

Going Deeper

Your weekly guide to understanding God with others

Dare - Part 5 Dare to be ready

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Introduction

Jesus uses the Jewish wedding ceremony to illustrate our place in His story. In this analogy, the father finds his son a bride and pays a price for her. A contract is made as the bride drinks the cup of acceptance. The groom then goes to build a place for them to live, while the bride readies herself to be pure for when the groom returns to bring her to the home he has prepared. The father of the groom decides when the home is ready, and nominates the time for the groom to bring his bride home. The bride must wait in readiness, anticipation and expectation for her groom to come. We understand that we, the Church, are the bride of Christ, that Christ is the groom preparing a place for us in His Father's home, and that He will come again to take us to be with Him. Let's explore what it means to be ready for the return of Jesus.

Read Matthew 25:1-13

Discuss

Ready In Purity

1. We read that ten virgins were waiting for the bridegroom to come at an unknown hour. 'Virgin' describes a person who has kept themselves pure and set apart for the bridegroom. It was traditional for a Hebrew bride to have their oil lamp ready for the coming of the bridegroom, even if the bridegroom took a very long time. What do you make of the readiness of the two sets of virgins and their preparedness for a lengthy wait? Have you ever considered that Jesus is coming again to take us to His Father home? Are you ready for His return? Why or why not?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 11:2-3. The Apostle Paul encourages us to be ready in purity for the coming of Jesus. What does it mean to be pure for Christ? What pitfalls does he warn us about in remaining pure? If you are comfortable sharing, what leads you away from purity in your life?

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Ready In Intimacy

3. We read that when the bridegroom came, five virgins were ready and five were distracted and absent. When the distracted five tried to enter the wedding banquet, the bridegroom said, "I don't know you." The lack of oil in their lamps diverted them from knowing the bridegroom more intimately. What are your thoughts about people missing out because they have no relationship with Jesus?
4. Read Ephesians 1:13-14. Paul reminds us that the sign of our intimate relationship with Jesus is His gift of the Holy Spirit. Considering John 16:12-15, how does the Holy Spirit grow our relationship with Jesus and make it more intimate?

Ready in Urgency

5. Five virgins waited expectantly for the bridegroom to come, and their actions demonstrated a deep desire and longing for him. Their mission was to prepare for his coming and they did everything in their power to be ready. They were unwilling to compromise their readiness for anyone. Considering Matthew 28:19-20, how might the church prepare for the return of Jesus?
6. Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. The Apostle Peter reminds us to live with a sense of urgency, as "the end of all things is near". Reflecting on the knowledge that Jesus may return at any time, how might you live your life differently? What does it look like for you to live out your mission within the church with a sense of expectation and anticipation of His return?

Respond

"But for those of us who are wise, our desire runs deep, our belief is profound and unshakable, and our commitment is more than superficial. So, our supply outlasts the bridegroom's delay. Though he does not come, his delay does not consume our readiness. We remain ever ready to follow him; for still we desire, still we believe, and still we remain committed to that which He has promised."

– Jack Crabtree, <https://gutenberg.edu/the-parable-of-the-ten-virgins/>

We are called to be expectant of Jesus's return. Let us consistently pray that the Holy Spirit would fan into flame a longing, yearning and passion for Jesus to return. When we do this we will live differently, with a readiness in purity, intimacy and urgency. What is one way you might live differently in the light of Jesus's imminent return? Share this with the group. Commit to God in prayer that you would wait with expectation and anticipation for His return. As a group, pray together the prayer from Revelation 22:17a, inviting Jesus to come:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!"