” However, at its earliest stage it does not look like a bowl to the potter’s visitor. It is Jesus’ blood and His righteousness that makes us holy; not us. The Church is not ‘our’ Church she is the Church of Jesus Christ.

TEAMWORK:

Write in your own words: How have you become a member of God’s family that qualifies you as a bride of Christ? _____

- a. **Virginity can be translated into “holy or pure.”** We must surrender ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit, set ourselves aside, and refrain from being like this world, and by taking on a new mindset and be transformed by He who is able to transform us. *“You yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and your sisters. Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; Neither sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men or thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you were. BUT **you were washed**, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your*

evil behavior. But now **he has reconciled you** by Christ's physical body through death **to present you holy** in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation---and **if you continue,** in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”
1 Corinthians 6:8-11 and 1 Thessalonians 4:7 and Colossians 1:21-23

Colossians 1:23 TLB “The only condition is that you fully believe the Truth, standing in it steadfast and firm, strong in the Lord, convinced of the Good News that Jesus died for you and never shifting from trusting him to save you. This is the wonderful news that came to each of you and is now spreading all over the world. And I, Paul, have the joy of telling it to others.”

GROUP WORK:

Matthew 25:1-13 READ THE Parable of the ten virgins: Discuss as a group and then write out in your own words: How you, too, like the wise virgins have the responsibility to remain pure and prepared.

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’ ¹² “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ ¹³ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

Session Two Part Four:

Further Discussion of the Bridegroom's Friend, the Bridegroom's Father, and the Mohar Price and Payment:

- a. "The Word" became flesh and made his dwelling among us. When he was born a man-child unto Joseph and Mary and circumcised on the eighth day, they named him, Jesus. At that time, his best friend and witness of the marriage agreement had been born and his name was John the Baptist. *"There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. John the Baptist said, 'A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him. The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. And John said, 'I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**"*

John 1: 14(a), Luke 2:21, John 1:6-8, John 3:27-29, Matthew 3:11

- b. **The Bridegroom's Friend:** Within the person of the Holy Spirit is also the attributes of the best man of the Bridegroom of Jesus Christ. He communicates to the Lord that which we cannot through inner-groaning. He also repeats and explains the marriage agreement conditions and terms set forth in the *Katubah* to the Church and the saints of the Church. *"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father---the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father---he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. (Therefore) what we have received is not the spirit of this the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. As it is written; 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived---the things God has prepared for those who love him'---these are the things of God revealed to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit*

within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”
John 14:15-18, John 14:25-26, John 15:26-27 and John 16:13-15 and 1 Corinthians 2:9-14

Group Work: From what you read above and now read Jude 20-21 *“But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”*

Write in your own words how the Holy Spirit helps you remain pure and holy for the coming of the Bridegroom.”

Have a Group Discussion. Now read as a group about the Holy Spirit’s active participation in the world in John 16:7-11 and discuss it. *“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*
What’s your conclusion about who is proving what to the world about Jesus Christ?

c. **God the Father** becomes immediately responsible for a believer when they say “Yes, Jesus, I want you to be my Lord and my Savior.” Family units during the Biblical period practiced this father responsibility transfer in most Jewish settings. These family units were large and they included every family member. The leader of the family is called, “Father.” He is the head of a group of families called the *sheikh*. Abraham and his heirs are examples of *sheikhs*. In Genesis 14:14, we discover that his ‘group of families’ was so large he was able to raise 318 fighting men born in his family to rescue Lot and his family. Jesus’ mother, Mary and earthly father, Joseph, traveled with such a large group of their family that it took an entire day for them to realize Jesus had not joined them for the journey home from Jerusalem. Therefore, the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day and before teaches us that a family-unit was similar to a ‘little kingdom’ and the father ruled it. Not only did he rule over his wife and children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren but all his servants both purchased and born into his ‘little kingdom’ as well. Jewish men preferred to have sons, not that they did not like girls, but boys did not leave ‘the father.’ However, daughters eventually left and joined the family of

her husband and that father became responsible for her. In the western culture he is called the father-in-law but she is considered still the responsibility of her father and under his and her husband's authority, mostly the husbands. Father God IMMEDIATELY became responsible for each believer in the twinkling of the eye when the believer accepted the engagement proposal (salvation). Jewish tradition calls this the betrothal as we learned earlier in this lesson.

