

Living for Jesus

A WEDDING IN HEAVEN

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you to read the references given. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

This booklet and other Manna Publications like it are for your own use or to use in small study groups. They will help you study the Bible and know more about Jesus Christ. They will also help you talk about your faith in Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection.

The writer of old said that God's word (the Bible) is like a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths. It shows us the way!

God's word will stop you from going the wrong way in life and help you to go the right way. It tells the things that please God and the things He hates. Read and study it carefully.

THE GOD OF CREATION

In the beginning there was nothing! No light, no sun or moon, no sea or land, no plants or animals and no people.

Then God said . . . "Let there be light . . . Let the waters be separated and gathered . . . Let the land produce . . . Let there be lights in the sky . . ." (Genesis 1:1-25). The Bible assures us that "God created the heavens and the earth" and everything in them.

Then God took some clay and made the likeness of a man! God breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life, and the man (the Adam) became a living being (Genesis 2:7). Only God has no beginning and no end. Only He has immortality, but He gave His immortality to man and woman. He breathed His eternal spirit into their mortal flesh, creating immortal beings that would live forever.

There was something very intimate and personal about God's act in creating Adam. As an artist signs his painting, so God stamped His imprint on His own work. God made man 'in His likeness or image' (Genesis 1:27).

Then God stood back and looked at creation. "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

God wanted to fill the earth with families of people. Adam and Eve were the first family. God told them to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28).

SIN SPOILED CREATION

God made a beautiful garden in Eden. In it He put every kind of fruit and grain for food. God provided everything the man and woman needed.

And the LORD God spoke to the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it, for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

Satan came to the garden and tempted Eve. He said to her, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Eve said: "No, it is only this tree from in the middle of the garden. God said that if we ate the fruit from it we would die".

Satan replied: "You will not die".

The fruit did look very beautiful and Eve took some and ate it. Then she gave some to Adam to eat and he ate it also. They had disobeyed God's command and Satan gained a victory. He had persuaded them to sin. That is his victory – getting us to disobey God. From that day on, they were cut off from the life of God.

TALK ABOUT

1. How was this world created?
2. What did God say about His work (Genesis 1:31)?
3. God commanded the man and woman not to eat the fruit of a certain tree. Why? (Genesis 3:1)?
4. Did they obey God?
5. What happened to them?

GOD PROMISED A REDEEMER

When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised a Redeemer. One to be born "the seed [a descendant] of the woman." He would crush Satan (Genesis 3:15). God sent Jesus Christ, born of a woman, to redeem the world from sin and Satan's power. Jesus Christ was the seed of the woman (Galatians 3:16).

He came to earth as the God-man. God so loved the world of men and women that He had created that He sent His only Son to save men and women from their sins (John 3:16). John wrote, "The Word was made flesh and dwelled among us" (John 1:14).

SATAN TOOK CONTROL

Over the years that followed, men turned away from God. Self-willed men and women rebelled against God. Paul said, "they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and the birds and animals and reptiles . . . Because of this God gave them over to sinful lusts . . ." (Romans 1:23,26).

Sin in the world got worse and worse. Men and women, left to themselves, indulge in every kind of evil. They never seek God or become more righteous because Satan controls their spirits. Paul said, "the god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . ." (2 Corinthians 4:4).

A MAN WILL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER

When God created Adam and Eve, He created marriage. The marriage of one man to one woman was planned in Heaven. God gave the human race His marriage law when He said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

God decreed that every new family begin in the same way. A man must leave his parents and take a wife to begin a new family.

In the new family, the husband will take responsibility for his wife and provide for children born in their marriage.

In Bible times a young man depended on his parents. After marriage, he had to trust God:

- That he had made the right choice of a bride,
- To earn a living to support his family,
- That they would serve God together,
- That God would bless them with children.

Many husbands have never taken this step of faith. They do not cut the ties with their parents and step out with God. Instead of looking to God, they look to their wives or their parents for support.

God planned marriage to last for a lifetime. One man married to one woman is God's command (Malachi 2:15; Matthew 19:4-6).

To make the marriage bond strong, a man must respect his wife and put her welfare and the interests of the family first. This may go against modern practice and culture and we often find just the opposite!

Today men leave home for no reason at all. This was probably not so in early civilizations. In Bible times, until a man chose a wife and set up a new family of his own, he probably worked with other members of his larger family. This still happens in some cultures.

