The Bride

It is really important for us as the church and the bride of Christ to understand just what our role as the bride of Christ looks like.

In John chapter fifteen, Jesus says that He is the vine and we are the branches. The vine is the life-line of the plant. Everything flows through the vine to the branches. If the branches are not abiding in the vine, they will die because the vine is the source of everything that the branches need in order to grow and produce fruit.

Now lets focus on the branches. What role do the branches play? The branches bear leaves and fruit and inside the fruit are seeds. The leaves identify the tree. The seeds inside the fruit reproduce the tree. What happens to the tree if all of the branches are cut off and no more are allowed to grow? The tree will die. Not only will it die, but it will die alone! If no seeds are produced or sown, the tree can’t reproduce itself.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."  (John 15:5)

Jesus is our provider. We are the branches that bear His fruit. Without his provision, we will wither up and die. We need His part in the relationship. We must abide in him in order to survive.

But, without our part, there is nothing to grow and plant and He will die alone. God is using us, (His church) to multiply Himself, take dominion and fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."  (John 15:7-8)

If we maintain our position of resting in Him, we bear good fruit and He is glorified. Think about it this way: If you see a straggly tree with very few leaves and under-nourished looking fruit, what do you think? That tree is not healthy and it is dying. Something is wrong with its source.

I have seen a lot of Christians who are not abiding in the vine. Instead they carrying a lot of burdens and are stressed with the cares of life. When the world sees them, they are not attracted to the God that they claim to follow because God does not appear to be a very good provider. Who wants to follow a god who can’t take any better care of his people than that.

But, when you see a tree with beautiful leaves and luscious fruit growing on it, you know that it is a healthy-well taken care of tree. When the world sees well adjusted Christians who are happy and basking in the Lord’s provision, it makes God look good. It makes the world want what they have because they are attracted to their God.

Their are two parts involved in our relationship with God, each part plays a very different role. In Genesis chapter 1, God said, let us create man in our image, after our likeness, male and female created He them!

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."  (Genesis 2:18)

God made a help meet for Adam. He made an opposite counter-part. Adam needed someone to bear his fruit. God took a rib out of Adam and created Eve and called her ‘bone of his bones.’

If man was created in God’s image and it was not good for man to be alone, then it was not good for God to be alone. He needed a help meet. He needed someone to validate him as a good provider. He needed someone to bear and display His fruit.

Ephesians chapter 5 compares the relationship that a husband and wife have with the relationship that the church or the bride has with Jesus. Two opposite parts come together and make one complete part.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."  (Ephesians 5:31-32)

Wives are told to submit to both their husbands in the same way that the church is told to submit unto the Lord.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Why submit? Because the husband and the Lord provide a source of defense. A lot of times we read these verses and automatically assume that the woman plays a lesser role; that she is obligated to selflessly serve her husband; that she has no rights. But, that could not be further from the truth.

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."  (Ephesians 5:23-27)

Husbands are admonished to love their wives the way Christ loved the church. Jesus lay down his life for the church. He loves the church just like he loves his own body. Because of this, He is dedicated to providing for the churches needs. His provision is what produces the glorious fruit that arrays the bride and causes her to shine like gold.

Men and women were created to fulfill each others needs.

"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."  (Ephesians 5:33)

What a wife needs most from the relationship that she has with her husband is to feel loved and cherished. If she feels loved, she will support her husband even in hard times because she believes in him. The husband, on the other hand, gets his sense of fulfillment knowing that his wife believes in him and appreciates his efforts to provide for her. He desires to be her ‘super-hero.’ When she gratefully allows him to care for her, her beauty comes out. He is validated as a good provider and this is his reward for all of the efforts that he put into the relationship.

Now let’s take all of this and place it in the setting of the relationship that we have with Jesus as the bride or church. We have asked people all over the world this same question: What is it that you want most from your relationship wit God? And the answer is always the same: I just want to know that God really loves me. And, based on our comparison, what God really needs from us is for us to simply believe that He is a good provider. He needs to hear us say, ‘Good job God.’

Let me give you an example that you can probably relate to. Several years ago while my husband and I were visiting another country, we needed to go and buy some groceries. We came back to our apartment with all of the groceries in a taxi cab. My husband got out to pay the driver and I thought I would be a help to him by carrying the groceries. While he was paying for the ride, I gathered as many of the sacks of groceries as I could carry and I started for the front door. As I staggered with the weight of all of the sacks suspended from my arms, I heard my husband’s voice say ‘Do you think you have to carry all of the groceries?’ He was obviously upset with me. Well, doing what comes naturally when one is offended, I dropped all of the groceries right where I was standing and I said ‘Fine, you can carry them all.’

Later on when I was thinking about what happened, I suddenly realized why he was mad. I made him feel like he did not need me. Not only did he feel useless, but the taxi driver was watching and in my husbands mind I am sure he was thinking that the cab driver was thinking ‘What kind of man makes his wife carry all the groceries.’ You see, my actions did not validate him as a good provider, and that is what he needed more than my help.

Looking at it all from a spiritual perspective, this is exactly how we treat God. We as the church are continually trying to help Him out. We carry burdens that are not ours to carry. We spend our time trying to prove to God that we are strong. We labor and strive under the heavy load that we are trying to carry and the world is watching! What God needs from us more than anything is for us to validate him as a good provider. He needs us to abide in his provision and that seems to be so hard for us to do.

God does not need us to be God! That is His role. He needs a help mate. He needs someone to display the fruit of His provision. He needs someone to love and cherish. He wants to carry our load! This is what gives Him His sense of satisfaction.

We were created to be a display of His glory and His honor. When we walk in the role that God created for us to walk in, God looks good and the world is attracted to him.

Women hate feeling like they are weaker or less than. Interpreting the scriptures from a twisted point of view has caused a lot of the ‘gender confusion’ that is running rampant in the world today.

The scriptures say that Jesus loves the church like He loves his own body. He does not look at us with a less than mentality. Caring for the bride is what Jesus lay down His life for. We have been perfected (completely furnished with his abiding presence) forever. It is when we doubt that what He has done for us is enough and we begin to try to perfect ourselves that our weaknesses begin to become more and more obvious. “In Him” we have everything we need. We are completely furnished with His righteousness, but if we ever try to display His righteousness without abiding in Him (wearing our head covering) we dishonor Him because it does not make Him look like a good provider, and the world is not attracted to Him. 1 Corinthians 11:3-5

The Old Jerusalem, or Old Covenant, was based on the work of man’s hands. The New Covenant is based on the work of God’s hands and what He has adorned His bride with.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."  (Revelation 21:2-3)

The bride was created to display of the glory of God!

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;"  (Revelation 21:10-11)

When people see us adorned and arrayed in His gory, they see the Father.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."  (Revelation 3:12)

We were created to walk in relationship with Him and to be one with Him. Bones of His bones and flesh of His flesh, two opposite parts come together to make one.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."  (John 17:22-23)

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