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Forerunner Church
The Mystery of the Bride

Thank you Brenton and Kara. You two guys...

Well, good morning. It's good to be here with you this morning. We're gonna look at Ephesians chapter 5, so go ahead and turn there in your Bibles. Also, if you'd like the teaching notes, we have those available for free online if you go to forerunnerchurch.com/live, you can see the notes posted there and follow along if you'd like to. And if you're ever not here at service, you can webstream also online. The notes are online each week.

Ephesians 5. Today we're gonna talk about the mystery of the bride, the revelation of the bride of Christ that flows from the heart of Jesus the Bridegroom towards us. Two weeks ago, the message that I shared was from Ephesians 1 verse 17-19, that apostolic prayer. And just a second of review, the main point of the message was is that in verse 19 of Ephesians 1, the Lord reveals that there is a working power toward us and in us to reveal the beauty and the revelation of Jesus. That comes by the Holy Spirit. That's the work of the Holy Spirit in us. That there is a power toward us who believe, and that power is to, verse 17, to reveal the beauty and the majesty and the glory of Christ. And then secondly, verse 18, to reveal the riches of His inheritance in the saints. That means that God, through His Spirit, wants to show you the beauty of who He is and the beauty of who we are in Him. And there's this working power, the power of the Holy Spirit that is ushering us into the deeper things of God to know Him and experience Him in this way.

And so, in the spirit of that riches of His inheritance, we're going to look at the mystery of the bride, the mystery of the bride. Ephesians 5, verse 32. I'm gonna read this and then pray for us. Paul says, "This is a great mystery. I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Heavenly Father, we come before You. We love You. We love Your Son. We love Jesus. You are the reason that we're here. You're the reason, Lord, that we wake up. You are the desire of our souls. You're the One who satisfies us, provides for us. You are the perfect God. You are the Bridegroom King. We love You, Jesus. We ask that You would release Your Spirit of wisdom and revelation upon us this morning. That You would help me to speak well of You. That we would come away with an increased passion for You, an increased love for the body of Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Well, Paul calls this revelation of the church in the Bible, as the bride of Jesus, he calls this a great mystery. He calls it a great mystery. Why does the Lord speak to us in mysteries? As a matter of fact, many times in the Scriptures, the Lord speaks to His people in mysteries, in parables, and in you know, the kind of the secret things, symbols and what have you.

And I think that the Lord speaks to us in mysteries and in symbols is because He wants, He knows that the willing and the sincere will press through the veil, will press through the mystery to lay hold of deeper truths in God. The Lord intentionally makes things mysterious, but only a little bit.

There is evidence many times throughout the Gospels. Jesus would tell a parable and then the disciples would be like nodding and amening in the corner. You know, they were kind of like the southern Bible belt church. If you preach in the south, people are amening the whole time and throwing shoes at you, and just depending on where you go, it's just, it's awesome. It's a different experience if you've never done that before.

And ah, you know, the disciples are amening, in the amen corner, and then they're coming to Jesus behind the scenes going, "Wow, that was a really cool sermon, but seriously, what did any of that mean?" And what the Lord does is, in the mystery, He offends our mind. He offends what is familiar to us. He offends our pre-conceptions because He wants to reveal to us our own heart. Are you really hungry? Are you really willing? And the Lord rewards those that are sincere and willing in their heart. It's really remarkable. He doesn't only reward those who are really intelligent, that have all of the Bible knowledge, that have all of the understanding, that have the seminary degrees and all those things. The Lord rewards the willing and the hungry. It is remarkable.

He totally levels the playing field because it doesn't matter what your background is, your educational experience is. He goes, "If you're willing and you're hungry, and you come after Me, I will reveal to you great mysteries." He intentionally does it. He intentionally sets us up in this way. The nearer we come to that day where the Lord splits the sky and returns to earth to establish His Kingdom forever. The nearer we get, the more that the Holy Spirit is going to emphasize this mystery that the church is the bride of Christ and that Jesus, the Man from Nazareth, the great King of all the nations, that He has the heart of a Bridegroom. He is a Bridegroom God.

