



PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

WORKSHOP: The Bride of Christ

by Merrie Lynn Eaker

LEADER'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: God has faithfully prepared us for our role as a bride. Jesus is the Bridegroom, and in the fashion of fine and ancient Jewish tradition, He will come for His bride, the Church. For now, we wait, but upon His return, our relationship, and our very beings, will change and we will grow into full intimacy with our Redeemer. This workshop will explore the cultural concepts of a Jewish wedding which shed light on the relationship that God desires to have with us as believers.

CONTEXT: This workshop is intended for the full PWOC body. It could be shortened to serve as a devotional.

TIME: 60 minutes

HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE: (5 minutes)

Play the video: "Proposal video for Katie".
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF94G95Yvus>

RJ and Katie are apparently ready for this next step. RJ just gave us all a brief history of their life together up to this point. Katie is dearly loved and RJ is ready to make theirs a "forever" relationship.

Many of us here today are already married. We have love stories and proposal stories of our own that we could spend hours sharing, but regardless of our marital status, there is a love story and proposal that is greater than our minds can fathom. We are part of a love story that is truly "out of this world".

Open your workshop in prayer.

-The means to play a YouTube video
-Gold ring party favors with 2 Cor. 1:21-22 attached
-White board/chart paper and markers

-Bridal magazines
-Printed Gallery Walk verses, tape
-Party popper
-Large Venn Diagram
-Post-it Notes

MAKE YOUR POINT 1: The Proposal (10 minutes)

In ancient Jewish times, it was often the fathers who arranged marriages. The father of the young man would seek out a bride for his son, and the father of the maiden would set the bride price. A good father would set his price very high, yet not unattainable for the young man.

Nowadays marriages are not arranged, but the courtship, or *shidduch* ("SHĪ-dook") is a time to be taken seriously. The *Talmud* (Jewish commentary on culture, customs, history and law, with application for daily living) stipulates that it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman until he meets her, and she finds favor in his eyes.¹ Marriageable young people are encouraged to avoid going to movies, but instead discuss plans, dreams, and goals for their future to determine their compatibility.

God has taken upon Himself to woo you into a love relationship, win your heart, and make you His forever. Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV) says, *The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have drawn you with lovingkindness.'*

God's covenant in the Old Testament (Exodus 6:7) established Israel as His chosen people. They rejected Him, but God has never rejected them. God used the prophet Isaiah to declare His love and his intention for marriage to His people. (*Have a volunteer read Isaiah 62:4-5.*)

Isaiah 62:4-5 (NIV):⁴*No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, [my delight] and your land Beulah [married]; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. ⁵As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.*

Not only has God not rejected the people of Israel, He has made a way for us to join Him in this relationship! (John 3:16-17) ¹⁶*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

God made a way. His Son Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). This is His proposal to you. His proposal is for life, for a FOREVER relationship.

We could end here, rejoicing, and all go home with new or renewed joy in our Savior God, but there is more to see today as we study to compare our life with Christ to ancient Jewish betrothal and nuptials. We will continue with the assumption that everyone here has accepted God's proposal for salvation, but please, if you have any questions about it, seek a leader you trust. They will be happy to answer any questions you may have.



ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 1: The Ultimate Proposal (10 minutes)

Have your participants work with a partner or in a group of no more than four people. Assign a Scripture passage (below) to each small group and instruct them to answer the questions below. After they have answered the questions, give them the chance to share their findings with the whole group.

1. What is the "proposal" in this passage of Scripture?
2. To whom does this proposal apply?
3. What impact does this proposal have on you as an individual?

- **John 6:44-47** ⁴⁴ "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God. Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.
- **John 15:12-16** ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.
- **Ephesians 2:4-7** ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- **1 John 4:15-19** ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.



