

# together

a four-week study in Ephesians

## Together (Ephesians) (Week 4/4) Together Forever

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect** Write a prayer about how you long to develop and deploy your God-given gifts to build up Christ's church this year.

#### Warm-Up

1. Do you ever imagine New Creation? What type of images come to mind?

#### Read Ephesians 5:21-33

2. How many times does Paul address wives and husbands? How many times does he mention Christ and the church?
3. Read verse 32. Why should we consider marriage *as an image* of Christ and the church?
4. Where else in the Bible is the image of bride or a wedding used? What is the image of the church as the bride of Christ meant to convey? How does Christ love the church?

#### Read Revelation 19:6-9

5. Who is the wedding between? Who is the Lamb and who is his bride?
6. Considering the reputation of God's bride in the Old Testament, why is this union surprising?
7. What does the Lamb point to? What is the cost of this union between Christ and the church?
8. How should Christ's sacrificial love for the church motivate and direct our love for each other?
9. What is our future in Christ? How should this future shape our commitment to each other?
10. What would it look like for you to show sacrificial love for the church? What do you want to continue to do, or what would you like to grow in?
11. Who are the guests at the wedding supper?
12. What is the best party you have ever been to? What made it so good and enjoyable?
13. In what ways do you anticipate New Creation to be like *the very best party*? How can you adjust your expectations?
14. Who will we be enjoying New Creation with? Who are you looking forward to being together with?
15. Who do you long to be there? This week, invite them to come to Alpha.

#### Read Matthew 25:1-13

16. Who is the bridegroom? When will he be returning? Who are we meant to be like?
17. How can we *together* in Christ, help each other be ready for Jesus' return?

**Apply** Who do you want to share the wedding supper with? Commit to praying for them each day, and if there is an opportunity, invite them to Alpha.

**Pray** Gracious Father, help us to wait faithfully together as your people, anticipating our good and glorious future together with Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

# GOING DEEPER

## **Together (Ephesians) (Week 4/4) Together Forever**

Small Group Discussion Questions

### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*Ask someone this week "would you like to come to Alpha"?*

### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* "A Marriage Made in Heaven" by Glenn Nesbitt:  
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/a-marriage-made-in-heaven-6/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* "New Creations in Love" by Charlie Skrine:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show\\_media=302164&show\\_file=332142](https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=302164&show_file=332142)
- *Read:* "Waiting Isn't A Waste" by Mark Vroegop.

### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* "The Message of Ephesians" by John Stott. 📖
- *Read:* "The Vision of Ephesians" by N. T. Wright.
- *Read:* "Gathered Together" by Karl Deenick. 📖
- *Watch:* "Ephesians" by the Bible Project:  
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-ephesians/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart's (including Children's Resources):  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/ephesians>

📖 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

## TOGETHER

*Week 4/4 "Together Forever"*  
*by Amy Norman (25/01/2026)*

영원히 함께 | W5 Dhiä Athëër | 永远同在 | என்றென்றும் ஒன்றாக

*Bible Passage: Ephesians 5:21-33; Revelation 19:1-10; Matthew 25:1-13*

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*Gracious Father, help us to wait faithfully together as your people,  
anticipating our good and glorious future together with Christ.  
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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- If you've been to a Christian wedding, the words of Ephesians Chapter 5 are probably familiar. Maybe you even chose this reading for your own wedding.
- Here Paul paints this beautiful image of marriage, of submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. That wives would submit to their husbands, as they do to the Lord, and husbands would love their wives as Christ loved the church.
- But when we get to the end of this passage it says something unexpected, in fact it can seem so out of place, that we can just skim past it. After addressing both husbands and wives, Paul says in verse 32: "This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church."
- Paul is talking about marriage, but then he basically says that there is something *about marriage which tells us* about Christ and the church. Marriage points towards *the union* between Christ and the church.
- And so in this series, as we've been working through *just how we are together in Christ*, today we're going to look at Christ and the church, through the picture of marriage that Paul uses. That in Christ, God's people have been joined together forever with him.
- It turns out Paul isn't the only one to make this analogy. The people of Israel are described as the bride in the Old Testament,

John the Baptist calls Jesus the bridegroom,  
Revelation depicts the coming of the Lamb and New Creation as a wedding,  
and even Jesus himself used parables to warn that his return will be like the coming of the bridegroom.