TALK ABOUT

1. What do you think God meant when He said that Eve would be Adam's 'helper' (Genesis 2:18)?
2. What is God's marriage law (Genesis 2:24)?
3. How did Satan gain control over Adam and Eve?
4. When Adam and Eve sinned, what did God promise?

HUSBANDS, A TYPE OF CHRIST

God used the marriage of a man and woman as a type or picture of His relationship with His people, Israel (Hosea 2; Jeremiah 2).

Paul also used the marriage of a man and woman as a type or symbol of Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25-27). This sets marriage apart as even more awesome and holy (Hebrews 13:4).

Paul wrote, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Christ's love for mankind led to His giving up everything. He "gave Himself up for the Church," not just once at the cross, but "from the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 3:11).

Paul understood a little of Christ's love for His bride. In writing to the Ephesian Christians he took them back to God's marriage law (Genesis 2:24), back to a time before sin became an issue, before any atonement for sin was needed. He showed that Christ's love for His bride was not only shown in Christ's death on the cross, it was in the heart of God before the creation of the world! Because Christ loved His bride He obeyed His Father and chose: -

- To leave Heaven's glory and harmony.
- To come to this sin-filled earth.
- To live as a poor person.
- To be rejected by His own countrymen.
- To die on the cross, with all its suffering and shame.

God calls on all husbands to 'give up' their own selfish desires and comforts for the sake of their wives' spiritual, emotional and physical welfare.

A BEAUTIFUL SYMBOL

Paul gave us a beautiful symbol of Christ and His bride. Paul used the marriage of a man and a woman to represent Christ's relationship to the Christian Church. He wrote, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy . . ." (Ephesians 5:25).

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSES

God is love and His eternal purpose was ever to express His love. His love was first poured out in His glorious creation. He showed His greater love for the world of men when He sent Jesus Christ, HIS SON. "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" (John 3:17).

Philip, the disciple, said to Jesus, "Show us the Father and that will be enough!" (John 14:5)

Jesus answered, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father!" So the writer of the Hebrews exclaims: "Fix your eyes on JESUS, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL

Paul also wrote, "He (God) lavished on us (those who believe) all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will . . ." (Ephesians 1:8-9).

What was this mystery? That He would accept Christ's death as sufficient sacrifice for all of our sins, for all the sins of the sons and daughters of Adam, who have ever lived and who will live in the future (John 1:29). God made Jesus Christ, who was crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

Everything in the Bible points us to the Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection. God offered His Son as the one and only sacrifice for sin, so that He might forgive us.

Now everything in your life and mine depends upon whether we believe that and on our response to God's command that all men, everywhere, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." When you repent, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:36-38). God will forgive your sins and mark you as one of His children! (Ephesians 1:13,14).

TALK ABOUT

1. Are men and women equal in God's sight?
2. How did God show His love for men and women (John 3:16)?
3. Who came to earth to redeem mankind from sin? How did Jesus do this?

ADAM, THE HEAD OF THE RACE

Adam was the first head of the human race. Adam was responsible to God. God made Adam responsible for the animals, the trees and the keeping of God's creation. But Adam stood quite apart from it. He was different.

Adam was created "in God's image" (Genesis 1:27). He could think and reason, plan and create.

At first Adam lived alone amidst a beautiful and perfect creation, but he lacked a vital part. After Adam named the animals, he sat alone. God looked at Adam and said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

Adam needed a wife before he could be head of a race of people. So God made woman, flesh of his (Adam's) flesh and bone of his bone! Eve was made in the image of God just as Adam was.

God brought Eve to Adam. She became Adam's wife! The man and the woman were united, one flesh.

Adam's headship could not be exercised over his bride or over the animals without God's help. As soon as Adam sinned, he lost his contact with God and he lost his headship.

God gave special marriage laws for the Levites who served Him as priests, (Leviticus 18:6-8; 20:19-21; 21:7,13-14).

A MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN

God desires a very close and binding relationship with those who love Him. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, He asks us to love and serve Him all our days. God makes a covenant or agreement with all those who love Him.

In the Old Testament God made a covenant with the people of Israel. He promised to bless them if they obeyed His law. But men did not obey God's laws. God said, "All have sinned . . ." (Romans 3:23). God also said, "The payment for sin is death. But Eternal life is a gift from God through Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:23).

God sent His Son to die to take away our sins. In His death on the cross, Jesus Christ signed a New Covenant with His own blood (Luke 22:20).

The relationship between Jesus Christ and His people is like a marriage.

Jesus Christ is like the Bridegroom.

And the Church is like a bride.

