

## ***Session 16 Establishing Our Identity in Bridehood***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Session 16: “Establishing Our Identity in Bridehood.” That’s the theme of tonight. We’ll go really briefly through the first couple of pages because it’s only introductory. Since we’re starting late, they aren’t that essential to the theme.

### **GOD’S FINAL WORK: THE GLORIOUS CHURCH**

God’s final work: the glorious Church. Verse 27: “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

God’s final purpose in human history, in natural history, is to provide out of the human race a remnant that He defines as a glorious church. The Church isn’t going to end as a ragged remnant, but as a people filled with the glory of God.

God started in Genesis 1 and 2 in a garden with Adam and his bride. It will end in a garden with the last Adam and His bride. The Church from human history is going to end up in the glory of God before it’s over.

Look at paragraphs B and C. Not to elaborate on this, but they speak of the garments, the bridal garments. They will have no spot and no wrinkle. Being spotless means there will be no defilement of sin. Being without wrinkle means nothing will be out of balance. It will be according to the truth.

Now look at paragraph D. The bride’s heart is holy and without blemish. That’s the bride’s heart. I won’t develop this theme because I just want to give introductory remarks on this. That’s where this thing is going: a glorious church that wears garments without spot or wrinkle. That’s what’s on God’s heart. That’s where human history is going in terms of the redeemed: a people who are wearing garments with no spot and no wrinkle at the end.

### **GOD’S METHOD: CHERISHING HIS CHURCH**

God’s method: cherishing His church. It says in the same passage, in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church” (Eph. 5:25). That’s the point: “Jesus loved the Church.”

“That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water by the Word” (Eph. 5:26). Skip a few verses, and go down to verse 29: “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church” (v. 29).

Here’s the first point: that the first foundation of the Church, the first foundational point of having her identity, is this simple phrase, “Jesus Christ loved the Church.” The whole thing is built on this revelation.

Ephesians 5 is the picture of Jesus and the bride. The husband and wife are merely a picture of the eternal reality. Under this idea, that Jesus loved the Church, we have to understand that marriage was an eternal reality in the plan of God. Secondly, it was a human picture on the earth. What I mean by that is that God didn’t look at Adam and Eve and say, “Man, look at how good they’re getting along. Why don’t I do this with Jesus and His people? Why don’t I make her a bride?”

God didn't look at the earth and then come up with the idea and then create a reality with Jesus, but rather there was a reality in the mind of God with Jesus that He would cherish this partner forever. He wanted to give us, the redeemed, a picture of this on earth, so He gave the institution of marriage. Obviously, it serves many purposes of God's plan on the earth. He wanted to give a picture of the spiritual and the eternal reality first. The whole thing is founded on the fact that Christ loved. He had passion in His heart for a people. That's the whole foundation of it, right there.

### **PURSUED BY GOD WITH A SPECIAL DESIGN IN MIND**

What's He going to do? He's going to sanctify. Here we have that word again: *sanctify*, set her apart; designed with a special plan in mind. That's what "set apart" means: pursued by God with a special design in mind. He's going to cleanse the Church, and that's the point I want to make. He's going to fulfill the special plan for which we're set apart, and He's going to cleanse the Church before it's over.

### **STRONGHOLDS ARE TORN DOWN BY ANOINTED IDEAS**

The real point for which I introduced the first two points was C: "How?" This is the key point: by the washing of the water of the Word of God. Going back to Session 15, the point is this: that strongholds are torn down by ideas that are anointed by God. Here it gives the exact same concept, but he says this bride is going to be cleansed and sanctified, with no spot and no wrinkle, filled with glory. How? Paragraph C tells us. The Word of God is the tool that God will use to bring glory to His people.

### **JESUS WILL RELEASE HIS AFFECTION THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD**

My bigger point is this: it's ideas that are the truth that enter our heart with power that changes our identity. That's what will cause glory to touch our lives. I believe this with all my heart: that the Word of God that enters the heart actually changes the way we view God and ourselves; this is what's going to bring the spirit of glory to the Church.

I've traveled around a bit in these last years, and there are so many wild spiritual mechanics that people have in their minds that are effective to spiritual warfare. You can't even imagine the number of ideas I've encountered. In the end, the Church is made pure and spotless and clean by the Word of God. This is really simple. When the Word of God enters the human heart with power, people see God and then themselves differently, and then their hearts are changed.