Paul says that this is a mystery. And again, the Lord wants us to engage with Him on these topics. The Lord wants to talk with us about them because we will gain understanding from Him and our heart... The Lord wants our heart to be moved. Not just our heads. And He knows that if He just lays out line upon line the meaning of the parable... what if He didn't tell a parable? What if He just told the meaning of it? He knows that it would touch something in our mind and in our understanding, but what happens when it's veiled and a mystery, there's an exchange that we have to have with the Holy Spirit. And in that exchange, something happens in our heart relationally where we connect with Him and we grow in love in a unique way.

Jesus is the Bridegroom God. It's revealed all throughout the Scripture. And the Bridegroom God, part of it, one of the facets of it is that He is a joyful Bridegroom and He is a jealous Bridegroom as well. I love it because the Lord holds these two dimensions in perfect tension. He is both outrageously joyful and glad, and He is also so connected to the heart of His people, so longs for them, so loves them, that He is described as being a jealous God. And if there's anyone you don't want to get in the way of, it's a jealous husband. And if there's anyone you don't want to get in the way of beyond that, it's a jealous God.

Do you know why the Scripture calls God jealous but not envious? God is not envious. God is jealous because the jealous heart says this, "What you have actually belongs to me." But the envious heart says, "What you have, belongs to me," but in reality, it doesn't. And so, the jealous

Bridegroom is the God that looks among His people, that looks at the nations and sees where their heart, sees where their affections are placed, and He goes, "Those affections were meant for Me."

When he looks at the church throughout the nations, He goes, "The affections of My people, My bride, those affections were for Me, and when anything gets in the way of that," He goes, "You stir My jealousy. You're touching the apple of My eye." He is a jealous God. That is a terrifying reality to grapple with. If God is jealous, that means that He doesn't just love you, but He'll get in the way. He's gonna intervene and get in the way of our lives, and if our affections are misplaced, He's gonna mess those things up to get us back on track with Him. That's the whole story of the people of Israel. Their affections get placed somewhere else and the jealous Bridegroom says, "I don't think that's gonna happen. You're betrothed to Me. We made a marriage covenant in Exodus 19 on the mountain. We made a marriage covenant together, and I will uphold that marriage covenant whether you do or not." And the Lord is after the affections of His people. He is the jealous Bridegroom.

Understanding out individual and corporate identity as the Bride of Christ is an essential facet of our faith as we cultivate the great commandment. The great commandment that many of you know and have heard, "You will love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, with all of your mind. You will love Him." Have you ever considered how bizarre it is that God commands us to love Him? He goes, "I don't just want your service. I don't just want your gifts and your abilities. I don't just want your money." He goes, "I'm not after just servants and workers." He goes, "I want your heart, and I want you to love Me in the same way that I love you."

Sometimes I read that verse and you know, we get so familiar with it, but it's actually kind of uncomfortable if you think about it. God is commanding you to love Him. What in the world? That sounds like an arranged marriage to me. No, He goes, "This is My command. This is My first and My greatest command." This is the whole trajectory, the whole narrative of your life and the Bride of Christ in the nations of the earth is headed to this one thing - loving God in the way that He loves her. A jealous Bridegroom, a joyful King. This is powerful.

We need to wrestle with this. We don't like being told what to do, much less being told what and who to love. We don't like that. That is very... The idea that we would love God with all of our heart and that it would be a command is actually very offensive to our human nature. And I'm not saying that we revel in that offence and, "Well, let's just all get offended at God." That's not my point. My point is, have we grappled with the implications of what it means to be a people of wholehearted love and a Bride that fully loves Jesus voluntarily?

He sets the standard incredibly high. And in the commands of God, there's always the grace to walk in His commands. Whatever the Lord has asked you to do, He will release the grace to do it. If He told you to go love Him with all of your heart, He will meet you in grace to love Him with all of your heart. If the Lord told you to do something in ministry or in the marketplace or with your family, if the Lord told you to do it, you can be sure He will release the grace, His empowerment to go walk that thing out.

And part of touching that grace in the Holy Spirit is learning to identify as Christ sees us. How does He see you? How does He relate to you to help us make sense of what's going on.

