

## **9 DISCIPLESHIP IS A ROMANCE**

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C:\Users\JuanCarlos\Dropbox\Documents\2 MENSAJES A TO H\DISCIPULADO\9 DISCIPLESHIP IS A ROMANCE English (REVISED) (1).docx

**Romance:** love, tenderness, selflessness, emotion, sentimental, dreamy, idealistic, being in love, love affair.

**First sentence:** When a person falls in love, she will do anything to please the person she loves. For this reason, to be truly spiritual and live a life pleasing to God, we must develop a deep friendship with Jesus, who fell in love with us to such an extent that He gave His life for us. If we fall in love with Jesus as He fell in love with us, then it will be very easy for us to please Him willingly and joyfully in everything, even to give our life for Him, as His first disciples did. If we become intensely in love with Him, to please Him in everything will be natural and easy for us and falling in love with Jesus will produce in us an inexpressible joy full of glory <sup>1</sup> Peter 1:8.

### **INTRODUCTION**

We should grow every day in our relationship with Jesus. It is as if an unknown person does us a favor and as a result we become friends, then we fall in love, then we make a commitment and finally we get married to be together for the rest of our lives. This is to grow in friendship. **A relationship that ends in a wedding is a romance!** Revelation 19:6.9. So should our relationship be with Jesus. When we hear of Jesus for the first time, we see Him as a Savior who died, forgives our sins and reconciles us with God. But that is not all. His first disciples discovered that He was a teacher who could change their lives with His teachings and transform simple fishermen into "*fishers of people*" Mark 1:17. Because they wanted to be like Him, they became His disciples. As time went by they discovered that their master had supernatural powers and asked: "***Who is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?***" Matthew 8:27;<sup>16</sup> ***Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, [a] the Son of the living God."*** Matthew 16:16 They began to worship Him as Lord and became His servants. Later Jesus tells them than He is more than a Savior, Messiah and Lord ***He is a lover!*** shortly before the cross, Jesus declares His love to them when He said: "***I will not call you servants any longer but friends, because I have told you everything that I have heard of my Father***" John 15:15. This was the beginning of an even more intimate relationship, like a proposal. And at the end, in His farewell prayer He confesses to His Father and to them His true intention, that He wants to be one with us, that is His bride, and live with us forever.

**John 17:20-24** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>20</sup>*I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;* <sup>21</sup>*that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You*

sent Me. <sup>22</sup> **The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;** <sup>23</sup> **I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. <sup>24</sup> Father, **I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me**, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Every believer should have a growth like this in our relationship with Jesus:

1. He Teacher - we disciples,
2. He Lord - we servants,
3. He Friend - we friends,
4. He Fiancée - we fiancée,
5. He bridegroom - we bride,
6. He Husband-we wife...

...until Jesus is no longer only a religious figure that we worship, and make an effort to obey Him us under the Law of Moses, but because He is our beloved boyfriend, fiancée and husband. Moises was not a fiancée, but an executioner, letter that kill 2Corinthians 3:6. To please Jesus Christ is the result of loving our lover. We realize that we are in love when we desire to please Him in all. It is like a nice chubby but unkempt and poorly dressed girl. She falls in love for a handsome boy, and as she falls, she begins to follow a diet, keeps her hair arranged, uses make-up and begins to dress well in order to please him. So is discipleship. As in a courtship the two start to adapt to the other, so it is in our relationship with Jesus Christ. St. Paul says:

**Ephesians 5:25-27** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>25</sup> Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, **having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** <sup>27</sup> that He might **present to Himself the church in all her glory**, having **no spot or wrinkle or any such thing**; but that she would be **holy and blameless**.

Since I met Martha I have changed quite a bit and continue changing even today. Love made me become a faithful friend, a responsible and helping husband to the point that I would do anything for her, even give my life. For Martha's love I changed from being a young man who thought only of myself and always did what I wanted, to a person devoted to my family and committed to them. All the friends of my youth fell to second place. This should also happen in our friendship with Jesus.

