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## Are We Helping to Get the Bride Ready?

Eric V. Snow, sermonette, June 5, 2010, Ann Arbor, UCG

If you're a married woman, do you remember the day of your wedding? Do you remember how long it took to get dressed, to set your hair, to put on makeup? Last Sunday, my bride took over 2 hours to get dressed, to have her hair elaborately set, and so forth. This excludes the normal time spent washing everyday. About five years earlier, her sister Carolina took nearly 3 hours to transform herself into a bride when starting from what she wore to church. Of course, the bride spends far more time in organizing and preparing for the wedding weeks in advance. Now, by analogy, what can this physical experience teach us spiritually? Scripture teaches that the church is the bride of Christ and that she is getting herself ready for marriage.

S.P.S. Like a bride herself preparing for her groom, we should be carefully preparing ourselves spiritually for Jesus' return.

Rev. 19:6-8

V. 6: If we think the present worldwide financial crisis will help lead to the Great Tribulation and Jesus' return, are we doing anything about it spiritually?

V. 7: God will be happy to be unified with us after our evil human nature has been transformed spiritually. So we should be getting ready for the great spiritual wedding to come and the eternal life that follows.

V. 8: My wife wanted a perfectly white dress. It was custom made. When she saw it before it was totally finished, and it had become dirty during the process of cutting and sewing on it, she was sad. Likewise, do we feel sad when our sinful ways of life keep us from getting ready properly for the greatest wedding of all time? If we have

long running sins in our lives, will we do something different to fight them? Men reluctantly reading Christian relationship (marriage & childreading) books example.

Matthew 22:2-14

Vs. 2-4: When sending out wedding invitations and then opening up the responses, I've experienced a bit of drama, not knowing who was responding and who would choose to come. Likewise, God doesn't choose to know in advance our final response to His calling to His Son's great wedding in advance either.

V. 5: Likewise, how can we ignore or make light of God's calling? This can include three types of people: 1. Someone in the world who has learned God's truth, but refuses to ever come to church. 2. Someone is raised in the church who throws away his or her special access to God by going into the world. 3. Someone raised in the church who still attends at least

sometimes as an adult, but has put off baptism for years.

V. 10-13: We can respond to God's calling, but that isn't enough by itself. We have to prepare ourselves for the great wedding to come, when Christ returns. Just coming to church and warming a seat won't save us. Like my bride this past Sunday, we have to diligently work at getting ready for eternal life with God. It just doesn't happen automatically or casually.

Like the man without a wedding garment, it's possible to respond to God's invitation but not sufficiently so that we're saved.

V. 14: According to the theological system of John Calvin, those who are called are automatically going to be saved. They call this "irresistible grace" and "the perseverance of the saints." But Scripture teaches otherwise. People can be called yet not saved. Let's make sure we aren't among the many called who aren't saved

because we lacked the spiritual discipline to follow up after being baptized. Baptism by itself doesn't automatically permanently save us, but it's just the beginning of the Christian journey.

Luke 14:16-20

Do we keep making up excuses to not follow God more seriously? Is anyone here putting off getting baptized? Is anyone here avoiding making serious changes in his or her life in order to overcome this or that sin?

**So in Conclusion:** Just as a bride makes herself ready for her groom on her wedding day, we Christians have to get ourselves ready to marry Christ when He returns. To respond to God's invitation by coming to church and getting baptized isn't enough. Let's diligently do good works and overcome old sins so we can be arrayed in the clean, bright white wedding dress of the bride of Christ.

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