- d. **Jesus paid our bridal Mohar in full with His Blood!** Christ paid the 'mohar' with His blood, Luke 22:20 and 1 Peter 1:18-19 We are no longer slaves to sin or slaves to this world and its system, nor its prince (the devil). We owe nothing to sin, for Love there is no law against. We owe nothing to this world for we are not of this world. We are in it but we do not owe it our allegiance, Romans 12:1-2.

"In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Luke 22:20; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 12:1-2 NIV

THE PROMISE OF THE LORD FOR HIS BELOVEDS IS EVERLASTING---therefore even if a marriage agreement for men and women could be broken under Jewish customs by him deciding he did not want her before the Wedding Feast (Supper) and giving her a certificate of divorce, **The Lord cannot go against Himself and pull His promise from you.** "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was not one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants. And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 6:13-20

The Shared cup of wine, The Bridegroom Prepares, and The Bride Prepares:

- e. **The written contract:** Our Katubah (The Holy Bible) says Jesus Christ has gone to prepare a place for us and that He is returning for us according to the promises that He made and our written agreed terms. His Word and His Promise is an irreversible contract that we depend

on every day to show us His love for us. It teaches us about our betrothed bridegroom. It instructs us on how to prepare for His return and what we must do to be ever-ready as He said no one knows when He is coming for us, not man, not angels, not even Himself, only the Father knows when He will send Christ Jesus for His bride! Every time we feel lonely for our Lord Jesus, we can read the Word and be reminded of the hope we have in Him. *“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar. For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and correctly handles the word of truth. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession---to the praise of his glory. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Simon Peter asked, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.”* Proverbs 30:5-6, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Timothy 2:15, Ephesians 1:13-14, Matthew 24:35, John 6:68-69, Revelation 22:18-19

Personal Question: Are you comforted by reading the Bible? _____ How so? ____

_____ Do you sometimes feel uncomfortable by reading the Bible? _____

How so? _____

Read John 16:7-11, again. The Holy Spirit is always teaching us, too, not just the world about righteousness and sin. Therefore, when you feel uncomfortable like you are being corrected or called out on something, it is The Holy Spirit gently correcting you, because he wants you to remain pure waiting for the Bridegroom’s return. Some spots are still on all of us and sometimes we are doing or not doing things that are sinful and we need to have the Holy Spirit point it out to us, so we can ‘clean up our act.’ Praise Jesus---we are not orphans and not left on our own to figure it out by ourselves. Hallelujah!!!

The Second Cup of Wine:

- a. **Jesus drank the wine** with the disciples during the last supper being those who established the first church. As He lifted the cup of wine he said, *“Then he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* Matthew 26:27-29
- b. **Jesus is preparing a place for His Church---His Bride** *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”* *“Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever.*
Therefore, encourage one another with these words. John 14:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- c. **FIDELITY is REQUIRED of The Brides of Christ in the Betrothal** in the Marriage Arrangement as we wait for the return of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. *“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be lead astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God---this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is---his good, pleasing and perfect will. How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.*
2 Corinthians 11:2-3, Romans 12:1-2, Psalm 119:9-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Session Two Part Five:
Our Love for Jesus Has Permission to Grow:

Do not be confused any longer about being the 'bride of Christ.' Each individual collectively makes up the Bride of Christ---for the Bride is His Church, however, His Church is made up of individual people who accepted His wedding proposal and made herself ready for His return. *“Just as a body, though one has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? **Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.**”*

1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 12:27-30

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3 *“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”*

Growing up takes time and devotion. Which one are you lacking in the moment?