Our relationship with Him transforms us. As we get to know and love Him as He loves us, our desire to please Him will keep on growing. We will begin to be more like Him and come to the point when we will be ready to give our lives for Him, as His early disciples did. They **gave their lives for their Lover**.

Romans 5:7-8 *New Living Translation (NLT)* <sup>7</sup> Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially

good. <sup>8</sup> But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to **die for us while we were still sinners.**

We began knowing Jesus as our Savior, but we must grow in friendship, until our relationship is as a fiancée in love.

Because of our relationship with Him, who is an invisible Spirit, we also have to become more aware of the spiritual realm. Being spiritual is to learn to have more to do with the spiritual and invisible than with the visible world, because one day we will be like Him and will live in His Eternal Kingdom that is heavenly and spiritual. We must learn to relate with the celestial beings from here and now because we will be the bride of the Son of God who loves us, and wants to be our husband:

**Colossians 3:1-4** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.** <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.** <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our **inner man** is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we **look not at the things which are seen,** but at **the things which are not seen;** for the things which are seen are **temporal,** but the things which are not seen are **eternal.**

Hebrews 12:22-24 New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>22</sup> You have come to Mount Zion, to the **city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to **countless thousands of angels** in a joyful gathering. <sup>23</sup> You have come to the **assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven.** You have come to **God himself,** who is the judge over all things. You have come to the **spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect.** <sup>24</sup> You have come to **Jesus,** the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

All these are invisible things and invisible spiritual personalities. Even the promises of the New Covenant are spiritual, eternal, infinite and invisible:

Ephesians 1:3 New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

Though Jesus is invisible, **we know** that He is **with** and **in** us **continuously.** To live in the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit Galatians 5:25 is to be **continually conscious of his presence with and in us.** So there is no problem with having an intimate courtship, because He lives in us. We are continuously communicating with Him through our faith, prayers, meditations, contemplations and visualizations, that is, visualizing in our mind what we do not see but definitely know exists.

**Hebrews 11:1** New American Standard Bible (NASB) Now faith is the assurance of things **hoped for,** the conviction of things **not seen.**

His disciples had to learn to live by faith, that is, to be *convinced of what they wouldn't see*. When Jesus died, He disappeared from their **sight** and they felt as if they were orphans. "What will we do without Him?" they thought. Then the resurrected Jesus appeared many times to them during 40 days. He appeared, and disappeared many times. He was training them to interact with Him when He would be transformed into an invisible Spirit. How did He do it? First appearing: "**Waaah!**" And then disappearing "**Oooh!**" The lesson was not the appearance, but the **disappearance**. He did so to prepare them to have **the same intimate friendship they enjoyed when they saw Him**. He wanted to show them that their friendship now would be easier than when they saw Him, because up to then he had been **with** them as a group, but from that time forward He would be **in each of them individually**, wherever they went, until the end of the world.

He said: **John 16:7-9** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>7</sup>But I tell you the truth, **it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Holy Spirit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.**

**John 14:16-20** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>16</sup>I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that **He may be with you forever**; <sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it **does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.** <sup>18</sup>**I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.** <sup>19</sup>After a little while **the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me**; because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup>In that day you will know that I am in My Father, **and you in Me, and I in you.**

He also said: **Matthew 28:19-20** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**"

His disciples learned this new relationship well with their now Invisible Friend, and we notice it in the Book of Acts. The disciples with Jesus living inside them were much more productive than when Jesus was with them in flesh and blood. Our relationship with Him is now much faster than E-mail, cell phones, texting, Facebook, and Twitter, because He is in us and in our conscience continuously. To think in Him is to talk with Him. When we are silent, He talks to us. He knows what we think because He is in our mind. We need to train our people to always be conscious of His presence in the home, at work, in the car, as we fall asleep and when we awake, at any time and in any place, with Him constantly in mind. **To live in the Spirit is to live by faith, that is to be continually conscious that He is in us and therefore we can freely dialogue with Him.** St. Bonaventure (1217-1274) said: "God's center is everywhere and his circumference nowhere"

Also as Jesus is pure, upright and honest, we also become purer, honest, truthful and loving because of our continual contact with Him. "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are." Because we love, admire and meditate on Him, we will be more like Him each day. We will love what He loves and abhor what He dislikes. Our goal is to be just like Him!

