



## **Preparing the Bride: An Assembly with No Spot, Wrinkle or Blemish; but Pure and Set Apart!**

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW

Undershepherd

[www.set-apart-ministries.org](http://www.set-apart-ministries.org)

[www.PrepareMessiahsBride.org](http://www.PrepareMessiahsBride.org)

January, 2014

*...Then **watch how carefully you walk**, not as unwise, but as wise ones...*

*speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,*

*singing and praising in your heart to the Lord...*

*having been **subject to one another in the fear of God...***

*But even as the **assembly is subject to Christ**, so also the wives to their own husbands in everything...*

*that He might **sanctify it, cleansing it** by the washing of the water in the Word,*

*that He might **present it to Himself as the glorious assembly, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things, but that it be holy and without blemish.***

All of Ephesians 5; with focus on these verses 15, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27

During a recent teleconference discussion this question arose: *Are people and leaders really willing to enter in to a serious effort to exhort and hold one another accountable with the goal of becoming more like our Messiah, being made without spot, wrinkle, or blemish and made set apart?*

These matters **have** been a part of our community life. Chapter 5 in Ephesians identifies many things that you will also find in our [mission statement](#), [goals](#) and many of the [articles](#) on our site. You may also be interested to view the brief PowerPoint presentation on the home page about what it means to be without spot or blemish, *Be Perfect*. It is really not so frightening or unreachable as it seems.

Our teleconference members were very saddened as one by one several told stories of their experiences in which others in fellowship gatherings they had been a part of were resistant and even angry about ever being held accountable to a standard of behavior. One was especially grieved over what was seen when he tried to encourage leaders to hold to a standard and exhibit something of the zeal of a *Pinchas*. In more than one instance, people were said to first resist the message and then the messenger. After some reflection, this person now realizes there may have been some unresolved personal issues that affected how it was presented and “came across” to others. Nevertheless, the overwhelming report was

that genuine exhortation and support for the actual process of becoming holy, set apart, without spot, wrinkle or blemish has not been apparent at a community wide level.

At this point, I mentioned a practice that came into being about 2 years in to the development of our community, so twelve years ago. We understood that it was wise for us to **pray specifically that our Father would expose and bring into the light anything that was in us that was not pleasing to Him**. You may recall that our community was first birthed in response to a need to encourage those coming out of occult practices then expanded as we realized all were coming out of one kind of pagan practice or another so the relevance of this prayer need was evident.

*Then do not become partakers with them;  
for you then were darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light.  
For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth,  
proving what is pleasing to the Lord.*

***And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,  
but rather even reprove[expose] them.***

Ephesians 5: 7-11

It has been normal for us to pray this prayer among other corporate prayers as we open our Shabbat gatherings and as we meet for our Life Model studies, whomever it might be that leads the prayer. Over the years, we have also found ourselves adding the request that not only what is **within** us, but also anything to be exposed that is not pleasing to Him **among** us. We did not speak this prayer lightly, and spent some time reflecting and considering what it might mean to us all. Although it seemed a little frightening to us— no, really it seemed a LOT frightening—it also came to us with conviction that it had something to do with our given name of being “Set Apart Ministries.” I am certain that none of us could foresee just how deep the struggle to carry out this practice would be but I can honestly say that all who have willingly allowed the process to occur have benefited, all praise to Messiah Yeshua, our Redeemer!

Indeed, our covenant Yah has been faithful and has exposed both personal issues and interpersonal issues since then. Dear reader, I can assure you this has not always been well received! It took us about two years, so about ten years ago, to realize that we had better also include in our prayers a request for His joy, perseverance, courage and strength to actually face what He chooses to reveal and to work through to a resolution that is honoring to our YHWH. This is especially true when it was an interpersonal matter so that both people could gain in the process. Here is the origin of one of our [pithy maxims](#): “Pray, stay and don’t run away!”

I have asked people from time to time if they or anyone they know makes a similar prayer a regular community practice. Though there are those who ask for these things within their personal prayer life, to date I have not found anyone who is familiar with such a corporate practice. Many do not respond at all, and simply pass quickly on to other matters, but if they do comment they observe that it seems like a difficult thing to do. The Ephesians 5 reference specifically speaks of the **submission of the assembly to Him** that results in the **sanctification** and **cleansing of the assembly** that leads to the **glorious assembly presented to Him**. We really think that certainly, YHWH has inspired others to do likewise! If not, may they now see the corporate need.

We here at SAM can attest to the difficulty and to the number of people who have come and gone who have resisted the process. Yes, it is also true that they often chose to turn on the messenger, usually me as the point person, and make whatever accusation they could think of to prove how unreasonable such an approach is. It seems that most people have a very hard time understanding that exposure of what is unholy within and among us is a necessary part of the process of sanctification! Truthfully, it hasn't come easily for us here either.