_____. Can you
correct that? _____ What’s your plan of correction? _____

Now we know that God commands us to love our Lord thy God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. As a matter of fact, Jesus said this is the GREATEST COMMANDMENT. Additionally, Jesus told us to love one another as He loves us. Read the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37-40, Matthew 10:37, 1 Peter 1:8-9, 1 John 5:1-5 and Matthew 25:40, and Colossians 3:12-17, Philippians 2:3, Romans 12:10, and John 13:34-35.

Write in your own words how these verses speak to you about loving The Lord and ALL believers. Be honest and think about how you are doing on the love barometer.

Personal Inventory: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being AWESOME how would you grade yourself on loving the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind?

_____ Can you do something to improve that?
What? _____

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being AWESOME how would you grade yourself on loving ALL believers more than you love yourself? # _____ can you do something to improve that? _____ What? _____

What kind of personalities are you struggling with in the love department toward others?

Example: A person who has to control everybody, everything, and the environment or they are not happy.

_____ do you see yourself in these personality types or triggers? _____ Did you used to have one of these personality types, hang-ups, flat-sides, before now? _____ which one(s) _____

_____ Can you remember how it was broken off you? _____

We are ALL called to the Ministry of Reconciliation: 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

We have been specifically called to ushering Runaway brides back to Jesus Christ as spoken of in James 5:19-20. Do you think that is an easy assignment? _____ Why? _____

_____ Do you feel like the Lord chose you for this assignment? _____ Why? _____

Were you ever a Run Away Bride of Christ? _____ How did you make it back to Him? _____

Can you use your personal experience to help others find their way back to Christ Jesus? _____. Make a PLAN TODAY and The Lord will order your steps.

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Who Do I know that is a RAB? | How to contact them | What approach do I use? |
| Example: Joey | Send him an email | I have missed him in Church |

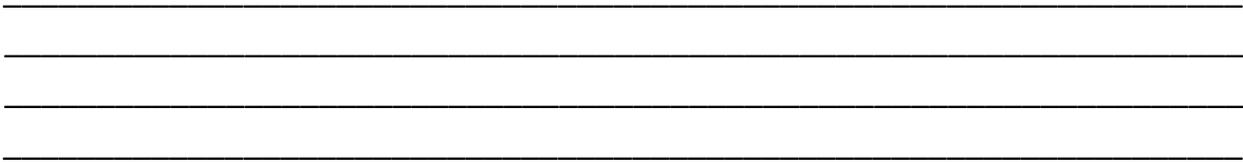
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| _____ | _____ | _____ |

Group Work: Write down some ideas on how you can approach Run Away Brides: _____

Now that you have written them, will you do any of them? _____

Which ones? _____

When will you get started? _____



SESSION THREE:

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO FLEECED YOUR SOUL

Session 3 Part One:

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO FLEECED YOUR HEART & SOUL

Jesus describes His return like a thief in the night. He says he will return like that when the owner of the house is not alert. Therefore, He said be ready all the time. The Bible describes unpreparedness to the ten virgins. Five were prepared and had enough oil (love) for the future, because they had leaned in on the love of their life and through Him from the top to the bottom the oil cascades. An olive does not just give its oil just because it is ripened and in season. The olive, if not shaken out of the tree and then taken to the olive press and pressed for its oil, would rather rot on the tree or after falling on the ground be walked on or eaten by the beasts of the field or the birds of the air.

Can you imagine getting a letter from Christ such as the Church of Sardis did? In fact, if you would consider it, we can apply these letters to the seven Churches not only to the corporate body of Christ but to ourselves individually. This is a way to see how we are doing with our hearts and souls that Christ Jesus stole from us---Like a thief in the night, He came into darkness to bring a bright light and the light is Him. When that light hit darkness like a thief, He robbed that darkness of its stronghold and shattered it into a million pieces never to gather itself again against His beloveds. However, He tells his beloved ones to stay awake and watch for His return.

“Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed. For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning. Like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds

them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night toward daybreak. But understand this; if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. But you, brothers and sisters are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are the children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.”

Revelation 16:15, Luke 12:35-40, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4-5

Even Jesus had to wait and he waits still for His return for us. He said, “I wish it were already kindled!” He, too, is waiting for the day of His return, let’s be patient with Him, shall we? “I have come to bring fire (judgment) on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!” Luke 12:49-50

Love Letters

Dear Bride:

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars {Jesus Christ}. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold to it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Revelation 3:1-3 NIV

Dear Bridegroom:

“I slept, but my heart was awake. Listen! My beloved is knocking. “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.” I had put off my garment; how could I put it on again? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them again? Song of Solomon 5:2-4 NRSV

Dear Bride:

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.” Revelation 3:4-6 NIV

Dear Bridegroom:

My beloved thrust his hand into the opening, and my inmost being yearned for him. I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, upon the handles of the bolt. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned and was gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but did not find him. I called him, but he gave me no answer. Making their rounds in the city the sentinels (watchmen) found me; they beat me, they

wounded me, they took away my mantle, those sentinels of the walls (watchmen). I adjure you (beg you), O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him this: I am faint with love.

Song of Solomon 5:4-8 NRSV

Dear Bride:

Return to me: Like I explained in the parable of the lost [prodigal] son. "I will set back out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants. So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate.'" Luke 15:17-24 NIV

"ARISE; SHINE; FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD HAS RISEN UPON YOU."

"Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healings shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke from among you the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! Your lips distill nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon. A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed. A garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon."

AWAKE, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. I come to my garden, my sister, my bride; I gather my myrrh with my spice, I eat my honey comb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love."

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in." Isaiah 60:1, Isaiah 58:8-11, Song of Solomon 4:9-12, 15-16, 5:1, and Isaiah 58:12.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH CHRIST JESUS---HIS LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE---HIS KISSES ARE LIFE STINGING for He said, "How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful." Song of Solomon 4:1(a)

Christ the bridegroom is engaged to His Church. This Church is described as beautiful. Its inner beauty is manifested in bright images and bold comparison.

Are you feeling inside and outside like His beautiful bride? _____ Why?

In Song of Solomon we see where the Bride of Christ invites Him into her garden----into her life. She wants Him to be a part of every aspect of her daily existence on earth and for Him to enjoy all that she is in Him and Him in her. Furthermore, she calls it His garden---His life being lived through her. She tells Him through her words and her actions that everything she is and everything she has, it all belongs to Him; "Everything, Christ Jesus, is yours now and forever," she says, "Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choice fruits." Song of Solomon 4:16(d)

He getting your "choicest fruits? "Why do you say that? _____

_____ Is your garden His garden? _____ What happened to change your heart about this?

When you first met Him, King Jesus, you called Him the "Joy of your Life." In fact, you said,

"My Lord is my shepherd, [He said of Himself, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.] I shall not want; [never again will I want anything or anybody BUT JESUS]. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. [His love brings rest to my torn soul]. He leads me beside the still waters. [His love quiets my internal guilt and shame]. He restoreth my soul, [for He doeth not condemn my unrighteousness] rather He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. [For as His bride, I represent His Name---therefore He designates righteousness for me and brings all the paths with Him as a Lamp unto my feet to take them]. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (casting falseness before me) I will fear no evil for thou art with me (The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear

Psalm 27:1[c].) for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me (The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1[b]) Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies [he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them]. Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” [_____] added emphasis; Psalm 23.

Jesus said to you, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:18-19...21(b).

“As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go, and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”

Psalm 42:1-3

“By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but found Him not! I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him Whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chambers of her that conceived me.” Song of Solomon 3:1-4 KJV

Wake up Brides of Christ: She who had sought him so eagerly has now found him. She does not want to lose him, so she holds fast to him. Likewise, those who met Jesus after His resurrection took hold of His feet and worshiped Him: Read Matthew 28:9---what does this say to you personally?