Because we love Jesus with passion we will be interested in what He is interested. Wanting to expand His Kingdom should be natural and normal for us, being light and salt in the world, bringing our friends, neighbors, coworkers and school mates to Him, because His desires will be ours. To please Him will be an exciting adventure and a pleasant romance. He will help us to accomplish it.

**Philippians 2:13**

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

**Philippians 4:13**

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

This romance with Jesus is a serious matter!

**Ephesians 5:31-32** New American Standard Bible (NASB) <sup>31</sup> FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. <sup>32</sup> This mystery is great; but I am speaking with **reference to Christ and the church.**

Luke 14:26-27 Living Bible (TLB) <sup>26</sup> "Anyone who wants to be my follower **must love me far more than he does<sup>26a</sup> his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters—yes, more than his own life—otherwise he cannot be my disciple.** <sup>27</sup> And no one can be my disciple who does not carry his own cross and follow me.

When some believers hear the requirements necessary to follow Jesus they say: "Isn't Jesus asking too much?" Those who think this way do not understand anything about love. **Love does not ask much, love asks everything!** In fact, what Jesus asks is **normal and reasonable.** But to understand it **we need to understand the magnitude of His call: why** He calls us? and **what** are we called to? What He wants to do with us is something so great, so extraordinary, so marvelous that it is **undreamed of**; so much so that St. Paul calls this relationship of Jesus with us a **"great mystery"** Ephesians 5:32. This mystery was revealed to Paul and he explains: Jesus is declaring to us His love: **it's a love proposal!**

Jesus asks us to love Him more than our father and mother, brothers and sisters, and **this is not really such a big deal!** What did I do when I fell in love with Martha? I did what God commands: **I left** my father, my mother, my brothers and my sisters to join Martha and we went to live together in another house. We did it **with joy** and it was the most exciting and enjoyable day of my life. I left my house and family and went with Martha. I didn't go crying to our honeymoon because I was leaving my parents, my brothers and my house. I went **voluntarily and joyfully** with my love and I joined Martha for life. She did the same. We left everything from our past life to unite in marriage forever, and we never returned to our life as single people.

When one **falls in love** and leaves her parents, brothers, house, independence, friends, to join her love, become one with him, and make him the most important person in her life, that is normal! **It is not something from another world!** Didn't

all of you who are married do it? And the rest of you... are you not on the way to doing so? To leave the self-centered and independent single life, leave parents and siblings, putting friends of your youth in second place and marry, **isn't it normal?**

Christ also fell in love with us. He left His Father, heaven, His servant angels, comfort and glory, and came to declare His love to us demonstrating that love by the maximum sacrifice of the cross. He died not just to save us from hell but also committing Himself to take us to live with Him for all eternity. It was not pity that led him to the cross; He went to prepare room for us in heaven John 14:2-3. He fell in love with us! This is why for me **discipleship is a romance, a pleasure!**

## **JESUS, THE ETERNAL LOVER...**

Let's disentangle this mystery as close to the beginning as we can.

Ephesians 1:4-5New Living Translation (NLT)<sup>4</sup> *Even **before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.** <sup>5</sup>God **decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.** This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.*

What does it mean "**before he made the world, God chose us to be his very own through what Christ would do for us?**" It means that we were **created for Jesus**. It was Jesus who asked His Father to create us for Him. We were created **by Him and for Him** Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 8:6. This is why God adopted us as members of His family. Paul adds: "**And He did this because He wanted to!**"

**2 Timothy 1:9** New Living Translation (NLT) *For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because **that was his plan from before the beginning of time**—to show us his grace **through Christ Jesus.***

Jesus is the eternal lover. **Thanks to Jesus**, because we are His beloved, God gives us His grace, forgiveness and salvation, to make us His. When we failed miserably in the Garden of Eden, the Son of God who loved us before the foundation of the world decided to come to **rescue** us from Satan the kidnapper, paying the **ransom** with His own blood Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Revelation 5:9. What our lover asks us to follow Him it is **nothing** compared to what He did for us and what awaits us in eternity.