I don't have tremendous impatience with all of it. I just know this: it's the washing of the water of the Word that's key. We don't have to be so easily taken down the path by all the new mechanics of how to make this thing work right, because they're endless. Just remember this: Jesus is the Word. He comes back with the Word coming out of His mouth. The Word is what destroys strongholds. It's the Word of God, and we don't have to rely on so many of the other secondary activities that fill up people's imaginations. Some of it may be edifying here and there—who knows? But it's the Word of God, in the end, that changes the way we view ourselves, and that's what releases the glory of God. We're washed by the Word of God. That's how He nourishes the Church. That's how He cherishes the Church.

I looked up the word *cherish* in Webster's; it means, "To hold dear, to feel affection for, to take special care of." How will He do that? He will release His affection by the Word of God.

### **WITH ALL YOUR GETTING, GET THE WORD IN YOUR HEART**

I'm a teacher, and so you say, "Well, maybe you just picture an area." Well, the Word of God says it. Whatever means that we use, this is the way people are going to be transformed.

Again, I don't want to go on and on about this, but there are so many ideas and gimmicks and mechanics and things people are doing in the name of God; so many things that they're showing and telling. It boils down to the Word of God touching the heart, and that is what changes the way we see ourselves and the way we see God. Our hearts are awakened in love. Bottom line: that's where I'm putting my money, if I were a betting man. I just wanted to note that, because the idea of a new image and a new identity is the subject of this session, and it's rooted in hearing the Word and saying yes to the Word and the heart. A lot of people want a new prophecy and a new person to pray over them and a new discipline to endeavor. Get the Word in your heart. With all your getting, get the Word of God in your heart.

### **BRIDEHOOD: THE ULTIMATE REVELATION OF THE CHURCH**

Bridehood: the ultimate revelation of the Church. This is going to be the final great revealing to the people of God from God. God the Father will reveal the Church as the bride.

There are quite a few verses, but I'm just giving you a few of them here. We've looked at Hosea 2 several times in this session. Possibly—I say *possibly* because it's two full weeks from now, and anything can happen—but my purpose is to look at the book of Hosea in the first session, and then the issues of the bride in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. That's really what I want to do in the next remaining two weeks of this session. There are four sessions, but two weeks left in this course, and I want to look at the Old Testament prophecies. They are fantastic. They are awesome. That's what we'll be looking at more in context in the book of Hosea. It's speaking about the end of the age. You'll just have to take my word for it at this point in time. You'll look at it in our next session.

### **“YOU WILL CALL ME ‘MY HUSBAND,’ AND NO LONGER CALL ME, ‘MY MASTER’”**

Hosea the prophet says this about the end of the age: “And it shall be, in that day,” says the Lord, “that you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master’”(Hos. 2:16).

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’” (Rev. 22:17). The very last description of the people of God in the Scriptures, the last paragraph of the revealed Word of God, describes the people of God as the bride. The very last cry of the Church won't be the cry of the army. It won't be the cry of the family. It will be a bridal cry in unity with the Holy Spirit. Even in the last revelation of the Scriptures, the last four chapters of the whole written Word of God, God is presenting human history with a bride. That's not an accident. It begins with a bride in Genesis 1 and 2 and it ends with a bride in the last four chapters of the Word of God. God could have ended it with any kind of revelation He wanted, but He ends it with presenting a bride to His Son.

I don't believe that's just the last revelation in the written Word. The last sense of identity and image the Church will have of ourselves will be the bridal revelation. It should be the activity of the Holy Spirit at the end of the age. We will say before the Lord, “My Husband.” Our final identity at the end will be that of the eternal companion and the cherished bride. At the very end of the age, we won't see ourselves only as faithful servants. That's only the beginning of our identity. We'll look at the threefold identity in just a moment. When it's all said and done, we will see ourselves mostly as the eternal companion, the cherished bride; the betrothed, chaste virgin.

## **THE DEFINING CRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD AT THE END OF THE AGE**

Hosea was looking towards the end of the age. He said, “At the end of the age, the activity of the Spirit will be such that this will be the confession of the people of God. They’ll not say, ‘I’m Your servant. You’re my Master.’” We will be God’s servants and He will be our master. He’ll be the Lord always. It’s a very legitimate part of our identity to be servants before our Master, or the Lord. We call Him, “Lord”; we call Him, “Master.” That makes us His servants. That’s a very legitimate part of our identity before God. We’re servants.