MAKE YOUR POINT 2: The Engagement/Betrothal (10 minutes)

By the way, Katie said "Yes!" As is the Western tradition, Katie got a ring. What does the ring symbolize? (*Allow your participants to answer your question.*)

That commitment in Hebrew is *kiddushin*, but Jewish betrothal is not like our concept of engagement, which is only a promise of marriage. *Kiddushin* ("KID-doo-shin") also means "sanctification," and signifies that from that point in time, the woman was promised to the man. The word *kiddushin* comes from the same root word as *kadosh* ("KÄ-dosh") "holy." Betrothal made the woman a legal wife and her status could only be changed by divorce or death. Betrothal was usually accomplished by the groom giving a coin or ring to the prospective bride and her acceptance of the token accomplished *kiddushin*.¹

If a ring was given, it was placed on the bride's right index finger. There, it was plain for all to see that she was spoken for, and as the woman went about her daily business, it would often remind her of her husband and of her covenant vow. The unity of the bride and groom, however, was not yet physical.

During the traditional *kiddushin* ceremony, the groom would stand in front of his bride with a glass of wine and declare, "This is a new covenant in my blood." During the last supper, Jesus stood and used those very words (Luke 22:20)! When we receive Jesus as our Savior, we enter that same covenant vow. If we choose to enter into this covenant/contract with Almighty God, made possible through the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then we are "sealed." (*Have a volunteer read Ephesians 1:11-14.*)

- **Ephesians 1:11-14** (NIV) ¹¹*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,* ¹²*in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.* ¹³*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,* ¹⁴*who a deposit is guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession— to the praise of his glory.*

God does not place a physical, tangible ring on our fingers. He instead gives us His Holy Spirit. (*Hand out gold rings with the "sealed" Scriptures attached to them. See Appendix A for Scripture printout of 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.*)

Slide your ring on the index finger of your right hand. You are *sealed*. What does that mean to you? (*Allow answers from the group. If they need a prompt, ask a follow-on question like, "What if God was standing face-to-face with you and He put this ring on your finger and He said, I claim you for all of time and eternity? How would you feel?" Let the question sit and be patient for a response.*) If you have accepted His proposal,



then He claims you and seals His commitment to you with His Spirit, who makes His home with you. Amazing.

So, the proposal has been made, the ring is on your finger, now let's do some planning. If you are newly engaged, what comes next? What are the kinds of things that you would do in the engagement period (Western culture)? Let's make a list. I have some bridal magazines that you can look through if you'd like. (*Hold the magazines up and offer them to whoever wants them. Open up the floor for their input and record their answers on a whiteboard or chart paper.*)

The Jewish bride often spent a year or longer preparing for her wedding. The span between the *kiddushin* and the nuptials was filled with quality time with the intended, sewing, preserving, and gathering. A bride's planning, then and now, is for her future life on earth with her husband. We also have quite a bit to do while we prepare for our heavenly Bridegroom. We must get to know our Intended, we must invite others, and we must be watchful and wait.

Responding to God's pursuit of us by pursuing Him back is the purpose of our life. This is what He created us for. This is the reason for our existence. God's intention is that we seek Him, reach out for Him, and find Him. It is out of this relationship that we can extend invitations for others to know God. Every invitation is a call to relationship. Every invitation received opens a new chapter in life's journey. We are called to love God and to love others without holding back.

The truth is that our life on earth after salvation is one long betrothal! But there is something important about "waiting eagerly." While we wait, we address questions that we stuff in the hurry of the adrenalin rush of busy-ness. Having to wait forces us into a space of time that can quiet the soul and give us a chance to breathe. It can be a place to actively practice the spiritual discipline of patience. Waiting is a gift from God.²

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 2: Gallery Walk (10 minutes)

Note to Trainer: Be sure to have the gallery Scriptures posted ahead of time. If your workshop space is small, consider using a hallway somewhere in the building. Getting your people up and moving will help them refocus. Reading this long list of Scriptures out loud as a whole group would very likely result in most of your participants tuning out. A gallery walk gets the blood flowing and allows each person to read at their own pace, with a specific assignment in mind (i.e. "mark which verse(s) resonates with you the most") which makes them read with a vested interest. It's a great way to present a lot of information without overwhelming your participants.