The Father, or excuse me. Back up to paragraph C if you're following along in the notes. If the church only relates to Jesus as servants who emphasize the Kingdom, meaning the work of the Kingdom or an army that emphasizes Kingdom influence, our love is not fully perfected. There are many in the body of Christ who relate to Jesus not as the Bridegroom, but only as the Master. Only as the Boss. Only as the One that we're supposed to report to and check off the boxes to. And the Lord goes, "At the end of the day, I don't just want all of your works. I don't want just all of your sweat. I don't just want your whole paycheck." He goes, "I want something more." He goes, "I want your love. I'm after your love."

And it's the revelation of the Bridegroom God that has to touch our hearts and resonate with us to awaken us to what this whole Kingdom thing is about. Many people serve God out of their own strength, they're serving, they're seeking to obey God. "God, I want to obey You. I want to obey You. I want to obey You." But why do they want to obey? Why is it that our heart longs to obey? For many people, the reason that we want to obey God and the commands of Scripture is so that we feel better about ourselves. I mean, to boil it down to just the most simplistic thing, we seek often to obey God so that our conscience will be quiet and we can rest and be at peace in our life. I just want to obey You so that my conscience isn't nagging me so I can just get on with the rest of my life.

And we live on this rollercoaster of emotions of feeling like we're doing great and then feeling like we're doing terrible, and guilt, and shame, and that tic tic tic, back up again. And we're riding this rollercoaster. It's called self-righteousness. And we believe that through our good works, even in the Kingdom, we believe that just serving God and just checking a list somewhere, that we're hitting the mark and the Lord goes, "No, I'm a Bridegroom. I'm not just here to call you servants, John 15:15, I'm here to call you friends. I'm here to call you My bride. I want you with Me. I want you participating with Me. I want your heart connected to Me. It's not just enough that your righteous in your own eyes, that you fasted a little bit, you prayed a little harder, you gave a little bit more money to the Kingdom." He goes, "That's not it." He goes, "Inside, does your heart connect with Me as the Bridegroom? Does it flow in love? Are you after My affections? Do you love Me with the same affection that I love you?"

You know, Jesus didn't just come and serve us. He did. He didn't just come and work for us. He did. He came and loved us even to the point of death, death on a cross. He loved us with extravagance. He loved us with devotion. He went way beyond what was necessary. It's the heart of a Bridegroom that goes beyond what is necessary. It's the heart of a bride that before the day of the Lord, will go beyond what is necessary, beyond the status quo, beyond the minimum of how little can I do to get by, make it into heaven, get some eternal reward, and have a good reputation among my fellow Christians?

The Lord is inviting His people into extravagant love. When you fall in love, you become extravagant. When I fell in love with my wife, back when we were dating, no one had to come to me and ask me, "Are you spending enough time with Morgan?" You know, pull me aside and,

"Hey, you know, I'm kinda worried. You're not really interested in hanging out with your fiancé, and man, are you guys doing okay?" Why? Because my heart was in love. People were looking at me like, "Hey, haven't seen you in a while." No one had to talk me into being like, "Hey, have you taken any of your money and spent it on her yet?" it's like, absolutely. All of my money goes to her, every paycheck. The 15th comes and by the 17th, it's all been spent on who? Her. And then it's just ramen, your roommates ramen for the next two weeks, just surviving to that next time you can be extravagant. See, when the heart is in love, it longs to be extravagant. It feels confined when we're not able to fully express and give of the resources that we want. That's how Jesus is. He has all the resources to give. He looked through the created order. He said, "How can I give the most precious thing to fully express My love for her? I'll give My own blood because that's the most precious commodity that there is."

He didn't come up short. He didn't sell us short. He went beyond because He's in love. He's a Bridegroom. And He goes, "Before this thing," the Father says, "Before this thing is done, I'm gonna have a bride made ready for My Son, Jesus. I'm gonna have a bride that just goes beyond, she just wants to give everything that she is in love. All of her time, all of her affection, all of her emotion."

This is the first commandment. "Love Me with all of your heart, with all of your strength," everything that we have. This is what God is inviting us into, and it's through the revelation of the Bridegroom that strikes our heart and teaches us how to engage with Him and begin to pursue that wholehearted love.

