

iii) Will you take your place in His love?

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10



Keep it simple, read the same words again.

Right now do you 'delight greatly in the Lord'?

Does your 'soul rejoice in your God'?

Will you believe that 'He has clothed you with garments of salvation'?

And that you're 'arrayed in a robe of righteousness'?

Will you adorn yourself with your jewels?

Ask Him to help you to believe for yourself first and then for the Church.

No matter our weakness and failings this is how God sees us by grace, this is what He paid such a price to achieve. Let's not waste the Cross.

Can we learn to see ourselves in this grace, others in this grace ...

the Church in this grace?

Pause for Personal Prayer



'My soul rejoices in my God' - pause to pray, are these your words?

Discuss



From the above what do you believe and what do you struggle with, for yourself first and then for our church? – discuss.

Taking it Further

Take time quietly to pray with these Scriptures.

These are God's words to you, ask Him to help your heart to hear and believe Him.

2) All Saints Church - the Bride of Christ

If we had any idea of how much God loves His church it would blow our minds!

It would cause us to fall silent in awe.

We see our faults and failings (and sometimes those of others!) but God sees the Church He loves and chose to give Himself for us.

We sometimes say that 'love is blind' and I don't know how God does it, but He has chosen to forever love His Church.

He may weep over us and long for us to change but He has chosen to love us.

Becoming a Christian and becoming part of the church in the first place is because He loves us.

But then playing our part in the church can only come from knowing how much God loves us, together as His Church.

We're stepping on holy ground here – the love of Christ for His bride.

A suggested outline for the session

Open with worship and prayer

Divide your time between the 3 sections

In each of the 3 sections ...

. Ask someone to read the scripture & reflection

. Pause for a few minutes of personal prayer

. Then discuss the questions given

. At the end allow 10mins for personal prayer

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i) His Darling

My beloved spoke and said to me,
'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,
come with me.
See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone'. SofS 2:10



The Song of Songs in the Bible is a beautiful portrayal of God's love for us.

Christ is the lover, we (as individuals and as a church) are the beloved.

Read the words above slowly and quietly, hear the words of your Lover speaking to you and to His Church here.

'My beloved' – Sue/Paul/Mary/my Church – my beloved.

'spoke and said to me' - He's calling you and us to respond to His love.

'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one' - that's how He sees you and us.

'Come with me' - Come with Me!

Read the words, hear the words ...

'My beloved' - He speaks to you and to us His Church.

To take our part in God's Church we must learn to see her as God does;

'My beloved, My darling, My beautiful one'.

Pause for Personal Prayer



You are His beloved, His darling, His beautiful one – pause to pray

Discuss



- How does these words affect how you see yourself?
- How do they affect how you see our Church?
- What challenges or encourages you?

ii) Cherished



So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. Eph 5:28,29 KJV

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10

God 'cherishes' His Church – cares for us, nourishes us.

He can see us as beautiful because our beauty comes from Him.

Paid for at the Cross, a free gift of righteousness Rms 5:17, a robe of His righteousness, clothed in garments of salvation Is 61:10.

This beauty is His work of grace '*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*' Eph 5:25-27.

Ours to accept and rejoice in the beauty He gives us '*the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready*' Revelation 19:7.

No matter how we see ourselves and the Church, this is how God sees us.

Christ gave Himself up for us because He wanted the Church as His bride.

He's paid the price at the Cross because He thinks we're worth it!

Pause for Personal Prayer



God cherishes you – pause to pray.

Discuss



Discuss from the heart rather than analyse – these are words of love

- Do the words above challenge how you see yourself?
- Do they challenge how you see our Church?