Storytime:

Imagine with me if you would. You are walking along a deserted warm sandy beach. Suddenly this beautiful beach ball falls from the sky right in front of you. You bend over and pick up the ball and you begin to feel light hearted and your smile and the joy you feel is more than fulfilling. You begin bouncing the ball and chasing after it. It lands on the sea shore and in the sand and it rolls into the gentle waves of the sea. However, the ball never goes beyond your reach. The ball begins to grow larger every time it hears you puff out a giggle or a laugh. As the beach ball begins to

grow, it brings you such joy and delight, such as you have never known before. With such gladness you play with it anyway that pleases you. You toss it up in the air and catch it, you bounce it, and you kick it along the beach. Through the years you and the beach ball have become best friends. Sometimes the ball has begun to lose its air, but when it sees your eyes filled with happiness and feels the joy of your heart, and feels the touch of your hand after a dormant time, it begins to grow larger. When you begin to tell the ball how you have missed it over the long winter months, your voice and your time causes the ball to grow almost beyond its capacity. You realize the larger the beach ball grows in your life, the more time you spend enjoying its company.

One day you wonder what ever could replace the joy that your beach ball had brought you for so many years. Through time the beach has progressed and many new attractions have been added. More people than ever before have begun using the beach and spending long lazy summer hours there. Keeping a close eye on the beach ball had become your second nature, but now a different nature has begun to take hold of your soul. Just as suddenly as the ball had appeared, new sources of gratification have now found time to entertain you. One day, you not only take your eyes off the beach ball, but your hands as well.

Beach balls are buoyant and if you don't stick close to your ball and hold onto it with all of your strength, a wind could shift and come up and take it from you into the awaiting air. The gentle waves change momentum and they pull your ball into them and roll it out into the sea. Out in the sea the waves are vicious, angry, and violent. You do your best to retrieve your ball but eventually you give up the fight. Tearfully, you just watch hopelessly as what was yours that had brought you such joy drift out of your sight.

Your soul {oftentimes called your heart in the Bible} is your command center. It operates your mind, your body, and your heart. It engineers emotions, thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, memories, reasoning, logic, expectations, desires, likes, dislikes, love, hatred, joy, sadness, content, discontent, and everything else in between. Personality is your soul. The love between you and Jesus is represented by this beach ball. Before the wind came and before the waves came, you owned it, operated it, regulated it, protected it, filled it, emptied it, and mastered it even in moments of mourning, sickness, loss, and suffering. However, like the virgin of the Song of Solomon, you now cry out to the one who has stolen your heart and soul and captured your love that you have hit a love-void.

Your soul my beloved is ravished by the creator of the wind and maker of the air. The beach ball represents the lover of your soul, Jesus Christ, and the indescribable love you shared together inside the depths of your soul. When you fell in love with Jesus Christ it came upon you suddenly and your beach ball was so HAPPY it could have busted wide open. The zeal for Him was uncontrollable. You wanted everybody to know how much you loved Jesus. You wanted everybody to love Jesus the way you did.

“Song of Solomon 5:2, 9, and 16, and 16:1-2 are symbolic of the bride of Christ and Christ, the Bridegroom. “As a symbol the church, the bride in another dream is troubled like the churches of Revelation, which were rebuked for their weaknesses and commended for their strengths (Rev 2-3). God’s people are not always what they should be. But when they waken from their slumber and renew their commitment to Christ, our Lord returns to their hearts. Speaking of his beloved and symbolically of the church, the Spirit through the bridegroom Solomon describes the bride as the fairest among women. The Church---The bride of Christ---is the wonderful society of the redeemed. The community of saints is the finest community of people, who exhibit holiness and show forth the praise of God.