- Ephesians chapter 5 draws our attention to this image of marriage, but to help us see what Paul can possibly mean by referring to *marriage as an image for the church* - we're going to focus on Revelation 19 and two parables Jesus' taught. These will help us think through what it looks like to be God's forever people.
- Here we see the marriage between Christ and the church is:  
**A Union at Great Cost;**  
**A Union that Lasts Forever;**  
**A Union Which We Anticipate.**

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## A UNION AT GREAT COST | REVELATION 19:1-10

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*First*, our future together forever is only possible *for* it is a **union at great cost**. *From Revelation, chapter 19, verse 6 ...*

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Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean,  
was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” *Revelation 19:5-9*

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- If you're at a wedding - you're usually going to know *at least* the bride *or* the groom. But look here at who this wedding is between: it is between *the Lamb and us*. The groom is Jesus: the Lamb of God.

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The bride is the church: which includes us, and all who put their faith in Jesus.

- It's not that in New Creation we will all need a wedding dress, but rather speaks into how *as God's people, together*, we relate and united to Jesus.
- Throughout the Old Testament, God continually used this image of his people as the bride. As his bride, God's people were deeply loved, chosen by the Lord, and meant to be in relationship with him - sharing extraordinary intimacy with God. They had been joined together by a promise — a covenant made by God.
- But despite the Lord's steadfast love, His bride was often *unfaithful* — even described as adulterous.
- But that's not the image we see in Revelation. Things have been turned around. In Revelation the marriage depicted is beautiful - one which glorifies God. Where there seems to be no hint of the unfaithfulness of the bride.
- But how is this possible? Because it came at extraordinary cost.
- Last year one of the richest families in the world hosted their son's wedding. New airports were built, Rhianna sang, and the 5 month spectacle cost over \$600 million. But it doesn't come close to the cost of *this wedding*.
- It can't be measured in the amount of celebrities, diamonds, or lavish parties, for what *this wedding cost* was something far more precious.

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To pull this wedding off cost the most valuable thing in the entire universe, not all the wealth of the King, but the life of the King himself.

- We are reminded vividly of that in Revelation as Jesus is described as the Lamb. Immediately this should bring our minds back to the Exodus. The blood of the lamb spread over the doorpost to save God's people.
- The cost of this wedding *was the life of Jesus*, the Lamb of God, his blood given to save his people, his life sacrificed on the cross for the church.
- We are clothed splendidly at this wedding - but the robes of salvation we are given, are drenched in his blood, through his sacrifice.
- We see this in Ephesians, *verse 25*:

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Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy  
*Ephesians 5:25-26a*

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- This wedding between the Lamb and the church - *is only possible for Jesus paid the cost*. He is the only one who could pay this ultimate cost.
- Jesus death for us is not only what makes this union *possible*, but it is the ultimate demonstration of his love for us. //

6

- In any relationship, it can be so important to have reminders and evidence *of how much you are loved*.
- That's what makes shows like "Married at First Sight" pretty empty: two people who don't know each other joined together, who have no history of any type of love (and definitely not sacrificial love).
- And yet *how* Christ shows his love for the church is by giving himself *up for us*.
- As people - we long to be loved. To be cherished and sought after. When we look to the cross, we see *how* Jesus loved his bride, with a sacrificial and costly love.
- This wasn't only a demonstration of love, but the very means of how we were joined with him. Without Christ's death for us, we would not be united to him.
- No matter if you are currently single or married, *your future* in Christ is being united perfectly, forever with the one who *profoundly loves you*. It is a future *filled with the deepest kind of perfect love*. And this future is not going to just be *you and Jesus*, for we are loved by Jesus *as the church*.
- Together, we are Christ's bride. />

7

- Jesus' *sacrificial love* for the church should motivate *our sacrificial love for the church*, and it should also give our love direction.
- Jesus' goal in his *sacrificial love* for us is to make us holy, to cleanse us, to present us to himself as a radiant church - without stain, or wrinkle, or blemish, but holy and blameless.
- And so *in this* we see how we are meant to love, in a way that points and prepares each other for our union with Christ.
- In the book *The Meaning of Marriage*, Tim Keller asks:

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What, then, is marriage for? It is for helping each other to become our future glory-selves, the new creations that God will eventually make us. ... It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating, and to say, "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne."