1. He **forgave** all our sins Acts 26:18,
2. He delivered us from the **bondage of Satan and hell** Colossians 2:15,
3. He delivered us from the bondage **of sin** Romans 8:2,
4. He delivered us from the **Law of Moses** Romans 7:4,
5. He delivered us from this fallen race giving us a **new birth, starting a new creation with us** Roman 5:17,
6. He began to **transform** us here on Earth, preparing us to become His bride, clean, pure, unblemished and without wrinkle Ephesians 5:26-27,
7. He granted us **eternal life** by our union with Him, so that we may be His forever John 17:24,

8. He made us members of His family, the **family of God**, proposing marriage to  
US. Ephesians 1:5
9. And who knows **how much more!**

So by our unity with Christ, now God is our father, the Blessed Virgin Mary our mother, the Angels our siblings and we will live with them as family for eternity. **This is un-i-mag-in-a-ble**. It is a great mystery, but it is also a great truth! And... did you read in Revelation 21:9-26 about how the mansions that Jesus is preparing for us are?

I don't know if you read about the recent story of this pretty Argentina young lady called Maxima. She was a classmate of my daughter Georgina in Argentina. Later, while in New York, Maxima met a very nice young man who happened to be the Prince of Holland. They fell in love and after a reasonable courtship, the Prince proposed marriage. By accepting this proposition, she became the Queen of the Netherlands, since her husband the Prince is now the King of Holland.

Of course, she had to accept a series of preparations for marriage including learning to speak perfect Dutch, learning all the rules and disciplines of the Court, learning how to behave as a royal person, how to dress, how to walk, how to win the heart of Dutch citizens and many things that made her different from other girls. **This would have been difficult for Maxima if it had not been for her love for the Prince.**

But her love for the Prince and what she would become by joining him caused her to learn the Dutch language. She speaks it now as if she was born in the Netherlands, and behaves naturally as a royal person as if she would have been born a Princess. She had teachers and tutors who taught her the royal life and the Prince, of course, helped her in such a way that Maxima won the hearts of all the Dutch people. Now she is the heir of Queen Beatrix, the Queen mother, who is one of the wealthier Queens of the Europe.

So is the encounter with Jesus, the first time that Maxima saw the Prince, she kept her distance, because he was the Prince of Holland! But when they fell in love and become intimate friends and ultimately married everything changed. Now she reigns with him, they are a happy family and have a few precious daughters.

So it is with the true disciples of Christ. When we look to Christ as the Son of God, Holy, righteous and exalted, Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, founder and leader of Christianity and King of the universe, it almost causes us fear. But as we become friends and start our romance with Him, our relationship will not be just another religion, but a wonderful life of a loving intimate friendship with Christ. If you still have not experienced the romance with Jesus, you are only a religious person. Begin to look at Him as your fiancé, with love, and begun to please him. Think on the

spiritual honeymoon, with whom you are going to live for eternity, and this will give you a desire to please Him.

By becoming disciples of Christ we began our preparation to belong to the Divine Royal Family, the family of God, and began to be increasingly like Prince Jesus, the Son of God <sup>Romans 8:29</sup>. Pastors and moderators of cell groups are tutors who teach first by example and then with their words what Jesus and His Apostles taught on being a spiritual, Divine Royal person <sup>2 Peter 1:4</sup>. Teaching us to become real kings and priests with Him <sup>Revelation 1:6</sup>, how to behave as co-heirs of the king, being the bride of the beloved Son of God and be trained into the heavenly and eternal life. Jesus Christ will help us every day to change and to behave like members of His family. That's Discipleship. Learn to behave like members of the Divine Royal *family*.