Just like an engaged couple intentionally makes preparation for their wedding day and beyond, we too are called to invest in our relationship with God, looking forward to the



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day we will see Him face-to-face. We are going to take a gallery walk to read Scriptures that apply to this waiting period that we are in. Mark which verse or verses resonate with you the most. (*See Appendix B for Scripture printouts for Gallery Walk.*)

After your group has completed their gallery walk, encourage them to share which Scriptures they marked and why.

Note to Trainer: Your participants do not have the verses written out in their Participant Guide- if they did, they would be reluctant to take the Gallery Walk. You may need to help them jog their memory about which verse they chose since you will have the advantage of having the verses written out. Maybe just read a clip of it to refresh their memory (suggested portion to read is highlighted).

- Anticipate!** Psalm 27:14 *Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.***
- Tone Up!** Isaiah 40:31 *But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; **they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.***
- Choose a Dress** Isaiah 61:10 *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 her jewels.***
- Wedding Invitations** Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'***
- Dream House** John 14:2-3 *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that **I am going there to prepare a place for you?** ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*
- Know your "Man"** John 17:3 ***Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.***
- Hope Chest** Galatians 5:5 ***For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.***
- Home** Philippians 3:20-21 *But **our citizenship is in heaven.** And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*
- Say You're Sorry** 2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead **he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***



MAKE YOUR POINT 3: The Wedding/Nuptials (5 minutes)

(Explode the party popper.) I Corinthians 15:51b-52 **...we will all be changed- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**

The second part of a Jewish wedding is called *nisu'in* ("NĪ-soon"). *Nisu'in* also means "to lift or carry." In ancient times, the father of the groom would determine that the bridal chamber (or *chuppah*) was ready and announce that the young man may then fetch his bride. The groom would gather his friends, then travel to his intended's home. From there the bride was lifted in a chair or carriage above the officials and guests and carried to the *chuppah* ("KHOOP-pah"). A traditional Jewish wedding still incorporates the *chuppah* to this day.

Today, the *chuppah* is a canopy which sits atop four poles and is usually ornately decorated. The marriage ceremony takes place beneath this canopy which is open on all sides. This is a demonstration of the couple's commitment to establish a home which will always be open to guests, as was the tent of Abraham and Sarah.³

Under the *chuppah*, the Jewish people believe the souls of the bride and groom are joined and that the *Shechinah* ("shĕ-KĪ-neh") glory of God rests on them there.

The word *rapture* does not appear in Scripture, but I Thessalonians 4:16-17 does give us an idea of what is going to happen when Jesus returns: **¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.**

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 3: The Wedding and Marriage (7 minutes)

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

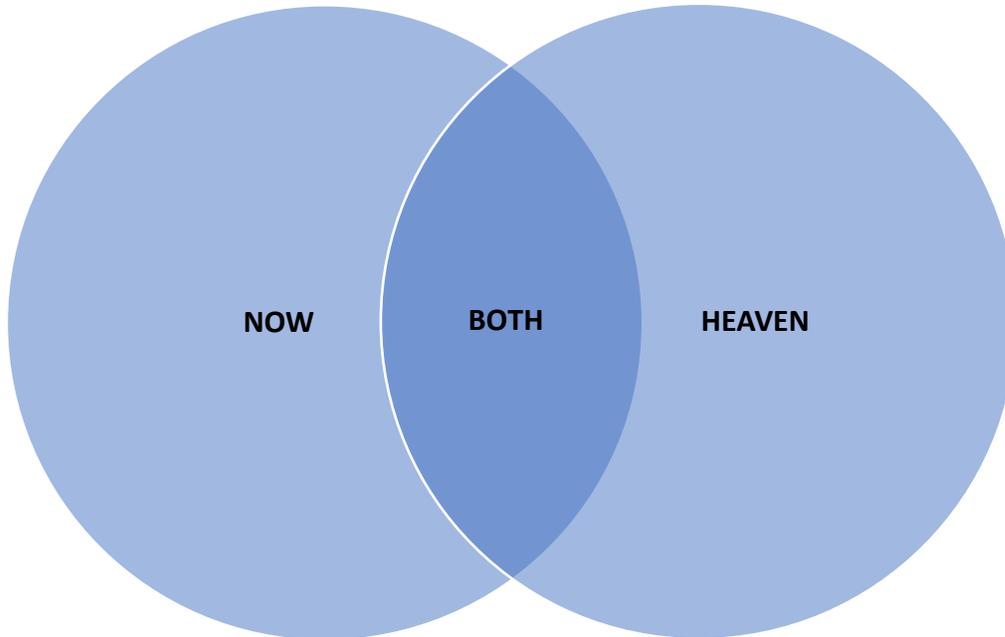
1 John 3:2 *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