Hosea said that at the end of the age, when the Lord brings everything to culmination, when you ask the people of God to describe how they see themselves before God, they won’t say, “Oh, I’m His servant.” They’ll say, “I’m His bride.” That’s the confession. The predominant confession won’t be that of a servant; the predominant confession will be that of a bride at the end of the age. At the very end, you will say to the Lord, “My Husband,” in that day. I believe we will say, “My Master.” I believe we will say, “We’re Your servants.” But that won’t be the defining cry of the people of God. Revelation 22:17 says it’s the Spirit and the bride. It’s not the spirit of the family, the army, the priesthood, or the kingdom. It’s the Spirit and the bride. That’s where this thing is going. We will see ourselves in the full glory of God as a cherished bride, as a betrothed and pure virgin. That’s why I think it’s important to emphasize these things at this time, because it’s what will be on the Lord’s heart.

There’s so much to this. I’m just going to just give some hints to this, because it’s the kind of thing the Lord writes on hearts over months and years. He could give us a one-day experience where our hearts are renewed with such understanding that everything changes. Typically, we grow in a new sense of identity over time as we take the Word of God into our hearts, because that’s how He washes us, by the Word. This isn’t how the Church functions. We function as a body; we function as an army; we function as a priesthood, but we’re these three things in terms of our relationship to the person of God the Father or God the Son or God the Holy Spirit.

By the way, this is our overall identity. I’m talking about how we define our life in the presence of God. In a few pages we will be looking at the issue of defining identity in a more in-depth way. Just for now, it’s the way we define our life. The way that we describe and view ourselves is what I mean by our identity.

## **IDENTITY NUMBER ONE: REDEEMED SERVANTS OF GOD**

Most of us start off seeing ourselves as the servants of God. We’re relating to the Lord. He saved us; He provides for us; He meets our needs. He gives us tasks to accomplish. We say, “The Lord told me to do that, so I did it.”

It’s really neat to be used by God. We’re His servants. He uses us to do a miracle and it’s totally exciting. He provides for us and it’s a wonderful thing. This is what the angels are. The angels are servants. We’re admitted into God’s presence. The judgment has been removed. We’re allowed to serve Him. We’re allowed to do tasks for Him. In other words, He tells us, “You made the team. You’re on the team. I will use you. You’re part of the empire. You won’t be in the lake of fire. I’m allowing you to work for My company and to be a part of the vast empire.”

It’s the time when it dawns on us that we’re not rejected; we’re not refused like the unbelievers who refuse the Lord. We made the team; we get to do stuff with God and for God. He provides for us, and that’s an awesome reality. It would be enough if there were nothing more than this. This is glorious. You go to the wealthiest man

on the earth and say, “I want to be one of your servants,” or look at him and say, “I want to be one of the people who work for your company.” He may say, “No, get out of here. I don’t want my company identifying with you.”

It’s not a given. We’re so used to the Lord inviting everyone to Him, but it’s a wonderful privilege that He says, “You can put the name of My team upon your jersey. You’re on My team. Yes.” It’s an awesome reality to be servants of the Lord and for Him to be our Master. That’s very, very glorious.

This thing increases in glory. There’s a progressive revelation going on. The response to this is that we have gratitude that He let us be on the team and that He let us come into His presence. This empowers us to serve Him, to do the tasks He tells us to do. That’s only the beginning.

At the end of the day, the servant says, “I did what I ought to have done. I’m so grateful just to be on the team. It’s wonderful. I’m in the city. I’m part of the empire. I made it. Yes! I didn’t get cut. I didn’t get refused” (Lk. 17:10, paraphrased). That gratitude actually doesn’t touch many of God’s people, because they just assume that this is how it should be. It’s never dawned on them that the greatest King has allowed them to be in His presence and to be on His team. That’s a wonderful thing. This is as far as the angels get, right here.

### **IDENTITY NUMBER TWO: CHILDREN BELONGING TO A FAMILY**

However, there’s a greater glory than being servants and being on the team. It’s children relating to a father. We’re an extension of the family. This is more glorious. We get the family name; we share the family name, the wealth of the family, the honor of the family. We identify with the history of the family. We have the father’s affection, which is different from that of the angels.

1 John 3:9 says the very seed of God is deposited in our spirit. The angels don’t have the seed of God in them; we do. It’s absolutely awesome to be a part of the family. We cry “Abba” (Rom. 8:15). “Behold, what manner of love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called the children of God” (1 Jn. 3:1, paraphrased)! This is far greater than being servants, far greater.

Here’s the response: we have security in the presence of God, with no fear of rejection. We have security in His presence, and honor, and no shame empowering us. It’s more than just accomplishing tasks, though we will obey all of His requirements in terms of our inner life. We want to totally obey. We want to be like our Father.