Jesus calls all the Christians His Church. When Jesus speaks about His Church He does not mean the buildings where we worship but the people who are believers.

God sent His Son into the world to seek His bride!

Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, came to earth and laid down His life for His Bride the Christian Church (Ephesians 5:25). He left everything to win her hand! One day He will gather His people, all the Christians to be with Him forever (John 14:1-2). Then He will "present her to Himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27). The Church is the bride of Christ. The angel said to the aged apostle, John, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelations 21:9).

JESUS CHRIST IS HEAD

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Christian Church. And He is the 'head' of every believer. When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives, we must make Him head or give Him full control. No body can function without a head and no head can function without a body. The head governs the body. The head is responsible for what the body does. When a person is declared "brain dead," their whole body is as good as dead.

WHAT IS GOD DOING?

You may ask, "What is God doing in our world today?" God's Spirit is calling out a people who will be the bride of Christ. He is working in God's people to make them into the likeness of Jesus Christ! You may see these children of God as half-finished and very imperfect. But in the mind of God all born-again believers are already complete in Jesus Christ! They are part of His bride.

Many things appear to us to interrupt what God is doing. I cut an article from the newspaper and kept it. It is about God's work in a refugee camp. The heading reads: "Programs in Refugee Camps Interrupted."

The programs were disrupted, but God's work did not stop. His work goes on in the hearts of men and women around the world. He does not stop to sleep. Every moment of the day and night the Holy Spirit is moving in men's hearts to make them more like Jesus Christ. God never stops working in those who cooperate with His Spirit! (Acts 13:43). Even Satan cannot stop God's work.

Jesus told His disciples, "I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). God is very busy. He is building HIS CHURCH. His work in the world and in His people will be complete when "the times have reached their fulfilment - to bring all things together under one head, even CHRIST" (Ephesians 1:10). This will happen when Jesus comes again (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

TALK ABOUT

1. What was God's perfect plan for mankind?
2. Is God at work in the world today? How do you know?
3. What is He doing?
4. When will He finish (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)?

GOD WILL COMPLETE WHAT HE HAS BEGUN

Look around your house and notice all the projects you have started but did not finish. My wife bought a basket of yarn at a yard sale. In that basket was a half-knitted sweater that some dear lady had started with all good intentions. Then the lady abandoned the work, leaving the sweater half finished. She gave it to a yard sale and my wife bought it and finished what the other person began.

In Australia I saw highway overpasses hanging in mid air, abandoned when a new government took office. "Oh," my friend explained, "the last administration began that project, but there was no money to complete it."

God is author and finisher of everything He does. He does not start anything that He does not finish. He has a perfect plan for your life and mine: allow His Spirit to work freely in your life and He will complete that perfect plan.

THE BRIDE WILL BE COMPLETE

God is surely completing what He began - in the world and in you and in me (Philippians 1:6). Be assured that God has not finished His work in us. As we allow Him, He will slowly but surely conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

We may hurt! We may suffer, too! But let us remember, if it was good enough for the Head (Jesus) to suffer, should not the 'body' (believers) suffer also? Jesus said that suffering is the way to glory!

What should we do in our suffering? "We fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith . . ." (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Jesus was the author of our salvation. Now He is finishing it. At our death it will be too late for Him to make those any other changes in us! Let us pray earnestly: "Lord, perfect Your work in me now."

What God is doing **in** us is so much more important than what He is doing **for** us, it does not matter how miraculous that is.

You are an overcomer. Every day, every moment of every day you are able to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. You are able to enjoy the victory that Christ won for you on the cross.

God gives us this victory freely as we put our trust in Him. Paul cried out, "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Claim His victory! Enjoy it!

TALK ABOUT

1. Who are being kept by God's power (1 Peter 1:5)?
2. What is God doing in our world?
3. How can we have victory over sin?
4. Do you feel at a standstill in your Christian life? Is this as it should be?

A WIFE FOR ISAAC

The Bible gives us a beautiful story of Abraham sending his servant to get a bride for his son Isaac (Genesis 24).

Abraham and his family lived in Canaan. All the people living around them worshipped idols. The Canaanites did not know the true God and were very wicked. Because Abraham loved God, he wanted his son Isaac to marry a girl who loved God.

The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. Now God would bless him in the matter of a wife for Isaac. Parents need to be concerned about life-partners for their sons and daughters and Isaac was special! It would not do for him to marry a heathen Canaanite girl.

Abraham called his faithful servant, Eliezer. This man may have come from Mesopotamia and he could have been a servant in Abraham's house from his youth.