Well, like I mentioned, the Father promised His Son a great inheritance in the nations, and we know the verses. There's a prized inheritance that the Son has in the nations of the earth and it's us. Think about that. The most prized possession. Imagine your parents came to you and they said, "I have the most prized possession to give you as your inheritance." You're like, "Yes!" And it's like you get to be friends with the neighbors that hate you. It's like, "What?" Like, Jesus, when He looks at us and our weak love and our brokenness, when He looks at the nations of the earth, He goes, "That is My prized inheritance. That's what I want." That's the heart of a Bridegroom.

Who could love us like that? Who could truly love the true you? I don't even know if a spouse or a family member, or even a close friend could love the true us were they to know everything, to know every thought, every detail, every vile desire of our heart, our past, our present, our future. The God that fully knows us looks down somehow and says, "You are My prized possession. I'm jealous of your love. I'm jealous when you give it away to other gods. I'm jealous when you give it away to money. I'm jealous when you give it away to notoriety and influence and fame. I'm jealous over your affections. Don't give it away, give it to Me."

He's the God that wants all of your affection, not even the person next to you probably wants all of that. He wants all of you, and He wants all of me. He is the jealous Bridegroom God. There is no one like Him.

That's why He's called the chief among ten thousand. That's why He's called fairer than the sons of men. He is more fair and more beautiful and more lovely. He doesn't think like we think. He doesn't relate to us in the way that we relate to ourselves. He's the Bridegroom God.

Someone knocks on your door and says, "The Bridegroom is coming." You better watch out because He's a fierce, passionate, jealous Man. The revelation of the Bridegroom in Isaiah 62 doesn't stop there. He is the Bridegroom God. You can read it. Isaiah 62. It doesn't stop there. He goes into Isaiah 63. He's the God that judges the nations, treads the winepress of the wrath of God because of His jealous love. We're like, "Woah. Let's slow down. Let's get back to that Bridegroom thing here." Because anything that touches you and anything that touches His bride, touches the apple of His eye. And He will bring true justice.

Page two in the notes. The missional end of the church is wholehearted love. That's what we're going to. We're not just the mission of the church, is not just get as many people saved as possible. It's not just get as many people to pray a 15 second prayer of salvation as possible. It's not just to get churches buildings built in every city and village across the nation of the earth as possible. That is not the end. That is not the mission of the church. The mission of the church is to love God with all of our heart.

So, when we think in terms of missions and strategy and all these things, are we willing enough, courageous enough to take pause and consider the mission of our own heart? Do we love Him? Do we love Him as the Bridegroom God? Are we standing before Him as the bride, receiving of His affections and giving it back voluntarily, willingly, freely?

When the bride across the nations of the earth comes into the reality of the expression of the first commandment, that is the time, the hour in history in which she will be made ready for her Bridegroom. She is being prepared in love for Him, a suitable partner, a companion that looks like Him, that's arrayed in beauty and glory, that's clean and pure before Him.

This is where the church is going. But so often we minimize it and lambast and attack her for not being that when we, ourselves, don't even realize we are that. That's who we are. We are the church. We are the bride. And as we're being made ready and headed to this day, it's called the marriage supper of the Lamb. Look at this. Revelation 19:7. "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready."

Now, put yourself into that story. The day of gladness and rejoicing is coming. Your heart is going to overflow with gladness and rejoicing because you've been made ready by the Holy Spirit to be joined to the Bridegroom God forever. Make glad, rejoice in your heart. Rejoice. Let songs overflow.

Can you imagine what that wedding feast is gonna be like? Can you imagine what kind of party and wedding reception the God of heaven, who created the universe, who spun stars into existence, what kind of party that Guy can throw? You talk about gladness and rejoicing and singing. You talk about glory and reunited with friends and reunited with loved ones and joined together. And without sin and without shame and seeing the beauty of God face to face with all the saints and all the angels. You talk about a celebration and rejoicing. Oh, my goodness.