### **IDENTITY NUMBER THREE: THE BRIDEGROOM AND HIS BRIDE**

But there’s a relationship the Word of God describes as more sacred, more permanent, and more intimate than even a father with his children. It’s the relationship the Bible describes as the only relationship where you actually leave your mother and your father (Gen. 2:24). This is incredible. You cleave to this one individual. It’s called bridehood; it’s called marriage. It’s more sacred, more intimate, and even more permanent. I don’t know about *permanent*. It wouldn’t work in this case, but it’s the most permanent relationship that God has ordained in the Scriptures, and the most intimate and the most sacred. We’re beckoned and exhorted to leave father and mother in the glory of this relationship. It’s called marriage.

### **THE RESPONSE OF OUR HEARTS: EXTRAVAGANT SACRIFICE**

With the Lord Jesus, we’re called into an even greater glory than being in the family. We’re called into full partnership with Him as co-heirs. He won’t act independently of us. A man can have a large family and act

independently of them, but when you're co-heirs, that's the marriage relationship being equally yoked. That's Romans 8:17; that's co-heirs. Jesus says, "As I sat on My Father's throne, so you will sit with Me on My throne" (Rev. 3:21, paraphrased).

Again, in the natural, this is the only relationship in which we're called to leave father and mother and to cleave to this person. Jesus has described our relationship to Him as Him cherishing and cleaving to us in Ephesians 5. The response of this relationship is intimacy. It's empowering us to do more than obeying everything He says, but extravagantly sacrificing everything to Him. When the bridal revelation touches us, it will do more than bring us into the security of the family. It will awaken a capacity of intimacy that's beyond anything that we know. God the Father blesses this union. It's not like it's in competition to the Father. He has described it in the Word of God as even more sacred, even more intimate; He describes it as being like that of husband and wife.

Those are the three levels of relationship to which we're called. The truth is that all three of them are true the day we're born again, but we're most comfortable and most easily receptive to that of being servants. Most of God's people are comfortable with that one. They're in the presence of God. They're legally accepted with the gift of righteousness. They do stuff for God; He provides for them. But the Father revelation unnerves a lot of people. It seems intense. The bridal revelation is even more intense, because there's a fear of intimacy. The sequence is actually important. We will never, ever be able to receive the nurturing and the cherishing revelation of the bride until we have received the embrace of the tender mercy of the Father.

In the prophetic sense, the Lord is emphasizing B right now, the revelation of the Father. It's the main revelation He's emphasizing. We're just sowing seeds right now. In the next ten, twenty, thirty years, the revelation of the bride is going to explode through the written Word of God. We'll see things there we haven't seen before. We read these passages right now and don't see anything—just like when you didn't believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. You read your Bible and you never saw it. All of sudden you begin to see the gifts of the Spirit and the power of God. You read your Bible and you say, "It's everywhere!" Why? Because God gave us a new set of glasses, a new set of lenses. The same thing is going to happen with the revelation of Fatherhood, and then with the revelation of bridehood. There will be songs, books, seminars, revelation, dreams and visions.

It's the time when the Holy Spirit says, "It's time." I think of the verse in Revelation 21:9 when the angel came to John and said, "I will show you the bride, the Lamb's beloved" (Rev. 21:9). This is God showing the bride by the angels of God. There will come a time when God shows us the bride by revelation.

### **THE FOUR MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS IN OUR EMOTIONAL MAKEUP**

The four most important needs in our emotional makeup. The reason I'm touching this is because it relates to our sense of identity. The absolute, unequivocal, number one emotional need that was built into the human heart by God's design is the need to feel—I like to use the phrase, "to feel enjoyed by God." We were created with a craving to be enjoyed by God. We call it *love*, but I want to put the word *enjoyed*. This need in the human soul is the soil of all the false religions in the world. They create all these gimmicks and mechanisms to get God to enjoy them. That's their point. We can't live without somehow attempting to answer the greatest cry of the human heart. Many people don't have language for it, but the basis of shame is the feeling of rejection. It's all right here.

The point is this: this thing is answered in the revelation of the Father and the revelation of the heavenly Bridegroom in the most powerful way. It's answered in such a way that it supernaturally touches the deepest part of our being. I don't have this idea that we're just going to feel this twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Occasionally there are times where it's tremendously important that we feel cherished and enjoyed by God. In my opinion, it answers the greatest cry of our humanity.

