

“Here Comes the Bride”

God gives women privileged roles as Christians, wives, and mothers. Satan tries to confuse us so that we might fail in the roles God has designed for us. He tries to trick us into thinking that these roles are unimportant. In fact, the roles God has designed for women cannot be accomplished by men or children. We must stop listening to the world’s view of what women should be; instead, we must listen to God. His Word will direct us to awesome blessings when we begin to see how we fit into God’s plan.

When my three daughters were small, I had fun watching them pretend they were getting married. They took turns playing the bride. They would spend hours getting prepared for the big event. They had a white lace dress in their toy box for the “bride” to wear. The two “attendants” would help the bride get dressed, and then they would go through the whole marriage ceremony. Sometimes my son or one of boys in the neighborhood would play the groom. More often the groom was imaginary, because the boys soon learned to disappear when the wedding gown emerged. No matter how the groom was played, he was always perfect. He was like a storybook character: wise, brave, strong, and handsome. He met the bride’s every need.

By the time they became teen-agers, each of my daughters had a detailed list of qualifications for a mate. As they grew, their lists grew too. When they started dating, I was pleased to see the maturity they used in deciding on the final qualifications for the perfect mate.

My oldest daughter, Karen, phoned from college one day. “Mamma,” she said, “it is hopeless. No young man fits my list. I’ve spent time looking and looking. He doesn’t exist, so maybe I will never get married.”

During our conversation, I said, “Karen, such a perfect young man will need a very special young woman. Remember that he will be looking for a mate who will be right for him—who will fit his qualifications. The best thing to do, instead of looking for him, is to work on yourself. When he comes along, he will certainly recognize you as his perfect mate.” She did; he did—and now they are happily married.

You and I have the perfect Bridegroom. He is not pretend; He is real, and one day He will come to take us away. He is Jesus, and He will recognize those who are His. Our greatest role is to prepare ourselves for Him: “And I [John] saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). The church is the bride, and as part of the bride, we must be busy adorning ourselves. We must get ready! Our choice is whether to spend our time just looking for Him or to concentrate on what we can be to Him.

Jesus illustrated this in his story of the virgins waiting for the bridegroom. Some chose to get ready for the groom, and others waited, unprepared, until it was too late. They spent too much time looking for the groom when they should have been preparing for him.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the prudent answered, saying, "No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered and said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you" (Matthew 25:1-12).

Why did those five foolish women only sit and wait for the groom? They knew he was coming, yet they just sat around unprepared, waiting. That does seem foolish, doesn't it? We can fall into that same trap. I hear many more prayers that look to God for something instead of asking for help to *be* something. I am guilty of that myself. We can center on what God can do for us and miss out on an exciting life because of what God can make us into. We can be caught simply looking for our perfect mate instead of preparing ourselves to be His perfect mate. Like those virgins, we must make a choice: We can spend our time preparing ourselves for Jesus, or we can listen to Satan and be distracted and drawn away from Jesus.

"... a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2): Every woman can relate to John's illustration. The bride takes months to prepare for her wedding day. Much time and attention are devoted to adorning the bride for the big moment when she meets her groom for the wedding ceremony. The bride wants to look perfect. If your daughter has been a bride, you know what I am talking about. That day was special to me, as I saw my beautiful daughter presented to her "perfect" man. Her father and I had prayed about this union for a long time. I wanted to see the groom's eyes flash when he first saw my daughter in her bridal gown. As I watched their eyes meet, all those hours of preparation seemed worthwhile. We will be glad for the hours we

spent preparing for Jesus when He comes back to take us home. It will be a glorious day.

Before Esther was presented to King Ahasuerus, she went through the longest makeover ever. Before a young woman was taken to King Ahasuerus, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with spices and cosmetics (Esther 2:12). That is a long time to take a bath and put on makeup! Preparing for that perfect mate takes time. For Esther, that time and effort paid off! "So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace. . . . And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen. . . ." (Esther 2:16, 17).

Esther went from being a prisoner to being a free woman, the king's bride. Like Esther, we are prisoners. We are prisoners of our own sin, and only the Son of God can make us into free women, as His bride. Jesus said,

Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:34-36).

We must devote our time and attention to a makeover, one that will last a lifetime. We must look to every detail of our lives so that we may be pleasing to Him. We must be adorned for our perfect mate. We have an awesome opportunity, and to help us, God has given us the Bible as our instruction book. Before we can fulfill our roles as wives or mothers, we must first look at this most important role: to be part of the bride of Christ, the church. That is our first priority. We must be busy getting ready for our perfect mate, Jesus. When we concentrate on that, He will make sure our other roles fall into place.

My prayer is that we will continue to strive toward beautifying ourselves in preparation for Jesus. ◆

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