You know who's leading it? It's the Psalm 45 Man. It's the Man that's been anointed with the oil of gladness more than anyone else. It's the Bridegroom King that has been so longing and yearning for this day in His heart that He can barely stand it and He's the most rich, wealthy, generous Person to ever live, and He is going to throw a marriage celebration that we will partake of. And we're gonna be laughing our heads off. You're gonna be there with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, David, Grandma. Reunited with loved ones, singing and rejoicing as your heart overflows with the marriage song of the Lamb. With Him forever.

She will be beautiful and holy. Ephesians 5:27. Ephesians 5 verse 25-27. I'm gonna read this. "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." Verse 26, "That He might sanctify her with the washing of the water by the Word."

When I think of the Lord washing us with the water of the Word, what I think of is that we touch the truth of how God sees us. It's a very powerful reality when we begin to agree with the way that God sees us. It's a powerful reality when we agree with the way in which God sees the people around us. We only see what we see. We only feel what we feel. Yet, the Christian has an advantage because the Holy Spirit who searches the deep things of God, escorts us into greater revelation so that we feel and see how it is that God sees us.

Do you know how different it is to feel and believe that you're a bride rather than a beggar? Do you know how different it is to feel and believe and act like you're a son rather than an orphan? Do you know how different it is to feel and act and believe that you are free by the blood of Jesus rather than a slave to sinful desires? Perception isn't everything, but it's a whole lot. And if we see rightly what it is that God says about us, if we truly believe it, confidence is stirred in our heart towards God.

He washes us by the water of the Word. Verse 27. "He's gonna present Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but she will be made holy." I was sitting in the prayer room, this was three years ago, and I'm just kinda going about my business. I just have my Bible open, just singing, waiting upon the Lord, and all of the sudden, the Holy Spirit speaks to me so clearly. He says, "Isaac," He says, "Will you see My church as beautiful and glorious?" It was just out of the blue. I said, "What do You mean?" "Will you see My church as beautiful and glorious? Will you see My bride in that way?" And to be totally honest, I was like, "No. No, Lord. I actually don't."

You know it's okay to be honest with God when He talks to us? We're not faking Him out. Like, you can say whatever you want, but He knows what you really believe in your heart the whole time. You can't trick Him. You can't manipulate Him. He knows the deep things of our heart, so I knew when He's asking me this, it's not because He didn't know the answer. It's because I didn't know the answer. I said, "No, Lord." Because I, like many, I was offended at the church. I saw her as hypocritical. I saw her as compromised. I saw the Lord as just, "Okay, Lord. You've gotta be done with the church. Let's just get on with the next thing here." And the Lord says, "No, no, no. Go back. Will you see My church, My people, My bride in the way that I see them? Glorious. Beautiful. Could you believe that? Could you pray like that is real? Could you relate to people like that's actually real?" He goes, "Isaac, this is what I'm doing."

In Matthew 16, Jesus says it. He says, "I am building My church. I'm building My... This is what I'm doing in the earth." He is preparing a bride in wholehearted love for Himself. This is what He's doing. And He began to ask me. He goes, "Isaac, what are you building?" Whenever the Lord asks you those questions, you know, it's never good. You don't want to have a snarky answer. When the Lord goes, "Isaac, I'm building My church. What are you building?" The answer's not, "Lord, I'm doing Your stuff too." It was convicting. It was painful. It cut to the core of my offense and my bitterness that I didn't even know was there that was laying dormant in my own soul.

And that's what the Bridegroom does. He comes and He speaks a mystery to us, and He invites us into His plan, and He goes, "I want you to see things, not from your perspective, but from My perspective. I want you to drive around in the city and see the various churches and denominations and congregations. I want you to see what I see, not what you see." Man only sees the outward, but God looks at the heart, and He has the power and ability to call forth the fruit in us that we don't even know is there.

Imagine if God were to appear in your life, walk with you the rest of your days. That sounds wonderful. Here's the catch. He only tells you what you're doing wrong. He only tells you what you're doing wrong. Every desire, every thought, every thing. He's just right there and, "Hey, you missed it. Hey, that's not right. Hey, don't do that. Hey, hey, hey." How many times would He do that to you in the last two hours? The last two minutes? He's just right there.