### **WE LEARN TO BE GREAT BY LEARNING HOW TO BE A SERVANT**

Here's the second most important emotional need. I'll use the word *feel* again. We need to feel successful before God. When we feel successful before God, it lasts forever. It means success that never ends. If God says you're successful, it never, ever stops. It's permanent. You can rest forever. It can never be undone. We were built with the need in our spirit to be great.

Again, I've said this on Sundays: that God doesn't ever tell us to repent of being great. But He wants us to be great the right way. He put it into us and exhorted us to pursue it. The great thing is this: anyone can be great without regard to any circumstances, and without regard to any special skills—without any special beauty, and without any special station in life. Anyone can be great by being a servant. Anyone can. God calls us into servanthood, or, you could say, into voluntary love.

The reason I'm touching these two is because the revelation of the bride answers the two greatest emotional needs that we're built with, and it was supposed to answer them. It's not an accident. We feel enjoyed a little and we feel successful a little, and anyone can be successful if you say yes to love and servanthood. It doesn't matter if you have no money, no skills, no financial power, no position in life, no breaks, no unusual beauty or talents. It doesn't matter. If you say yes to love and yes to servanthood, you can be the greatest in all of human history. That's really a wonderful thing. God made it easy on anyone. He said, "I called you into this."

Actually, we have a need to feel that our lives are great or successful. You can use the word *great* if you want to. When we touch these first two things a little, there's a spiritual pleasure that we experience, even a little. That's the term I'll use: "spiritual pleasure." A bit of spiritual pleasure empowers our heart a lot. There's a tremendous pleasure that occurs in feeling enjoyed and feeling successful. There's a serenity; there's a sense of dignity. There's a sense of triumph in a good sense that touches our spirit when we feel enjoyed and when we feel a little successful. Everyone can do this in the sphere of the bridal revelation. The result is spiritual pleasure, and it empowers our heart.

The third most important emotional need that we have is to be enjoyed by people. You can put *honor*; you can put *liked*; you can put *valued*. Put any word you want there: *heard*, *understood*, *known*. Bottom line: we were created with the need to be enjoyed by some people. When we don't, life doesn't work.

We were created with a need, a desire to be successful to some degree in the arena of human beings. Here's the problem. I want to say this. There's a certain emotional pleasure that empowers our heart when we feel enjoyed by people and successful before people. There's a spiritual pleasure with the first two. There's an emotional pleasure with the second two, and no doubt the two overlap.

### **WHEN WE DON'T FEEL LOVED BY GOD, WE BECOME SLAVES TO HUMAN HONOR**

Here's the point. Most people seek three and four, or C and D—I called them three and four—without one and two. Most people's lives are focused on C and D. Because if we aren't experiencing one and two, we

automatically give preeminence to three and four. Automatically, three and four take preeminence in our emotional lives if one and two aren't functioning. They automatically take over.

There's a problem when that happens: we become slaves to the love of human honor. We're totally enslaved to receiving honor from people. The fear of rejection paralyzes our lives and our emotions. If we do three and four without one and two, we're enslaved in the most devilish way. It's called "the fear of man," and it's a snare.

This isn't a condemnation, because all of us are strong on C and D and weak on A and B, all of us—the whole human race. There might be a few exceptions. And the fuel is being focused on C and D, being entrenched in C and D, which all of us are. That's where it is. This is the soil for all kinds of emotional entrenchments, addictions, and dysfunction. It's by having so little of A and B alive in our hearts. That's not a rebuke; it's an answer. It's a solution, is my point.

When God glorifies His Church, cleanses her, and washes her with the Word of God, we will, give the confession, "You're My Husband." The implication of this is that A and B are functioning in our life, even a little. The implication is that the amount of sexual disorders, and eating disorders, and all kinds of emotional disorders in our lives are going to be significantly touched.

The reason I'm saying all this is not so you can figure out which category you're in. Don't do all that. My point is this: there's hope. There's light at the end of the tunnel. There's a revelation of the bride that's on the divine agenda, and the Lord is beginning to reveal it little by little. It will answer A and B so powerfully that I have more confidence in this revelation to set the entrenched human heart free than anything else. We're slaves when we live by C and D only. Yes, C and D have a role, but they have to be third and fourth. When they're one and two, which is easily the natural order of our lives, then our lives are absolutely wrecks because we're afraid of rejection and we're slaves to receiving honor from people.

