

Background: *In Rev 19 the great prostitute, Babylon (= a symbol of the city of Rome with its immorality and seductive focus on wealth and luxury), has fallen and the focus shifts to the bride of Christ (= his church) walking down the aisle to marry her bridegroom, “the Lamb”. The sermon’s main thrust was: Jesus loves his bride, the church, in spite of all her warts and wrinkles. We should too. Your group may just want to chat about the sermon; if so, go for it – but please read the last para below. If not, my prayer is that the Questions below will stir your love for Riverbank.*

1. The “bride and bridegroom” theme is not just in Revelation but right through the Bible eg Isaiah 54:4,5; Matt 25:1-13; Eph 5:25b-27. What do these teach us? (think eg of what comes to mind when you attend a wedding)
2. The first thing that strikes us at the wedding is the *mighty roar* (Rev 19:6,7). God’s plan of salvation has been accomplished, Jesus has gathered a bride from every nation and the big day has come! How would this have been a help for the persecuted Christians who first received this letter? How can it help us? Why is so important for us?
3. The second thing we see is *what the bride wears* – see vs 8 and Eph 5:27. Is this how you see yourself? Try to see yourself that way. Try to see Riverbank this way. What does this mean for you? How can it help people who have no idea of the Gospel and have never been to church?
4. Before Sunday’s sermon, was your view of Riverbank generally positive (=you do love your church and it shows) or negative (= you attend, or attend occasionally, but you can’t honestly say you love your church)? Please be honest and please answer *Why*? Has the sermon changed anything for you?
5. What positive thing(s) can you do – by the grace of God – to put legs under this Vision of “Loving the church”? (please keep Matt 7:3 and John 13:34,35 in mind as you discuss this). How can you encourage one another in this?

For our encouragement: *“The power of the Gospel creates something altogether different in the world today... churches that are God-exalting, Christ-admiring, convenience-defying, cross-embracing, risk-taking, selfishness-crucifying, gossip-silencing, prayer-saturated, future-thinking, outward reaching and beautifully human congregations where the undeserving can thrive. Only God can build this new kind of community. But when he does it cannot be ignored”*. (R Ortlund, The Gospel, quoting John Piper, p77).