

Tenth Grade- The Bride of Christ

This session introduces a deeper study of the identity and calling of the Church. A big part of the Christian life is our membership in the family of faith, and so understanding it is important! For this first session, we want to explore how God feels about the Church. Anyone who's been a part of a church, or really any group of humans, knows that we are messy and frustrating and riddled with faults. That reality can make it easy to walk away once we've been burned bad enough. However, we want students to realize that, in spite of her faults, God loves the Church as His Bride, deeply, eternally, and unconditionally. And we are called to love Her the same way.

Introducing the Topic

We want to start off by opening up conversation and dialogue in your group, and then give students a place to talk through what they already know about this topic! There's no right answers here, so simply encourage everyone to share!

-What do you think makes a marriage healthy? What are qualities you see in good husbands? What about good wives? *(Again, no right answers here, but do record these answers because we will circle back later!)*

-What do you think of the state of the Church today? Not just our local church, but the Church at large? How do you think we're doing?

-How do you think our world perceives the Church? How have you heard the Church described by our culture?

-How do you think God feels about the Church today?

-Have you ever heard the Church described as the Bride of Christ? What do you think that means? Why do you think that description is used?

Scripture Study

As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the "Christian take" on a matter, but God's revealed word, given to us out of love for our good.

-If we are to understand why the Bible refers to the Church as "the Bride", then we have to first understand what the Bible says about marriage in general! Let's read a few different passages on marriage, and talk about what sticks out. Read: Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:8-12; Hebrews 13: 4; Ephesians 5:33.

-What are the key aspects of marriage you see discussed in these passages? *(Here are some key things to direct your groups attention to if they don't mention this on their own: the husband and wife are one flesh, totally united, and they should love and respect each other as they would*

themselves. Their bond cannot and should not be undone, anything that comes in-between is condemned.)

-Let's turn our focus now to where Scripture calls the Church the Bride, and with this context of marriage in mind, explore what it's teaching. Read: John 3: 25-30.

-What stands out to you in this passage?

-Who does John refer to as "the bride"? (*those who were following Jesus*)

-Who does John refer to as "the bridegroom"?

-Why does John say he is rejoicing?

-The Bible unpacks this metaphor of the Church as a Bride further in Ephesians. Let's turn there now. Read: Ephesians 5:22-33.

-What stuck out to you in this passage?

-What does this passage say Christ has done and continually does for the Church?

-What is the profound mystery described in verse 30? (*That we the Church are members of Christ's body*)

-How does this passage describe the relationship between Christ and His Bride?

-After reading all Christ does for His Bride in this passage, how do you think Jesus feels about the Church?

Practical Application

In this practical application, we want to help students internalize what they heard from Scripture today and assess where their previous understanding of this topic was misaligned with the truth of God's word.

-Why do you think Scripture uses the image of a Bride and Groom to describe Christ and the Church? (*After they have all answered, reiterate that it is because Christ and the Church are one-flesh, fully united, just like a married couple, and that bond is one of love and covenant, just like in an earthly marriage*)

-Think back to your answers about what qualities you saw in good husbands and wives, where do you see those qualities reflected in how Jesus loves His Church? How do you think those qualities should impact the way we as the church relate to Jesus?

- How would a loving husband feel about his wife hating parts of herself? If the Bride is the Church and all its members, how should that impact the way we view the Church as a whole?

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