This is meant to give you hope. It's not meant to say, "See, you're in trouble if you don't have A and B." Well, no one has this entirely. That's the state the Church is in. But before it's over you'll say to the Lord, "My Husband," and not only, "My Master." You'll say, "My Husband," and the Church will be filled with glory. The Church will be washed by the Word of God. We will live without spot or blame, and we will be filled with the glory of God. We will be cherished and nourished by the revelation of the Word of God to our hearts.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE COMPONENTS OF OUR SELF-IDENTITY**

Understanding the components of our self-identity, or you might put, "How we define our life." The way we define our life is so absolutely vital. This is the information that creates or breaks strongholds—the way we define our life.

These are the components of self-identity, or the way that we define our life. You could put the phrase, "Our image," the way we view ourselves. I'm using *identity*, *image*, and, "Defining our lives," as synonymous terms.

### **THE NUMBER ONE COMPONENT IN YOUR SELF-IDENTITY**

The number one component in your self-identity is how you define value. What's your life value? In essence, you attribute value to your life according to who enjoys you. It's really true. When someone is mean to you, you say, "They don't value me."

When someone likes you, you say, “They really value me.” The point of the issue is this: we define the value of our life mostly by who enjoys us. Some of us haven’t thought that through all the way, but it’s really true.

Here’s a principle. This is psychology 101, but it’s according to the Word of God here. We’re enslaved or we’re controlled by the opinion of the most important person in our life. This is a proven psychological fact by the social scientists out in our community. Who’s the most important person in your life? It could be a mom or dad. It could be a husband. It could be a son, daughter, or friend. Whoever the most important person in your life is, the power that person has over you is immense, whether you know it or not. We’re controlled and enslaved by the opinion of the person that’s most important in our lives—in other words, the one we want to enjoy us the most; the one we want to like us the most. When that person becomes Jesus Christ, for real—I don’t mean a doctor, I mean for real, and we can’t just make that happen—that’s a revelation of the Word of God to us. That’s the fruit of being washed by the Word of God. When we understand that He cherishes, longs, delights, and enjoys us as the betrothed virgin, something awakens and He becomes that One. Then we’re gloriously enslaved to Him and we have control that’s called being filled with the Holy Spirit.

What’s happened now is that most of us define our lives, not by the people who value us, but the people who don’t. We wish that they did, and it enslaves us. It causes so much anguish to our hearts, because we get our identity, our sense of value, from the people who enjoy us. Mostly we get it from the people we want to enjoy us who don’t, and we’re enslaved by it.

### **WE DEFINE OUR LIFE BY HOW WE DEFINE PURPOSE**

The second issue of our identity is that we define our life in the way we define success. So many of us define our life by what we have accomplished. We define success by the position we occupy. If our business goes well or our career goes well, we feel successful. Our life is therefore identified in this way. We define our life by how we define purpose. The purpose of our life is our highest goal.

The way we define our life is by the things that we accomplish. If we say yes to Jesus Christ and to servanthood, then most of us are focusing on all kinds of other things, but the bridal revelation pulls us into this. We define our life by the purpose to which we said yes: our highest goals, that for which we exist, the dream of our heart, what we want to be.

### **MY VALUE IS IN BEING PURSUED AND ENJOYED BY JESUS CHRIST**

What’s the real reason? For a lot of people, their real dream is actually to be happy. They maybe haven’t thought it all the way through, but when they think it all the way through, it’s to be happy. It’s the highest goal they could have, to be happy on the earth.

There’s an even higher goal than being happy, though we will be happy in it, for sure. We will definitely be happy in it, but our highest purpose is to be the eternal companion of the Son of God. When that connects with us, we feel loved and we feel like we’re lovers.

Here’s how we define our life in the kingdom. Number one: by who pursues us and who desires us, namely Jesus Christ. We define the kingdom identity on the basis of the One who pursues. I’m not important because some famous preacher thinks I’m important. I’m important because I’ve been pursued and desired by Him. That’s why I’m important. That’s why I have value, because I’m pursued and enjoyed by Him. I’m important

because of that to which He has called me: because of His plan for my life, because of my destiny as the eternal companion; that's why I'm important. The destiny that He has given me; that's why I'm important.

Someone might say, "Well, they fired me at work. It's really terrible." We can be fired from work, but there's a plan that we're called to that no one can stop. It's our destiny. This is what defines the value of our life.