2 Corinthians 3:18 Living Bible (TLB)

<sup>18</sup> *But we Christians have no veil over our faces; we can be **mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord**. And as the Spirit of the Lord **works within us**, we **become more and more like him**.*

Our goal is to be like Jesus!

Ephesians 4:11-15 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the **equipping of the saints for the work of service**, to the building up of the body of Christ; <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a **mature man**, to the measure of the stature <sup>14</sup> which belongs to **the fullness of Christ**. <sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup> As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness <sup>15</sup> in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup> but <sup>15</sup> speaking the truth in love, <sup>15</sup> **we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ**,*

Colossians 1:28 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>28</sup> *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man <sup>28</sup> with all wisdom, so that we may present every man <sup>28</sup> complete in Christ.*

First we are simple **apprentices**. The first title that the disciples gave to Jesus was "Teacher". A disciple is a person who wants to be like his teacher. This was the encounter of the first disciples with Jesus, very simple:

**John 1:38-39** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>38</sup> Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

But as we follow Him and experience a life of continuous transformation, we discover that He is more than a teacher. Jesus is God, He is the Lord, He is the creator of the universe! Peter said: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*". Recognizing that Jesus is indeed a Master, who is God, they began to obey Him and serve Him. Later Jesus revealed more of His nature to us, and at the end we discovered that He saved us because He loved us and wants us to be friends, not servants. Then He

opens His heart to us and shows us that He wants us to be his girlfriend and finally marry us.

Beloved, this is not a religion this is a romance. A courtship that culminates in the Book of Revelation with the marriage of the Lamb that lifts us to belong to the family of God and live forever with Him in a state superior to the angels. Can you imagine it? He who loves deserves everything. Now we understand the meaning of:

**Luke 17:33** New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

The choice is very easy; there isn't much to think about. The choice is between being **lost** or **lost**. We were **lost** in the hands of Satan and we were slaves to sin. We were not ours; we were under the power of the evil one. Christ, because He loves us, paid the ransom, bought us and set us free because we were created for Him. We were **lost** in the darkness of Satan, **lost** by belonging to this fallen race; but now that Jesus has rescued us we are madly in love Him. Now we are **lost** in Christ arms. That is why we can say with Paul:

**Romans 8:38-39** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. <sup>39</sup> No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So the choice is easy: **lost** in the hands of Satan, and sin, a fallen race and an infernal future **OR lost** in the tender arms of the beloved Jesus Christ and in a holy and eternal life. What is the meaning of: *"Who wants to save his life will lose it"*? The person who wants to save his life is the one who does not want to be either **lost** or **lost**. Some people don't want to be **lost** in the hands of Satan and eternal damnation No! But they also don't want to **lose** themselves in the arms of Christ either. They want to live for themselves. Neither **lost** nor **lost**. Of course most don't want to be **lost** in sin and hell, but they also do not want to be **lost** to Christ. **This middle path does not exist!** The choice is between being **lost** or **lost**. If you don't want to **lose** yourself in Christ, you'll instead get **lost** in hell. If you don't want to be **lost** in hell, then you should **lose** yourself in Christ – join Him. If you don't want to be **lost** in the odious arms of Satan, then **lose** yourself in the loving arms of Jesus, because if you do not get **lost** in the loving arms of Jesus, you'll be **lost** forever in the arms of the odious Satan. So if you don't want to get **lost**, then get **lost**, because if you don't get **lost**, you will be **lost**.

Our relationship with Jesus is a romance because it ends in a wedding! Do you realize how our friendship and spirituality grows? At the last supper Jesus washed the feet of His friends and one of them laid his head on His shoulder, **that is friendship!** Thus grew the friendship and spirituality of His disciples. At the end, from the cross, Jesus instructed one of His friends to take care of His Blessed Mother

Mary... **that is friendship!** When Jesus was face to face with Peter after the denial, instead of blaming him He instead lovingly told him: "Simon... do you love me?" **this is friendship!** They were friends. It was a relationship of love. Do you have this friendly and intimate relationship with Him, our lover, or are you're only a religious person who goes to church on Sunday?