Do you know what the Scripture calls that? That's the law. The law reveals to us our brokenness before God, but He says grace and truth come through Christ. And the Bridegroom God, what He does is He comes alongside of us and He doesn't just tell us what we're doing wrong, He calls forth that which He has placed in us. He calls forth the fruit of righteousness and peace and joy and holiness and our destiny in God and our identity in God.

Do you know how challenging it is to have a family member, a loved one, a spouse that just tells you what you're doing wrong all the time? it's just infuriating. And that's why so many marriages are so bottle-necked. Because this party sees what's wrong with this party. And this party sees what's wrong with this party, but neither party sees what's right about one another.

And the Lord goes, "I want you to see what I see. I want you to feel what I feel. Can you pray and believe and relate like your spouse is beautiful and glorious to Me? Like your friend, your roommate is beautiful and glorious to Me? Could you feel what I feel towards them? Because they're My prized possession. I paid the highest price for them. I won't relent."

Paragraph C on page 2. The bride's budding virtues of love when rightly identified and understood, propel her into greater confidence. Many despise the love and the obedience that they have for God. They take self-inventory. They look at their own heart, their own life, their own commitment, their own obedience, their own passion for God. They take self-inventory, and they despise what they find. They despise what they see. They buy in to the accusation and the lie of the enemy. The enemy comes and through our thoughts begin to accuse us. He goes, "Your love is actually hypocritical. You're not really a true Christian. You're not really worthy of Jesus

and the blood of His sacrifice. Your love is weak. It's broken. It's meaningless. Why don't you just throw in the towel and just go do what you wanna do?"

And every day, the enemy comes to the believe and he tries to sow those lies. He throws that accusation at us again and again and again and again, and then we begin to believe it about ourself. And then we begin to believe it about God. That's how He relates to us. He's not a Bridegroom. He's a harsh taskmaster. He's just a master that we have to serve.

Do you know what the name Baal in the Old Testament actually translates to? It translates to master. And the people of God kept going back to the master, the master, the master, and Jesus is going, "No, come to Me. I'm your Husband. I'm the Bridegroom God. I see the virtues of love in your own heart. I have the power to call those out and build your confidence in Me. I don't want you fixated on your weakness. I don't want you fixated on your brokenness and how bad you're doing. He goes, "I want you fixated on Me. I want you fixated on what I say about you. I will call forth that which is not as though it is." The Lord bringing the bride of Christ in the nations of the earth into maturity through this.

The truth is is that these feelings of our love when we do that self-inventory, it's not because you're a hopeless hypocrite, it's because your love and my love is immature. Immature love is still real love. It's still valid when the sincere come to God and they say, "Here is my weak love. Here is my offering." He does not despise that love, that expression of love.

When my kids come to me and they've created their, you know, glorious artwork, with all sorts of glue and da da da da da, and they come to me, their artwork is immature. I don't tear it up in front of their face and be like, "Come back when you're like Da Vinci." Because I don't despise weak love in sincerity. They're like, "Dad, I want to bless you. This is what I have to offer. This is my heart before you." And the Bridegroom God is the One that is deeply committed to the immature love of His bride as we're on the journey to loving Him wholeheartedly.

Page 3, paragraph D. The bride, we must address the very real compromises of the heart, but also avoid mitigating or minimizing sincere love. We need to get on a different wave-length. We need to get out of our human, fleshly thinking, and out of our feelings, and get into the narrative of the truth of the Word of God.

We're living in a generation that is so driven by feelings, emotion. It's actually not that new. It's just everybody knows about it now because we can tell everybody. We're so driven by our feelings. We're so driven by our emotions. Many drove to church this morning and they were unsure if they could worship God with a free heart because they were taking inventory according to their own emotions and going, "I don't know if I'm qualified to do this. I don't know if I'm qualified to pray for someone."

How do I know that? Because I've done that before. It's like, I know I should go pray for this person, but in my own inventory, my flesh, I feel so weak. I feel so guilty. I feel so condemned about my sin, about my weakness, my brokenness, that I'm willing to just check out. I'd rather check out and be passive.

