

Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

Week 32: August 7-13, 2022

Celebrate The Wedding of the Ages (pt. 3)

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Come Join Us as We
CELEBRATE GOD!



**“They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.”**

Dr. Patrick Wilson

(Psalm 145:7)

2022

Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Wedding of the Ages (part 3). Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- Why do you think Paul emphasizes that Ephesians 5:22-33 is about Christ and the church more than direction for husbands and wives?
- What did you learn this week about Jewish wedding traditions that better help you understand this passage?
- How are you lifting up Jesus in your life? How could you do this better?
- Do you really believe you are unconditionally loved by Jesus? How so?
- What is a step you will take this week to become closer to oneness with Jesus?
- Will you cling to Jesus this week?

Craft: Homemade Bubbles

A more modern version of the tradition of throwing birdseed on the departing bride and groom is to blow bubbles at the couple. Have fun making up your own bubble solution this week with the following recipe.

1. Stir together the water with the tablespoons of syrup and dish soap.
2. Experiment with various food coloring combinations to add some color and excitement to your bubbles.

[NOTE: Food coloring unusually washes out, but be a little careful about getting the colored food coloring on things that may be difficult to wash.]

3. Dip various objects in the bubble and have fun seeing the various sizes and shapes you can make. Enjoy!

Needed Supplies:

- 1 Cup Water
- 2 T Karo Syrup
- 4 T Liquid Dish Soap
- Food coloring



Foods to Prepare

According to Mediterranean Living, the foods below celebrate love and kindness. Consider making a favorite dish with one or more of these ingredients and sharing them with family, friends, or anyone you love.

- **PINEAPPLE:** “Pineapple has become a symbol of hospitality in many nations....A serving of fresh pineapple or a dish prepared with pineapple was a special treat. You now can enjoy pineapple fresh or frozen anytime.”
- **POMEGRANATE:** “The pomegranate is a thing of beauty, so it’s not difficult to see why it would be a symbol of love. In Greek mythology, the pomegranate was regarded as a symbol of marriage and life. In some cultures, it has also been known to represent brotherhood and togetherness because of it’s interior filled with tightly packed fruit.”
- **NUTS:** “Nuts have a hard, protective covering which, in many cultures, symbolizes a strong marriage. There are many references to varieties of nuts being associated with love, including hazelnuts, almonds and chestnuts.”
- **LEMONS:** “Lemons are a symbol of eternal love. They are also a symbol of purification and friendship. They are particularly celebrated along the Amalfi coast in Italy, where they are grown in abundance....Lemon is used in many delicious recipes across the world. You can’t go wrong adding a lemony flavor to your food preparations.”
- **BASIL:** “In Italy, as in India, basil is a symbol of love. Basil is also a symbol of good wishes....Basil is also seen as a symbol of friendship in modern times. Traditionally, it is a kind gesture to gift bunches of basil or basil plants to a new neighbor.”
- **HONEY:** “It should come as no surprise that sweet honey is a food of love. It is a central food (and medicine) in Greek culture, going back to ancient times. Honey is a symbol of love in Greece, Italy and in Nordic cultures. Honey is associated with love in many ways: in dreams, in gemstones (honey jade) and in the use of honey as a term of endearment.”
- **DARK CHOCOLATE:** “Chocolate is strongly associated with love and is clearly a popular gift on Valentine’s Day....The lines are very long at the best chocolate shops. It’s no wonder chocolate is associated with love as it contains various elements that produce feelings of love, euphoria and an overall feeling of well-being.”

Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. According to IMDb, these are among the best romantic fantasy movies of all time. If you'd rather, just pick another great movie to watch together. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the couch, and enjoy the show!

Heads Up Game

In the sermon, we talked about the various ways that “head” could be understood in Ephesians 5.

For fun, make time this week to play Heads Up with a friend(s), or your family. To play, download Heads Up onto your smartphone or tablet.

One person will hold the phone up to their forehead facing outward. When the game begins, others on his/her team or other players will try to get the person holding the phone to guess the word that is displayed on the device that he/she cannot see.

Depending on how you want to set the rules, players can use words that describe the undisclosed word or act them out.

Pass the phone around and let each person have a turn(s) to be the guesser. Enjoy and have fun!