Abraham trusted Eliezer to go on a long journey to his brother's family to bring home a wife for Abraham's son Isaac.

Isaac's faith was like his father's. He trusted the living God and he was waiting for a godly woman to be his wife.

THE LONG JOURNEY TO HARAN

Eliezer was very old, but he agreed to go on the long journey to Haran. He probably knew the area and possibly Nahor's family.

Before he left Abraham, Eliezer asked, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me" (Genesis 24:5)? This reminds us that everyone who marries should do so of his or her own free will. Parents should not pressure their children to marry any particular person, though they may certainly give them guidance.

Abraham believed that God would guide Eliezer and he said so (Genesis 24:7). He reminded his servant that God 'brought him out of Ur,' spoke to him and promised to be with him. This same God will "send His angel before you," he assured Eliezer. So they took an oath which was the custom of the day.

The servant loaded the camels with 'costly gifts' for the woman who would accept his invitation to become Isaac's wife. Abraham was very rich and he gave Eliezer gold and clothes and fine food to take with him. They were gifts that would suit the bride-to-be in her new place in Abraham's family.

So Eliezer set out for Haran to get a wife for Isaac. He went to Abraham's own brother Nahor. And he took with him "all kinds of good things from his master."

TALK ABOUT

1. Why did Abraham send his servant to his brother's place?
2. What did he tell the servant to do?
3. What did the servant take with him?
4. Should Christians marry Christian partners?

AFTER MANY DAYS OF TRAVEL

After many days travel, Eliezer came to Haran where Nahor lived. God led him straight to Abraham's brother's place.

It was evening . . . "the time women go out to draw water" (Genesis 24:11). Eliezer made his camels kneel down near a well and he waited for someone to come and draw water for them.

He prayed, "O Jehovah, the God of my master . . . help me . . . I am standing beside this spring, and the girls of the village are coming out to draw water . . . When I ask one of them for a drink and she says, 'Yes, certainly, and I will water your camels, too!' let her be the one . . . " (Genesis 24:12-14TLB).

This servant knew God in a very personal way. He asked God to give him these signs:

- A woman with a kindly heart,
- One ready to help a traveller,
- A woman who understood animals,
- One who was thorough in her work.

Then Eliezer looked up and saw a very beautiful young girl coming carrying her water jar on her shoulder. She was a virgin.

Eliezer hurried over to meet her and asked, "Please give me a little water from your jar."

"Drink, my lord," she answered, and she let the jug down for him to drink. Then she said, "I'll draw water for your camels, too, until they have finished drinking" (Genesis 24:19).

He watched her as she brought water for the camels. She was strong and willing. And she had spoken the words he had asked for. She had given all the signs Eliezer had asked God for. He knew this was the girl was God's choice.

"Who are you?" he asked. She told him she was a grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

She answered, "Rebekah! I am the daughter of Bethuel . . . and we have plenty of straw . . . as well as room for you to spend the night" (Genesis 24:24-25).

- God had answered Eliezer's prayer for the right girl:
- She was willing to help him.
- She gave with kindness.
- She was generous - "we have plenty . . ." she said.

Eliezer was filled with joy. He gave her two gold bracelets and sent her running to her mother. Then he bowed his head and thanked God. God had guided him to this place and provided a bride for Isaac.

Bethuel was old, so his son Laban spoke for him. The family are called 'Naharaim' or Aramean or 'of Aram' (Genesis 24:10).

At Nahor's house, Eliezer talked with the girl's father and mother. He told them how God had blessed his master, Abraham. He told them about the young man, Isaac.

"Then I came to the well", Eliezer said, "And before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came . . . with her jar on her shoulder" (Genesis 24:15).

ELIEZER TELLS WHY HE CAME

After they took his camels and fed them, Eliezer told the reason for his visit to Nahor's place. When they heard his account, Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the Lord . . ." (Genesis 24:50).

They agreed there and then that Rebekah should be told. "Let's call the girl and ask her . . ." they said.

"Will you go with this man?" they asked the girl.

"I will go," she said (Genesis 24:57-58).

Rebekah's family blessed her with a song: "Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of your enemies" (Genesis 24:60).

This is a picture of the Christian Church in this present age, "possessing the gates" and taking the strongholds of the enemy (Matthew 12:29; 2 Corinthians 10:4). The Christian Church does this as it stands against Satan in the victory of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:57).

TALK ABOUT

1. How was Eliezer's prayer answered (Genesis 24:12-14)?
2. How did he know Rebekah was the right girl for Isaac?

ISAAC LOVED REBEKAH

Isaac loved Rebekah from the moment he saw her. He took her to his tent and she became his wife.

