

Coach House Church

BEACONS

PREPARE YOURSELF

28TH JULY 2021

Last weekend I went to my brother's fiancé's hen do. It was a really nice time celebrating the bride Aoife, and preparing for the wedding that will be in a few weeks time.

This reminded me of the passage in Revelation where it talks about the bride of Christ being the Holy city of Jerusalem. In Revelation 19:7 it says "Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready"

This got me thinking about all the preparations a bride makes to be married and how that relates to the preparations we should be making for when the church together is the bride of Christ.

Firstly, a bride will get rid of anything that she doesn't want on her wedding day or is not suitable when she gets married. This is the uncomfortable part. It's not always nice or easy to remove hair from your legs and armpits and it's a process that needs to be done again and again. Hair keeps growing back as annoying as that is. This is like us getting rid of our sin and trying to change our thought patterns. It's a continual process of cleansing that we will not finish until this life is over. We will constantly be battling with those sins that are a problem for each of us individually, just like a girl has to constantly shave her legs. But when we get married to Christ, when we finally get to paradise, it's like those hair follicles fall out and we don't have to worry about it anymore. God doesn't count up these sins and hold them against us. He cleanses us of them so we can still come into his presence and be with Him in eternity. 1 John 1:8-9 says "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." It might not always be comfortable to confess or to remove the sin but God will be there with us and will cleanse us.

A bride will also get rid of anything that she has kept from childhood that isn't any good to her in her marriage. Maybe it's trinkets or stuff that will just be in the way. She has to sort through her belongings and decide which she wants to go on with and which she will leave behind. This can be an emotionally painful process as there may be things that we don't want to leave behind but have no place in a marriage, maybe some stuffed toys that she always used to cuddle or ornaments that are just

unnecessary. Again in life there are things that hold us back. There is baggage that we are holding onto, but in preparation for being the bride of Christ we need to get rid of these things. We need to shed anything that is unhelpful. This might be certain belongings or books if they are unhelpful to us or it might be letting go of hurt from the past. It might be choosing to forgive someone, even though they are annoying. Again, this can be a process, but with the grace of God sometimes it's as easy as chucking in a black plastic sack.

Next a bride will say goodbye to her single way of life. Just like at a hen do she might have people that have helped her through that part of her life, praying for her and promising to be with her in the next stage of life, or it might mean saying goodbye to some friends. It is good for us to have a community around us. It is good to have a community of friends that are both Christian and not Christian. But we need to choose our friends carefully. Proverbs 12:26 says "The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." Friends will help guide the way we live so we need to make sure we pick people that will build us up, or that we can build up. We need to always be encouraging those around us to grow closer to God. It has been really nice to see at this hen do the trust that Aoife (the bride) has in her friends and the trust they have in her. Not all of us were Christians but we still prayed for Aoife and the friends that weren't Christians saw and experienced something of God because she's done such a great job of building trust so she was able to bring them into that place.

Then a bride will put on things to get married. She will go out and buy a specific dress that she will likely spend a lot of money on and is likely to never wear again. It will be a gorgeous (usually white) dress. Fortunately, the wedding dress we put on to marry Christ, we will never take off. We don't have to pay for it out of our earnings, none of us would ever be able to afford it. We get the most expensive clothing that is the righteousness of Christ. He covers us with His glorious pure righteousness because we would never be able to dress ourselves. This is a garment we will wear for all eternity and we will wear it with pride. It will be a beautiful garment that will suit each of us perfectly. In Isaiah there is a passage about the year of the Lord's favour. I think this has been partially fulfilled but there is a passage that reflects the part we read earlier in revelation. Isaiah 61:10 says "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels." We will one day be properly adorned but for now we should do our best to "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness", as Ephesians 4:24 says.

Finally, the bride will walk down the aisle and make promises to her husband. She will leave her family and the only way of life she has ever known and begin a new life. She will do this publicly, in front of all her friends and family. She will do this happily. Marriage isn't a contract you enter into hesitantly or because you were pressured into it. Happy marriages aren't anyway. We will get to enter into this beautiful covenant relationship with Jesus. We will completely leave our lives here, including all the sin and shame and begin a new life. God will take care of us and look after us and we will worship Him forever. We will finally be free of sin and shame. Forever.

The church is the bride of Christ. We should be now celebrating and anticipating what is to come. We should be beginning the preparations and getting rid of our sin, putting on the new self as much as we can. But all the time we should remember that Christ has chosen us anyway. Even though we have all fallen short of His glory and even though we continue to do so, we are His treasured possession and part of His family.



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