*But all things being exposed by the light are clearly revealed,  
for everything having been revealed is light.*

**Ephesians 5:13**

*If I say: Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light around me.  
Even the darkness will not be dark from You, but the night shines as the day; as is the darkness,  
so is the light.*

**Psalm 139: 11-12**

*For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face;  
their iniquity is not hidden from My eyes.*

**Jeremiah 16:17**

*You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your face.*

**Psalm 90:8**

***Confess to one another the deviations from the Law, and pray for one another,  
that you may be healed. Very strong is a righteous petition, being made effective...***  
*If anyone among you goes astray from the truth, brothers, and anyone turns him back,  
know that the one turning a sinner from the error of his way will save the soul from death,  
and will hide a multitude of sins.*

**James 5: 15, 19-20**

Having had a history of a social kind of church experience or a history of abuse, whether in personal or church life, has made many people very wary and suspicious, and not without good reason! The faith group that keeps a superficial level of relationships, a ["social ship" more than a fellowship](#), often demands that people be more mindful of hurting someone's feelings rather than seeking His truth together. To come into relationship with people that are openly asking Him to bring the things that we'd much rather hide socially has been a culture shock! And those who have experienced the spiritual abuse of a leader's authority used in punitive ways are very gun-shy; often to the point that they find it difficult to tolerate their own emotions long enough to evaluate whatever the circumstances actually are in the present. One of our ladies has jokingly described these incidents coming out in the light, sometimes even when we have had guests for gatherings, like suddenly finding our "undies showing." If people do not have experience with conflict being well resolved, they fear it when they see it. Indeed, we have been told by a few people that they had never seen conflict actually worked through and resolved in a group before. Over time, most people in our community fear it less and less because our confidence is that, in Messiah, our unity is greater than our differences and He will strengthen us all to see it through.

I also think that people are unaware that it is just as crucial **if not more so** for leaders to be under this same light of exposure. I don't think it fits with a preconceived picture that spiritual leaders are thought to be somehow "superior" or beyond having any personal issues! In truth, personal pride has been the single greatest downfall of many leaders and ministries. For me, coming out from behind the therapist's professional cloak of anonymity was perilous and at times, terrifying. Boundaries do remain but they are quite different in a community than between therapist and client, more like what a pastor in a traditional church setting might call living in a fish bowl. Pursuing a community model of restoration and healing presented an entirely different concept than the office setting, and one that I described as seeing any one of the people I was standing with (most were satanic ritual abuse survivors initially) holding their Bic lighter in their hands, next to a propane tank, with the potential for explosions at any time! The more I understood that we are all sinners in need of our Messiah's redemption, the less I could see any reason that I should stand before Him in any less humility than those I stood with. The fear of "losing face" before people became a much smaller matter compared to any appearance of arrogance before our Almighty Elohim.

By now, you may be wondering about where we see His grace. Willing cooperation with the sanctification process is part of our obedience to Him. It is a practical outworking of the desire to be kept back from presumptuous sin, as NKJV puts it. (It is "arrogant" in KJV.)

*Also withhold Your servant from arrogant sins; do not let them rule over me;  
then I shall be upright, and I shall be innocent from great transgression.*

**Psalm 19:13**

Apparently, many people think that they need only to wait for God to correct anything within them rather than that they have any personal responsibility in the matter. This perspective also seems to extend to the belief that being part of an assembly is optional, though that is another subject in itself. In Life Model™ terms, there is both our part and His part while we are maturing. Yet all the while our final hope and confidence is in Him. Wherever we have yet to be made fully clean, He will cover and bring us to exactly where we need to be at exactly the right time. Thus, another of our pithy maxims: His grace is for when we **fall** short, not for when we **aim** short.

*So therefore we also, having so great **a cloud of witnesses lying around us**, having laid aside every weight and the easily surrounding sin, through patience let us also run the race set before us, looking to **the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, "and sat down at the right" of the throne of God. (Psa. 110:1)*

**Hebrews 12: 1-2**

So as the time draws near for our Messiah to return we are yet again convinced that there is little time to worry about "losing face" in front of people while there is every reason to be greatly concerned that we are yielding to the sanctifying work of our Father. How often He uses our relationships to rub and

bruise and offend us, until as Oswald Chambers observed, there is nothing “offend-able” left within us. The corporate aspect of this process *is* part of His plan for us, and His intentions are for our good, and not for evil! This doesn’t mean that exposure isn’t uncomfortable or even painful at times. (See recent article on *Preparing the Bride: Blows that Hurt Cleanse Evil from the Heart*. It is also important that we recognize the difference between **hurt** and **harm**: a surgery may hurt but it helps and a sugary diet may seem good but it harms.)

We do understand that every fellowship group is not the same and see that those who are in Levels 3-4 of our model would be much more able to work through a similar process. Those in levels 1-2 generally do not share the mutual vision and commitment which makes it possible for the iron sharpening iron/shepherding process to actually occur. The process involves daring to risk exposure with people who are also, themselves fearing exposure...which is everybody! In our fallen world, such exposure has often meant disgrace or banishment. In our Yah’s economy, in a community that is deeply seeking to be made without spot, blemish or wrinkle that exposure brings an opportunity to correct what is wrong while there is yet time.

In a community of believers who desire to be like our Messiah so we are ready when He comes, how can we in good faith refuse to enter into His process? It is for our refining, a redemptive purpose! May we encourage you to consider taking up this corporate prayer practice as well as in your personal prayer time.

*And this is the message which we have heard from Him, and we proclaim to you:  
God is light, and no darkness is in Him, none!  
If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and we walk in darkness,  
we lie and are not practicing the truth.  
But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,  
and the blood of His Son Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.  
**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.  
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins,  
and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**  
If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*

**1 John 1:5-10**

*If you have found this piece of encouragement to you, please be in touch with us! Especially, if you have a similar corporate prayer process or decide to begin a similar prayer practice we would REALLY like to talk with you along the way.*

*We are honored to share what our Abba has been teaching us, in the hope that it will benefit others and help them along a path with fewer pits than we have fallen into along the way.*

*You might be interested to read:*

[Social ship vs. Fellowship](#)  
[Intro to What Shepherds Need to Know](#)  
[4 Levels of Community Model](#)

<p><b>Set Apart Ministries, Inc.</b> P. O. Box 5584 De Pere, WI 54115 (920) 336-7005 info@set-apart-ministries.org</p>
--