God's love is the 'heart' of the Gospel. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ, giving Himself up in every way demonstrates God's love for us. We have Christ's eternal love and His dying love to bless us every day!

Now God commands all men to show the same love to their wives and their children.

TALK ABOUT

1. Did Rebekah's family ask her if she wanted to go with Abraham's servant?
2. Did she agree to marry Isaac?
3. What did Jesus Christ give up to come and seek His bride?
4. Should we pray to God for the right person to marry?

CHRIST GAVE HIS ALL

When Paul wrote of Christ's love for His bride (Ephesians 5:25), he did not refer to Christ's death on the cross to save us from sin. Paul quoted God's marriage law (Genesis 2:24). Sin had not come into the world when God spoke these words. In eternity, before God created the heavens and the earth, CHRIST LOVED THE BRIDE-TO-BE and gave Himself completely for her birth, growth in holiness and final glorification in Heaven. He put aside all His interests, His comforts, and His very own life, for the Bride. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor . . ." (2 Corinthians 8:9).

HAS CHRIST FORGOTTEN HIS BRIDE?

Around the world today, we see God's people sorely tested and tried; maligned and mistreated. There have been more Christian martyrs in the last 50 years than in all the centuries before this!

Has Christ forgotten the Church in China? In Haiti? In India? No. The New Testament tells us that God is perfecting the bride. He is making her holy, clean, radiant, so that He can present her "without spot or wrinkle. . . blameless" in the day of Christ's glorious return (Matthew 24:30; Ephesians 5:27).

Paul said Jesus Christ is jealous for His Church (2 Corinthians 11:2). He wants to present her "a pure bride." He is continually working to make her complete by adding to her every day all those who are saved. He is calling out of all languages, tribes and nations one holy people (Revelation 7:9). Jesus said that no language group will be left out (Matthew 24:14). But He is also perfecting His Church to take her place beside Him as His bride.

Peter tells us of "a place in Heaven reserved for you, who are kept by the power of God . . ." (1 Peter 1:4-5 KJV).

They are God's choice ones who are "being perfected" by His grace. They are being "shielded by God's power. . . ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

CHRIST'S COMMITMENT TO HIS BRIDE

The perfecting of the bride is Christ's commitment to His Church. He will never separate from us and He will not stop working in our lives, no matter how bad our circumstances.

His commitment speaks of that vow, or covenant, partners make to each other in the marriage ceremony, "until death do us part."

Christ's commitment is "until the day dawns . . ." and Heaven becomes a reality for each one of His children. He will work until the bride is complete, until the very last person is added to the Christian Church, from the very last language and tribe.

And even the weakest saint will be presented "without spot or blemish, radiant . . ." (Ephesians 5:27).

What a magnificent spectacle that will be!

Jesus Christ will accomplish this because "God has placed all things under His feet, and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

THE CONTROL AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus and the disciples were leaving the Temple area. They pointed to the great stone walls and buildings. Jesus told them, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

When Jesus said He would soon leave them, the disciples were filled with fear. Jesus promised, "I will not leave you orphans . . . I will come to you . . . I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counsellor (Comforter) to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth . . ." (John 14:17-18).

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, who would come and possess all who receive Him as their Saviour. The Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus ascended to Heaven. And He

has filled Christ's Church ever since (Acts 2:1-4).

Without the Holy Spirit guiding our lives and giving us power, we cannot serve our Saviour or grow to be like Him.

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is God. He is all loving, perfect in patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. He is gentle and full of grace.

The Holy Spirit produces fruit in our lives as we let Him work in us. He moulds us into the likeness of Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philemon 1:21). He gives us grace-gifts. We can have more of these graces, if we let the Holy Spirit have more of us. "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

This happens once in each life when a person trusts Christ. Each time we are tempted by our selfish desires, we can look back to that time and say, 'My old life was crucified with Christ on the cross. I am one with Him in His death. I will not give in to this tempting by my old nature' (James 1:14-15).

"Since we live by the Spirit . . . keep in step with the Spirit," Paul wrote (Galatians 5:25). We cannot walk as God does, but He is loving and kind to walk with us. He does not outwalk us. The Holy Spirit knows who you are and what you can do. He takes you by the hand and leads you one step at a time.

When you are tempted to sin, the Holy Spirit is there to help you. "Not allowing you to be tempted beyond what you can bear" (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is the One who comes alongside to help.