This one whom the bride has described in verses 5:10-15 is her beloved and her friend. She has committed herself to him, and on him her heart’s affection is set. So Christ loves those who love Him, and to those who once were His enemies, He now is their friend. Such are the wonders of God’s grace! In her dream the bride wonders where her beloved has gone. Now she sees that He is not on the streets of the crowded city but has gone into his garden for privacy and retirement. It is also her garden, for their relationship is mutual; she is his and he is hers.” Finally, Song of Solomon 7:10 sums it up for the bride and the bridegroom, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” Just as a husband’s desire is toward his beloved wife, so the desire of Christ is toward his people. Between them there is a blessed communion unmarked by discord.

The church needs nothing more than its bridegroom.”

Quoted commentary from NRSV Harper Study Bible, Expanded and Updated, 1991 Zondervan Grand Rapids, MI

ARE YOU STILL MADLY IN LOVE WITH JESUS?

Song of Solomon 2:16, 7:11, 8:7

1. Are you still madly in love with Jesus Christ? Can you still say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his...” _____?
2. Do you still invite Him to go with you wherever you go? “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. _____.
3. Do you still believe what you first believed about your love for Him? “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be despised. _____.

Bridal Warning:

Session Three Part 2:

Read these verses and write in your own words, "WARNINGS" to yourself.

God desires faithfulness to Christ: 2 Corinthians 11:2 NIV "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."

Spiritual Adultery: Starts in a sinful heart Matthew 15:19 NIV "For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

Spiritual Adultery: Leads to God's judgment Hebrews 13:4 NIV "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

Spiritual Adultery: Leads to exclusion from the Kingdom. Gal 5:19-21,"¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:9: "9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men. Rev 22:15: "¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." Quoted from NIV Version

God judges spiritual adultery, Jeremiah 5:11-17 "¹¹ The people of Israel and the people of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me," declares the LORD. ¹² They have lied about the LORD; they said, "He will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine.

¹³

The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them; so let what they say be done to them." ¹⁴ Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes. ¹⁵ People of

Pardon promise

Session Three Part Three: Pardon promised for adulterers 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and John 8:3-11

*“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers---none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. **And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**”*

Read as a group John 8:3-11----*This is that moment when Jesus showed great compassion toward people regardless of the nature of their sins.*

*“The woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus at the temple, whereas He told the scribes and the Pharisees who brought her to Him to be judged for those of them who had not sinned to cast the first stone. None of them could do so, so in time every one of them dropped his stone and left. Eventually it was just the woman and Jesus. Jesus looked up at her and said, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, **“Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”**”*

GROUP WORK: Read the following 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NIV: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, **not counting people’s sins against them.** And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf; be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

1. Go your way, and from now on do not sin, again.
2. Not counting people’s sins against them.

List other things you see in these verses that you want to discuss as a group to help you sharpen your skills as being ministers of reconciliation:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Discuss the other things seen by each other in the verses that can sharpen your ministry skills.
Discuss all of the above verses and how this affects your personal life not so much as to where

you have been, but to where you are going. You have been called into the Reconciliation Ministry whether you join the faith assignment of Run-Away-Brides Ministries or not, God has called EVERY CHRISTIAN into the Reconciliation Ministry.

Discussion Notes:

Song of Solomon 8:7 sums the entire love relationship up between Christ the Bridegroom and The Church, His Bride. *“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one’s house, it would be utterly scorned.”*

“True love is indestructible. It is a valiant, victorious passion. It will never desert the beloved. Water may quench a fire, but it cannot quench love. Floods will drown people and strike terror to their hearts, but they will not overwhelm love. Similarly, all the comforts of this world will never seduce the believer from his love for Christ, and Christ’s love will forever hold His beloved church, both in life and in death.” Quoted commentary from NRSV Harper Study Bible, Expanded

and Updated, 1991 Zondervan Grand Rapids, MI

(Romans 8:35-39 NIV) *“³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Read Romans 8:35-39 aloud together and read it a second time very loudly and now write in your own words what this promise means to you.

"I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." Luke 10:19



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