The third way in the kingdom that we define our purpose or that we have our identity is by our response. We're defined in part by our response. We're defined by a willing spirit, not by our failures. Many people define their life by their failures in the kingdom. God defines us by a willing spirit, by the yes He put in our spirit by the Holy Spirit. I can stand before God knowing that He's the One who pursued and desired me. He enjoys me; therefore I have value. He has called me to the wedding supper of the Lamb; therefore I have success. I have a response. My response is defined by the fact that I want to be obedient. I'm not defined by how much I can attain maturity; I'm actually defined by the longing of my heart.

### **DEFINING OUR LIVES BY WHAT WE ACCOMPLISH AND FAIL TO ACCOMPLISH**

This is the former basis of our identity. This is how most people define their lives, even in the kingdom. They define their lives by what they've accomplished in an earthly way: by their secular job, by their ministry, or by how good or how bad their family is. Most people define their lives by what they accomplish in the natural. It's a disaster for that to be the number one definition of our life. That's our identity and the image we have of ourselves. Most people don't define their lives by what they accomplish; they actually define their lives by what they fail to accomplish. That's far more powerful. It's the arena of accomplishment that defines who they are. This is the power of strongholds. The way we define ourselves is the essence of a stronghold. It really is.

The second way is the positions we occupy—for example, going up the ladder in the church world or the secular arena. People think they have more value that way. Nothing could be further from the truth in God's economy, but that's the information we've received. Remember, we're living by C and D, or three and four. We're living by being enjoyed by people and being successful in the light of people. We get our identity from the position that we occupy.

I struggle with this stuff all the time, but I'm constantly trying to realign my heart to God and to get my identity based in the fact that I'm a servant, a child, and part of the bride. When I connect my identity to those three things instead of these five things, it's amazing how differently I feel on the inside. When I feel differently, I act differently. I have a lot more power for diligence, for discipline, and for obedience under temptation when my heart is alive.

The next way that people define themselves is by their skills or special abilities: their musical, creative, artistic, athletic skills, or even by their wisdom. Some people don't have those skills, but they are very wise. They can talk to you about the sciences, and they understand this and that. Their identity is based on the fact that they have a skill or a certain amount of wisdom.

The next way is the people with whom we associate. I'm saying it kind of funny, but most of us long to associate with the rich and the famous in one category or the other. When we associate with them, there's a transfer of their honor that comes to us. People are always cutting in line to meet Billy Graham for some reason, or the president of the United States. They always take pictures of them at the White House, and they put it on the wall. "If I did it then, I'll do it, too!"

Anyway, I don't think that's evil. That's not my point. My point is, there's a powerful pull on all of us to identify our life by those with whom we associate, because we get some kind of transfer of their success.

### **WE DEFINE OURSELVES BY OUR SUCCESS; GOD DEFINES US BY A WILLING SPIRIT**

Letter E is for Christians only. We define our lives by the amount of spiritual maturity that we have. Or worse, we define our lives by the amount of spiritual failure we have. God defines us by a willing spirit. What you believe about yourself, the information that takes root in your heart about your value, about your success, and about your purpose, will control you for good or for evil. It really will. If it's the right information, if you define your life by the fact that you're pursued by Him, and that you're successful because you said yes to servanthood, and that your eternal purpose is to be a part of the bride, and you realize that God sees your willing spirit and that's how He defines you as successful on the earth, your life will have a tremendous amount of spiritual pleasure and the experience of fellowship with God.

### **THE THINGS WE THINK DETERMINE THE WAY WE FEEL**

If your heart is where mine is naturally, we're controlled by those other five things. We're not accomplishing nearly the number of dreams we had when we were young. "The cool people don't like us. My gifts aren't good enough." We're stumbling, and our whole definition of ourselves is disaster. God is going to answer this through the revelation of the bride. He's getting right to the very core of the human heart. This information determines your actions. It forms your emotions. This information will form your emotions. It really will. It will make you mad, glad, and sad in unpredictable cycles. When the right things happen, you're glad. When the wrong things happen, you're very, very sad. Our emotions are slaves to circumstances and people and the right person smiling. We're in slavery all the time to pain. It's called *strongholds*; it's called "demonic strongholds," and we get them by believing wrong information.

This information determines our actions. It's the same thing we said last time: the things we think determine the way we feel, which determine what we do under pressure over the long term.

### **RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO THE IMAGE OF JESUS**

I'm only going to read verse 10 of Colossians 3. You can read the rest of it later. 3:10, Paul says, "Put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:10). That's such a powerful verse. The new man is renewed by knowledge. Again, it's information. I'm using the word *information* to get your attention. It's divine information, of course. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). It's information that renews you. There's no higher information than the information of the Father and the information of the Bridegroom. There's no higher information in existence anywhere than that information. That's why it's vital that it enters our heart, because the new man is renewed by knowledge. It's not just knowledge. It's the knowledge according to the image of God.