To walk before God means a quiet walk and humble walk. "Let us not envy" the other person, but walk step by step with our Lord. There are no short cuts, just a day by day walking by faith:

- Reading His word (Joshua 1:8).
- Praying and waiting on Him (Psalms 130:5-6).
- Meeting with other (Hebrews 10:25).
- Telling our neighbours of His love.
- Doing good works in the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:10).

The Holy Spirit is also our teacher. He teaches us the things of Christ (John 16:14). He turns our eyes to Jesus, not our experiences! Never to what we are doing or what we are feeling.

He is patient with us; He does not hurry us. He has to teach us the same lessons again and again if we fail to learn them well.

TALK ABOUT

1. What work does the Holy Spirit do in us?
2. How can we 'keep in step' with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25)?
3. What is Christ's promise to His bride (Ephesians 5:27)?
4. When will this happen?

CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

When the time is right, Christ will leave His home in Heaven and He will come to gather His Bride – all who believe – His Church (John 14:2-3).

The Bible uses one Greek word for Jesus Christ's Second Coming. It is 'parousia.' Jesus used the word 'parousia' when He spoke of His coming again (Matthew 24:27).

Christ's parousia is the hope of every Christian. "For the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a mighty shout and the soul-stirring cry of the archangel and the great trumpet-call of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16 TLB).

What will that shout be? Some think it will be "Enough! Enough of war and suffering! Enough of sin and death!"

When Jesus shouts all trouble and suffering will be over. There will be no time left to make ourselves ready for Heaven. Whatever the shout says, it will cause all of us to wake up and look up expectantly – for those who love the Lord at His coming with joy and awe and those who have refused His salvation with trembling and fear.

Christ's coming will not be silent. Three awesome sounds will awaken the 'sleeping' dead:

- Our Lord's loud command.
- The voice of the archangel.
- The trumpet call of God.

At that time we will see Christ coming in the clouds with great power and glory (Mark 13:24). The righteous dead and us who are alive will be caught up into the clouds to be with our Lord for ever (1 Corinthians 15:51-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

HE WILL GATHER HIS BRIDE

At Christ's Second Coming He will gather His Bride from every tribe and people group. She will be made:

- Radiant with moral splendour (Matthew 13:43).
- Without stain, wrinkle or blemish (Ephesians 5:27).
- Holy and blameless before Almighty God.

No stains! The stains of sinful living run deep, but not too deep for God's grace. If we confess our sins, we can have instant forgiveness and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

No wrinkles! Wrinkles speak of a garment that has not been cared for. Christ's constant tender care and protection will take away all wrinkles from our lives.

No blemishes! Under the Old Covenant or agreement, blemishes were not acceptable to God, either in men who would be priests or in animals offered for sacrifice (Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 1:3; 22:22). Even our Lord Jesus Christ was "a lamb without blemish" sacrificed for us (1 Peter 1:19).

A RADIANT BRIDE

The Bride's radiance is thought to be the same aura that Adam and Eve had about them before the fall. I believe that when Adam sinned, this 'glory' fell away and left him visibly 'naked' and ashamed (Genesis 3:7).

The same aura shone on Moses' face when he came down from the mount. It was the presence of God in brilliant light.

So Christ's Bride will "shine out" with HIS glory, for she has none of her own. She will be an everlasting testimony to His love and grace! (Matthew 13:43).

Paul prayed that we all might grasp "how wide and long and high and deep" that love of Christ is for His people (Ephesians 3:18).

HEAVEN WILL BE PREPARED AND READY

The custom of 'taking the bride home' is common in many lands. And what preparations are made for a bride to come home!

Heaven will be prepared and ready for Christ's bride to come home. Heaven has not been the same since our glorified Lord returned there and it will not be the same after He takes His Bride home.

The Bride will be received with great rejoicing! Jesus said, "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels . . . over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). How much more rejoicing over the multitudes who will stand before the throne of God?

The apostle John had a vision of the Bride, "A great multitude" of God's people that no one

could count. They were singing the songs of Heaven and rejoicing in God's goodness and mercy (Revelations 7:9). And they will feast forever with their Saviour and Lord,

TALK ABOUT

1. What did God say a man should do (Genesis 2:24)?
2. What will Christ's Second coming be like (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)?
3. Who will make Christ's bride ready for Heaven (Ephesians 5:27)?
4. Can Christians be made holy now in this life (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)?
5. Is there only one way to Heaven? What is it (John 14:6)?
6. Will Jesus Christ take you to Heaven? How can you be sure?

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