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- This is how *we* can love each other, as Christ's bride. Loving each other, as the church, in a way that prepares each other for our glorious future with Christ.

8

## A UNION THAT LASTS FOREVER | REVELATION 19:9

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Second, this is a **union that lasts forever**. Verse 9 ...

Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” *Revelation 19:9*

- It’s nice to be invited to a wedding,  
but even better (I think) to know who else will be there,  
what is the dress code, and what you can expect: is it a destination wedding?  
How many days are all the festivities?
- Still sticking with the metaphor of marriage,  
the *guests* at the wedding of the Lamb are all those who trust in Jesus.  
Trusting in Jesus, being *in Christ*, is the only way you can be invited to this wedding.
- When Jesus tells a parable of a wedding banquet in Matthew chapter 22,  
the King (through his servants) gathers to the banquet the bad as well as the good,  
from wherever he could find people.  
The King didn’t mind where you were from - *only that you accepted the invitation*.
- And we see why, for it is the King - Jesus, who makes us fit to attend.

9

In the parable, all the guests are given new clothes to wear.  
And in Revelation too, in verse 8, the bride *is given* fine linen to wear.

- These wedding clothes given *to us*,  
remind us that we don’t attend the wedding on our own merit,  
or just because we *know someone* who knows the groom,  
but only when in Christ, clothed with his righteousness, can we attend.
- Because of Christ we will all be clothed, we will all have the perfect dress code,  
made ready to attend.
- The other image Jesus uses in his parable is that the wedding of the King’s son *is a banquet!*
- Sometimes I’m a bit surprised when people are not really excited about New Creation.  
They think eternity is just a *bit too long*.  
That’ll it’ll be too boring or too repetitive,  
we will be stuck ploughing fields or something,  
and that *even* if there are good things, we will get sick of them over time.
- But the image of a wedding supper *should* give us a hint  
that New Creation will be enjoyable!
- All throughout the Bible are images of feasting with God.  
Jesus’ parable of the King’s banquet is one,

but also in Isaiah, there is a picture of the Lord preparing a feast, with rich food, the best of meats, and the finest of wines.

- Think back to the best party you've ever been to.  
Not just because it was impressive, but because you had a great time.  
Our union with Christ in New Creation will be better than that!  
But instead of the host being your friend,  
the mastermind behind the party is the Creator of all!
- This party - this wedding - will be one that lasts forever,  
for death has been destroyed forever.
- If you're an introvert like me, that might sound slightly exhausting.  
But as we imagine a *banquet* we are meant to see God's abundant generosity to us,  
and the joy of finally being in his presence,  
with all traces of sin and death gone.  
New Creation will be wonderful - for we will be with the Lord,  
the source of all goodness and life.
- And part of the delight of our union with Christ *forever* - is that it is with others.
- Last year I went to a wedding where I only knew the bride, her family, and just one other friend. Even though I was part of the wedding party and knew I was wanted there,

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I still felt a bit lonely, and a bit out of place.

We won't have that awkward feeling of not knowing many people at this wedding.

- For our future forever with Jesus *is also a future together*.  
And that should give us cause for joy.  
There will be people we will know: whether we've shared our lives together following Jesus for many decades, or just a season.
- When tragedy and death has separated us from those we love,  
when in Christ, we have the certain hope that we will see them again.
- And equally, because *we will be together* with Christ forever, *right now*, it should give us a sense of urgency and burden for those who haven't turned to Christ yet.
- Imagining a future without them, should motivate our daily prayer for them,  
that they too will get to join us in this glorious future together.