Romantic Fantasy Movies:

- Ghost
- The Princess Bride
- Edward Scissorhands
- Amelie
- Twilight
- Chances Are
- Big
- Ever After
- Always
- Forever Young
- City of Angels
- Kate and Leopold
- Splash
- Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
- Stardust
- 13 Going on 30
- Practical Magic
- The Time Traveler's Wife
- What Women Want



Bible Study

“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.” (John 3:29).

After Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, we are told that he went and spent time with his disciples and baptized them in the Judean countryside. The disciples of John the Baptizer questioned whether it is appropriate for Jesus to be baptizing people, too.

John explains to his disciples that he is not the Messiah but was sent ahead of the Messiah to pave the way for the coming of Jesus. Then, in the verse above, John further explains that Jesus is like the groom who has come for his bride, and he feels blessed to be able to witness this joyous coming.

As previously discussed, in Jewish society it was uncertain when the groom would come to get his bride. When given permission by his father, the groom would travel to the bride’s home and take her to be with him for the wedding feast. While we may oftentimes anticipate that Jesus’ coming is a futuristic event, it is important for us to not overlook the significance of his first coming. Jesus has come, and John says that his coming gives us joy that is now complete. No matter what you are going through, take time to be joyous today. Jesus has come, and he offers his joy to us as his bride.

Prayer Time

One of the best advice you can give someone who is eager to find a spouse is to focus on being the person you want to attract rather than attracting the person you want to be with. Similarly, it is valuable for us to focus our prayer life on asking God to expose areas in our lives that need to change and grow to be more “attractive.”

Regrettably, when we speak of confession, we oftentimes do so in the framework of remorse, guilt, and shame. Yet, the loving God we worship is not striving to bring awareness to our shortcomings to harm us. Rather, his conviction is to draw us to want a better life with Jesus.

Spend time sitting in God’s presence, asking him to expose areas that need to change, agreeing with him about it and offering your life to him for transformation.



Connect: Empathy

Marriage can be tough at times. Opposites oftentimes attract, life brings many challenges, and different lifestyles can raise some conflicts. One of the best ways that we can work through these conflicts in our homes (or in any relationship) is through developing empathy. Empathy is looking at life or a situation through the perspective of another person. Consider these steps to strengthen your empathy quotient for your spouse, kids, parents, coworkers, or others in your life (provided by positivepsychology.com):

1. **Cultivate Curiosity:** develop an insatiable curiosity about the particulars of those you meet (spend time with people you know less well, ask them about themselves, reach out to people of different backgrounds, be present in conversations, visit new places).
2. **Step Out of Your Comfort Zone:** learn something new or travel and see how it feels to be out of your comfort zone (experience what it is like to not know something, reach out for support, accept the feeling of helplessness, be humble).
3. **Receive Feedback:** ask for feedback from others about your active listening and relationship skills (consider steps of improvement and be more aware of missed opportunities).
4. **Examine Your Biases:** often without knowing, we judge others on the way that they look or how they live (mix with people of diverse life experiences, ask about important things in their lives, recognize similarities but be most interested in differences).
5. **Walk in the Shoes of Others:** seek a deeper understanding of what life is like for others (observe how they live, work, etc., understand their worries and their dreams, build relationships with people you would not normally connect with).
6. **Difficult, Respectful Conversations:** listen and avoid interrupting, be open to consider new ideas, apologize for hurt feelings, and research to learn more.
7. **Join a Shared Cause:** working together on community projects help to heal differences (find a project, join with others, and help cultivate change).
8. **Read Widely:** content that captures people's lives from different backgrounds increases emotional intelligence (read unique stories, enter the character's feelings and thoughts about life).

Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs focus on God's undeserved love for us. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

Challenge: Counseling

God's Love Worship Songs:

- God So Loved
- At the Cross (Love Ran Red)
- How Deep the Father's Love for Us
- Only Your Love
- What Love is This
- His Love Endures Forever
- Testify to Love
- Amazing Love
- Garden into Graves
- Good, Good Father

Counseling is a great tool to help strengthen a person's emotional/mental health, grow spiritually, or develop relationships. Consider getting some guidance from a professional therapist, counselor, pastor or psychologist who can help you set goals, guide you to support networks, or hold you accountable to relational growth with God, yourself, or others in your life.

“In the sacrifice which Jesus Christ makes of Himself on the Cross for His bride, the Church...there is entirely revealed that plan which God has imprinted on the humanity of man and woman since their creation.” — John Paul II