And the Holy Spirit wants the bride, as she's being brought into maturity to have that perspective. "How does the Bridegroom see me right now? How does God feel about me right now? I have His righteousness. I'm a new creation in Christ. The old things have passed away. The new things have come. I've repented of my sin. I'm an heir forever. I've been seated at the right hand. I've been seated with Him in heavenly places, right? My life passed from death into life. I'm a new creature in Christ. Why can't I worship You with a free heart? Why can't I engage with the Bridegroom?" Because that accusation has gotten in subtly. it's so powerful.

The enemy doesn't need another weapon besides accusation because it works. It works. He accuses you. He accuses me. He accuses me through me. He accuses me through you. He accuses the church in the earth through the church in the earth. The bride accuses the bride. And we know that a house divided against itself will not stand. And in Revelation 12 verse 10 in that great picture, that eschatological picture, the day of the Lord, the great tribulation. Guess who's Satan still is? He's still the accuser of the brethren. He doesn't need another strategy because it's working so good against us, guys. it's working really well against us. We believe the accusations over our life and it causes us to be crippled and maimed on the inside, and we run away from God, and we run away from each other, and we don't believe what it is that God has done to us by His power.

We imagine that some other power exists, some other activity exists to establish us in confidence as the bride of Jesus. We imagine some other thing exists out there that we've gotta learn. And so we're reaching for it. We're trying. You know what that's called? That's called the spirit of religion. If the spirit of religion lies to us and says, "Yeah, you're saved. You love God, but you're not enjoyed by Him unless you do this. He doesn't rejoice over you unless you do this." And we live under this yoke of oppression before Him, weighed down and beat down. We can't touch the gladness of God's heart because we don't believe that He's glad. We're not glad! So, He can't be glad.

And we live in this perpetual cycle of shame and doubt and fear and the Lord goes, "I am preparing a bride in the earth." The Lord is going to blow the lid off of the lie of the enemy, and He is gonna have a bride who's a volunteer, Psalm 110, in the day of His power, who freely loves Him and worships Him. Who flows with this heart of devotion and sincerity before Him. Who's life is fully given to Him, fully yoked to Him, made ready for Him.

This is where we're going. This is where you're going. This will help you make sense of your life. The mechanism for preparation for the bride is a wilderness. Look at all His servants. They get prepared in a wilderness, but we try and rebuke the wilderness in Jesus' name and do one of these things on it and get the wilderness off because it's time for the promise land. And Jesus is going, "Wait a second, in the wilderness, you actually depend upon Me. In the wilderness, you don't have anything else to love. in the wilderness, there were no idols in Egypt." He goes, "Last time I checked, this was all about us." And we sing, we pray, "Oh, God. I don't want anything else but You. I don't want anything else but You." But then when God gives us nothing else but Him called the wilderness and brokenness and realizing our own lack and our own lack of self-sufficiency and all that is exposed, and we're going, "Oh, I actually didn't just want You. I actually wanted 18 other things."

We sing the song, "Put me anywhere. Put me anywhere. Put Your glory in me. I'll serve anywhere." And the truth is, God has likely put you exactly where you need to be, so go enjoy Him in glory and do the song that you sing.

The wilderness is the time of preparation. 400 years the Hebrews are in slavery, the children of Israel. And God pulls them into the wilderness because in 40 years, He had to get the Egypt out of their own hearts and their own souls. And we need to stop rebuking the processes of God and the things that are going wrong. We're interpreting them as only warfare and only the enemy and maybe it's the Bridegroom going, "Hey, I want your affection again. I want you to look at Me again. I want to remove the other loves." I mean, we sing the songs, we sing all these songs. Kick out my props and take me to the place where I only find You, and hedge me in behind and before. God is doing that. He's really good at it, too. He's like, "I'm after wholehearted love. I'm not just after your thing being better and you feel a little bit better about yourself and have a little more zip at your Bible study and a few of your co-workers are like, "Wow, that guy's a real Christian."

Like, that stuff is good, but it's not love on the inside. You could do all that stuff, but still be dead on the inside and still never connect with the Bridegroom God. And He's so jealous. He goes, "I won't let that happen to you." You could do signs, wonders, miracles, heal the sick, raise the dead, prophecy, cast out demons in His name, stand before Him, Matthew 7, and the Bridegroom look at you and go, "I never knew you."