Jesus did not come to the world out of pity, compassion, philanthropy or altruism, but **for love**. The Father **did not force Him** to come to save us from hell; Jesus **offered** himself voluntarily because He loved us. He wanted to come to this planet and give His life for us, to make us **His**, because He loved us:

**John 10:17-18** New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>17</sup> *The Father loves me because **I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again.** <sup>18</sup> **No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.** For I have the authority **to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again.** For this is what my Father has commanded.*

He came not only to give us eternal life and allow us to live in some corner of heaven. He came to make us His wife, be heirs of God and co-heirs with Him by our union with Him and then reign with Him. Jesus did not die only to deliver us from hell and so that we can go to heaven. He pledged to be with us forever. We were made His co-heirs, the heirs of God by our eternal union with Him. The angels will be our servants Hebrews 1:14.

The Father loved us this way because we are the love of His Son. His sacrifice on the cross was not an isolated charitable work, but the center of a love story. Jesus did not say: "**I'm going to die on the cross to save these poor people from hell and when I am done with this terrible mission, I will go back to heaven and... rest.**" No, He wants to go much, much further. **He did it to have us at His side forever!** He wanted us to belong to Him and He to belong to us! He told us before you leave this Earth:

**John 14:3** New American Standard Bible (NASB)

If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, **that where I am, there you may be also.**

Paul says:

**Ephesians 1:4-5** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>4</sup> *Even before he made the world, God loved us and **chose us in Christ** to be holy and without fault in his eyes. <sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to **adopt us into his own family** by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.*

As you can see, Christ's call to follow Him is a proposition of love. The cross is the most shocking romantic scene, a lover who gives His life for His love. He wants to unite with us, as it was predestined before He created us, so that we become part of His Divine Family and be with Him forever! Our union with Him integrates us into

the family of God, and so to speak, we become partakers of the Divine Nature <sup>2 Peter 1:4</sup>. Look at what Jesus said to His Father:

**John 17:21-24** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>21</sup> I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. <sup>23</sup> I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

In other words, *"Father, this is my fiancée. They will be part of our family. Now in the Holy Trinity, we are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We will soon be **Father, Mr. and Mrs. Son, and Holy Spirit.**"* Are you noticing that being a disciple of Christ is not a religion, it is not to be Evangelical or Catholic, it is not even just going to heaven, **it is much more than that; it is a romance with the Son of God!** It is the preparation for the great divine wedding. The Lover dies on the cross for His love. Are we also behaving as lovers? Or are we simply members of a Christian religion? A disciple is one who prepares himself for that wedding and eternal life with Him.

What a fantastic story. The true Christian life is wonderful. We learn from Jesus, serve Him not just to go to heaven and be saved from hell, but because we are in love with Him. At the end, we see our physical death as a liberation from this body that is aging and dying, to move on to an incorruptible, spiritual and eternal body, and the long-awaited union with Jesus to be with Him for eternity in the luxurious royal mansions of the King, and reign with Him. We love this Scripture in the Book of Revelation...

**Revelation 5:9-10** New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>9</sup> *And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. <sup>10</sup> And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth."*

To compare our union with Christ as a courtship and marriage is not only mentioned in the Scriptures as an analogy, but as something real. In Ephesians we are called the bride of Christ and in Revelation John speaks of the *"marriage of the Lamb"*.

**Revelation 19:6-9** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>6</sup> *Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder: "Praise the LORD! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself. <sup>8</sup> She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear." For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people. <sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he added, "These are true words that come from God."*

Let us try to visualize the city where we are going to live for eternity:

**Revelation 21:9-26** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>9</sup>Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." <sup>10</sup>So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup>It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. <sup>15</sup>The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. <sup>16</sup>When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. <sup>17</sup>Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel).

<sup>18</sup>The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. <sup>19</sup>The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

<sup>21</sup>The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. <sup>22</sup>I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup>And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. <sup>24</sup>The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. <sup>25</sup>Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. <sup>26</sup>And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city.