### **THE WAR FOR BONDAGE IS FOUGHT ON THE SOIL OF HOW WE VIEW OURSELVES**

I realize I'm going too quickly really to do this justice, but at least a few little thoughts will be sown into your minds. How we view God is absolutely the most critical thing about our life, because if the God that we view is passionate and longed for, our life is going to go down one path. If our view of God is angry, distant, hesitant, and probationary towards us, we will go down an entirely different path. The way you view God determines the way you view God's personality, which determines how you think God views you. If He smiles a lot, there's a very good chance He's smiling about you. If He's mad all the time, there's a very good chance He's mad at you.

Paul said, “You’re renewed by your knowledge of the image of God.” You have to think about God rightly. My point is this: there’s a heavenly Bridegroom who is waiting and beckoning us. This is the God who is viewing us in such a way that He cherishes us and longs for us. The enemy doesn’t want us to view Him like a Bridegroom because, number two, we will feel cherished and longed for if we connect with the Bridegroom in number one. That’s why this revelation is so vital. The way we think God views us ultimately determines how we view ourselves. The war for bondage is fought on the soil of how we view ourselves. We can tell people until we’re blue in the face to grit their teeth and repent. I have so little confidence in a person transformed by teeth-gritting repentance. What I want to do to that person is get them to see themselves differently, because their heart will be empowered. They’ll do all kinds of things differently. Bondages will be broken over time, but they’ll never view themselves differently until they see that God views them differently. They’ll never see that until they see God.

That’s why the images of a father, a master, and a bridegroom is essential. The Master is a good master. He’s not a taskmaster. Those three pictures of God, especially the last two, totally revolutionize the way we live life.

This is a great point, and it would take a long time. I’m just going to touch it a little, because obviously we’re over time already. Let me read the verse; Paul says, “Put on the new man.” He’s talking about putting on a new image. He’s talking about a new identity.

Some people say, “How do you put on this new man?” He’s talking about accepting a new identity of yourself. That’s what that verse means: “Put on the new man.” “See yourself differently,” is another way Paul could have meant that.

This new man, this new person that you are, has been renewed in knowledge according to the image of God. Paul uses this issue of the personality of God, the image of God, and he compares that to how we have been created in Christ Jesus.

The point is this: this passionate God, whose image we’re trying to understand, created us in His image so that we could be equally yoked with Him as His bride. That’s the point.

#### **FOUR SOURCES OF INACCURATE KNOWLEDGE**

Four sources of inaccurate knowledge. A. Satan blinds us. He’s deliberately blinding us.

B. We’re born with darkened understanding. We’re born with a mind in sin and darkness, and the light is not on.

C. The responses of people to our behavior. When we do badly, they reject us. When we do well, they flatter us and do everything for us. It builds into us a wrong set of information.

D. We interpret circumstances so incorrectly. We see difficult circumstances as God writing us off, when the truth is it’s difficult circumstances. It’s God longing to bring your heart into realignment with His purpose, that you would be created for voluntary love.

Let me say that again. We interpret circumstances incorrectly. We see negative circumstances and we say, “God has forgotten us. He’s rejected us.”

He says, “No, I’m only allowing the pain so that you come to Me so that I redirect the truth of who you are and the basis on which you’re living.”

**LIVING IN THE REALITY THAT VOLUNTARY LOVE IS WHAT DEFINES SUCCESS**

Satan is dogging and blinding the average believer. He’s deliberately strategizing to blind their understanding of who God is and who they are. Then Satan has to work with the fact that our mind was darkened at our natural birth. We don’t naturally have revelation; it has to be pursued. It has to be sought after. God gives it to the hungry.

We live so much by the responses of people to our behavior. Sometimes they’re horrible responses. They come and they abuse you and create shame. We define our lives by other people’s responses. Boy, we become a slave when that happens. We interpret our circumstances incorrectly. We think that God has written us off when the fact is that He’s wooing and compelling us into a lifestyle where we live by the fact that we’re enjoyed by Him. We live in the reality that voluntary love is what defines success, and not all that other paraphernalia we’re trying to get so hard. We spend so much of our time trying to get all that stuff so that our life is happy. We’re never happy when we get it because our heart was created differently.

I realize I gave you a ton of stuff tonight, but this is important stuff. Amen. Let’s stand.