Well, I'm not even there yet. I'm not even raising the dead. I'm not even doing all that stuff that He said. I'm like, "Hey, that sounds kinda cool! I want to do that in some sort of consistent way first." And He's just showing, He's just peeling back the onion of our own soul, just going, "On the inside, this is about you. This is about Me. This is about wholehearted love. This is about agreeing with the way I feel about you. I am the Bridegroom God. Stay in the wilderness. Stay in the place of, of all of those loves and all of those props, and whether it's the money or the relationship or the boyfriend or the girlfriend, whatever it is that's being tested, that's being peeled away in your life, stay right there and say, "Holy Spirit, does my heart connect with You? Am I Your bride? Do You love me? Do you enjoy me? Do you sing songs of deliverance over me?"

The Lord prepares Israel in the wilderness. He prepared Moses to be a deliverer in the wilderness. He prepared Joseph in a prison. He prepared John the Baptist in the wilderness. Jesus went to the wilderness. Where do you think you're going?

Various characteristics of the bride, Ephesians 5. Look at the way that He describes the people of God. She's fully subject to Christ. That means she's under, literally under God's arrangement. I will walk in the ways of the Lord. I will walk within the boundaries of this covenantal love. I will not exceed these boundaries, but what You say, I will do and what You say, I will believe, and I will trust in You. She's subject to Him.

This picture of mature love in Song of Solomon 8 is expressed by her being fully dependent on God. We train everybody through every mechanism possible to be completely independent. We train our kids, be independent. Stand on your own two feet, do your own thing. Pick up your own

clothes, da da da da da. And that's not wrong to do that, but where do we learn to be fully dependent on God? There's only one place. It's the wilderness. It's the wilderness.

Look at this, the bride that's seen as mature, Song of Solomon 8:5. It says, "Who is this coming up out of the wilderness," people are confused. They're confused by it. She's leaning upon her Beloved. That's the picture of mature love. That's the picture of the bride having been made ready for Him, is leaning on Him. Not standing on her own two feet, not walking powerfully, valiantly beside Him, but actually fully dependent on, leaning on Him, collapsing upon Him.

Have you learned how to collapse into God yet? Have you learned how to, how to just give in to the leadership of the Holy Spirit? To not kick against the goads, to not re-negotiate the contract of love, to not re-negotiate the marriage with the Bridegroom, to not bend the Scriptures, to just walk and lean, and depend on Him?

I want to just touch on two things. We'll go ahead and have the worship team come out. On page 4 under number 4. Verse 29 of Ephesians 5. It says that she is nourished and cherished by God. She's nourished and cherished by God. This is what that means. To be nourished by the Spirit of God means to be brought up to maturity in Him. See, there's that dependence. He's the One that perfects the love within the heart of His people. He's the One that perfects the love of your own heart. You don't perfect it. You just keep going through the wilderness, following the presence, the cloud by day and the fire by night. It was like, duh.

They're in the wilderness. They're not like, "What do we do? Where do we go?" It was just like, "Follow that thing. Okay, here we go." Meaning, the Holy Spirit is able and willing to guide us, to bring us into maturity in the place that we want to go. But where we get off track is, "God, I'm not going that way. I'm going that way. I'm not gonna do that in my relationships, I'm gonna do this. I'm not gonna do that with my money. I'm gonna do this. I'm not gonna do that with my sexuality. I'm gonna do this." And as soon as we do that, we get off track from the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and our heart isn't able to be perfected in love because He's the One bringing us to maturity. He's the One that is nourishing us, bringing the bride up to maturity. And we must work with Him, not against Him.

The second thing is that He is cherished by her. It literally means to be cherished by the Bridegroom, literally means to be kept warm. The imagery an individual coming near to the heart of another individual and allowing their warmth to transfer into their warmth. The Holy Spirit, He guides us. He holds us. He draws near to us. He keeps the flame of love growing on the inside. He's the One that sustains the passion for Christ on the inside.

Let's stand.