12



## A UNION WHICH WE ANTICIPATE | MATTHEW 25:1-13

우리가 고대하는 연합 | Mëen nē yuku Tääk | 存到永远的合一 | நாம் எதிர்பார்த்திருக்கும் ஐக்கியம்

Finally, this is **a union which we anticipate**.

- Matthew Chapter 25 records another parable Jesus taught about a wedding. He even says this is what the kingdom of God will be like.
- This time there are ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom to arrive.
- Five are prepared, they bring lamps and spare oil. Five were foolish, they just brought their lamps. But the thing is, no one is sure just *when* the bridegroom will arrive. Hours pass and they all fall asleep waiting.
- Then at midnight, the bridegroom appears! They are all told to come out to meet him. But some of them aren't ready, their lamps have run out of oil. They try to borrow some oil from the others, but there isn't enough to share, and so they head out to buy more. *Verse 10 ...*

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"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

"Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. *Matthew 25:10-13*

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13

- One of the biggest differences between weddings today and weddings in the first century, is *who* you are waiting for.
- Today, the bride really is the main focus. She might be five or even forty minutes late.
- But in the first century, it was the *groom* you would be waiting for. Not just for five or ten minutes - but the bride wouldn't know which *hour* or what *day* he was arriving. She just needed to be ready.
- Part of being the bride, is waiting faithfully for her groom to arrive, and the wedding to be consummated.
- Right now, if you are in Christ, you are *already* united to him. But as God's people, we are still called to wait faithfully, until Jesus returns and the fulfilment of all God's promises is consummated. /
- In the first century, weddings were joyful and protracted, but there was confidence the *bridegroom was coming*.
- Our bridegroom Jesus is coming too. But like the waiting virgins, we don't know the time or the hour, but just because the waiting may seem long, it doesn't mean he won't come.
- We are warned too *against trying* to calculate the time and the hour he'll arrive. Instead the emphasis is to *keep watch*. /

14

- As God's people together in Christ, we are created to be *a people in waiting*.
- We see that in the history of God's people.  
They waited 430 years to be rescued from Egypt,  
they waited nearly 1500 years after entering the Promised Land  
to the arrival of the Promised King.
- The Lord keeps his promises,  
but he also intentionally forms us to be a people in waiting.
- This can be really challenging on both counts:  
First - because we don't like to wait,  
Second - we forget that in Christ we are a people together (not just individuals).
- It is pretty obvious we don't like to wait,  
that's why Amazon, Netflix, and internet banking are so popular,  
we can get what we want immediately.
- But that is not the shape of God's kingdom,  
Instead of instant satisfaction we are called to wait well,  
and be prepared for Jesus' return.
- Mark Vroegop last year wrote a book on how *Waiting Isn't a Waste: The Surprising Comfort of Trusting God in the Uncertainties of Life*.

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He unpacks how waiting is hard, it is common, it is biblical,  
It is slow, it is commanded, and it is relational.

- And our future together in New Creation is the ultimate picture of the relational nature of our waiting - *we wait as God's people for our future together*.
- We are not waiting *for our own versions of heaven*,  
but our future *is to be together forever*. /
- And as Christ's bride, we are to be *ready together*.  
This is not meant to be an individual task,  
but it reflects what we have been looking at this whole series.
- As we gather together, across age and background,  
we proclaim the unity we could only have in Christ,  
and we proclaim his death for us in bringing us together.
- As we deploy our gifts for the church,  
we partake in God's mission, working towards the maturity of others in Christ.
- As we love each other in a Christ shaped costly and sacrificial love,  
we are living a life worthy of the calling we've received.
- All of these things that Jesus has told us to do,  
are how we are being made ready as his church,  
and how we wait together.

16

- We are together only because of what Christ has done.  
That completely changes how we relate to each other,  
for we are brothers and sisters in Christ now,  
and will be for all eternity.

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*Gracious Father, thank you for our bridegroom, who has loved us and gave himself up for us.  
By your Spirit, please help us as your people to wait faithfully together for the future we have with  
Jesus. Help us to learn how to wait well together, that we would be found ready when Jesus returns.  
In his name we pray, Amen.*

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