Scriptures like these give us a glimpse into the "now" and the "not yet." We are able to be in a betrothal relationship with Jesus Christ now- what is that like? When we meet Him face to face for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9) how will that relationship change? Let's brainstorm about that for a few minutes. We will use a Venn Diagram to help organize our thoughts. Work with your partner or small group to come



up with at least 3 Post-it Notes to place on the Venn Diagram. On the left side, we will put statements that are true about our relationship with Christ NOW. On the right side, we will put statements that are true about our relationship with Christ in HEAVEN. Where the circles overlap in the middle, we will put statements that are true for BOTH. You may write as many Post-its as you would like but try to have at least one for each of the three categories. Go ahead and place your Post-its on the Venn Diagram when you are ready.

Our Relationship with Jesus Christ



Give the groups time to work. After several minutes, pull the groups back together and read the answers within each category. There may be a few post-it notes that will need to move to the middle section. Try to sum up everyone's thoughts within each category, giving a bird's eye view.

One day we will be united with Jesus, our Bridegroom. All our questions will be answered, all our pain will be gone and we will be whole and free and loved more deeply than we ever imagined possible. In the meantime, we are invited into intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. He is calling us, wooing us, wanting to be with us. We are invited into the love, peace and acceptance that is only found in His presence. That type of relationship is available to us right now. Do you know His peace? Do you know how deeply loved you are, exactly as you are today? Do you desire to know your Bridegroom and to be known by Him? That is His desire for you.



APPLY IT TO LIFE: (3 minutes)

Our study of the Bride of Christ throughout Scripture begins and ends with JESUS.

- **Ephesians 1:3-4** *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*
- **Ephesians 1:9-10** *he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

John 1 tells us that all things are by Him, through Him, and to Him. He will be glorified, but what an amazing thing that He invites us into His eternity!

And what about you? It's true that the Church is the Bride of Christ as a whole, but you as an individual are also The Bride of Christ. You are loved and cherished. You are known and honored. Jesus Christ longs to be with you, just as a young man would long to be with his fiancé. The God of the universe is calling you, drawing you, wooing you into a love relationship with Him. Will you allow yourself to be claimed? Will you accept the fact that you are deeply and thoroughly loved, exactly as you are right now?

Take a moment to receive this for yourself. A beautiful engagement awaits you. Let's take one minute to sit in silence, then I will close in prayer. Use this time to breathe deeply and to allow your heart to be touched by your Bridegroom.

(Wait one minute and then close in prayer.)



Appendix A

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. **2 Corinthians 1:21-22**

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Appendix B

(next 9 pages)



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Anticipate!

wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

Psalm 27:14

Tone Up!

But those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings
like eagles;

they will run and not
grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Choose A Dress

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 her jewels.

Isaiah 61:10

Wedding Invitations

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

Dream House

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

John 14:2-3

KNOW YOUR "MAN"

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3

Hope Chest

For through the Spirit we eagerly await
by faith the righteousness for which
we hope.

Galatians 5:5

Home

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Philippians 3:20-21

Say You're Sorry

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

Appendix C

Resources:

¹ www.Chabad.org

² [The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage](#), by Maurice Lamm

³ www.Chabad.org

⁴ https://blogs.bible.org/engage/gail_seidel/why_wait_-_waiting_and_waiting_on_God

[Restore My Heart: God's Passionate Love for His Bride](#), by Denise Glenn



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