Paul does not say that Jesus and the Church as husband and wife is a merely a symbol. What he says is that "*it is a great mystery*" Ephesians 5:25-27, 32, Joh 3:29. We do not know how a church of millions of people can marry Jesus. But it is something divine and heavenly. Be as it be, it will be a spiritual love relationship, inseparable and pleasurable for all eternity with our beloved Savior and the heavenly family, much more pleasant than the relationship of the best marriages and best mothers-in-law on earth. Actually the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of the Lord, will be our mother-in-law. The call to follow Jesus is identical to a call to get married...! The bride and groom leave everything and are devoted to each other forever.

## **B. TO BELONG TO CHRIST IS A GREAT PLEASURE**

1. Following Jesus is not obedience to written commands, but the spontaneous and natural consequence of being in love. It is a delight as courtship. For the sake of love we will do anything. By love, He gave His life for us, and by love we give Him

our lives also. And when it is by love then one pleases the other and does it willingly and joyfully.

**2 Corinthians 5:14** New Living Translation (NLT)

Either way, **Christ's love controls us**. Since we believe that **Christ died for all**, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.

2. Jesus loved us so much, that His love relieved His suffering on the cross!

**Hebrews 12:2** New American Standard Bible (NASB) Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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Jesus faced the cross with peace because He did not focus on that cross but looked beyond the cross. He looked at what that cross would produce. He was dying for His love — for us! That mitigated His suffering on the cross! We are His love. Jesus focused His eyes on the faces of all of us, everyone in this congregation, and all believers in Him. He saw us all dressed in white at the wedding and beginning to live with Him forever. He saw that because of His cross we would live with Him for eternity. **This helped Him cope with the suffering.**

Thinking of us allowed Him to confront the passion and painful death on the cross with patience. He despised the shame but instead was looking forward to His marriage with us, and the beautiful thought that we would spend eternity together made His suffering more manageable. For this reason, since I am in love with Jesus, all the difficulties of my life will be more bearable because I know what awaits me with Him, with the Father, the Holy Spirit, Angels, archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim for eternity. Even more so as I understand more about how our mansions in the luxurious New Jerusalem will be.

**The call to follow Him is the most grandiose, extraordinary, phenomenal and inconceivable thing that could have happened to us!** It is something huge, eternal and infinite, hard to imagine that completely changes our life's purpose. We are preparing to be the wife of the Prince Jesus, heir of God and us joint-heirs with Him Romans 8:17. It makes me forget this world and live thinking of my spiritual and eternal dimension.

Let's fix our eyes on Prince Jesus, our promised love. Let's set our thoughts on being in the family of the Creator of the Universe. We'll be children-in-law of God and Mary! And the angels our servers. We are the family of Jesus Christ and the Father. Living with this faith will produce in us not only a life that pleases Jesus, but doing it will be a pleasure for us; and the passing suffering of this life will be much more bearable. Just as Christ took His cross to Calvary, so we take our cross, which is the kind of life that we have to live, because it will never be as heavy as the cross of **JESUS** Matthew 16:24.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** New Life Version (NLV)

<sup>16</sup>This is the reason we do not give up. Our human body is wearing out. But our spirits are getting stronger every day. <sup>17</sup>The little troubles we suffer now for a short time are making us ready for the great things God is going to give us forever. <sup>18</sup>We do not look at the things that can be seen. We look at the things that cannot be seen. The things that can be seen will come to an end. But the things that cannot be seen will last forever.

3. As you can see, our relationship with Jesus Christ is not keeping a list of religious rules, but a romance and a mutual desire to please each other as much as possible. If we live the Christian life as a relationship with Jesus Christ we are going to want to please Him because we love Him and not just because a religion obliges us to. As the cross was made less heavy for Him because He knew he was dying for those He loved, our life will be easier for us when we live for Him looking forward to our eternal life with Jesus. ***For the Joy set before us, we will suffer anything for our love.***

When I was just eight years old and in the third grade of primary school, I was the only Protestant in the school where the teacher and all the students were Catholics. My mother gave me a small pocket New Testament to read during the school breaks. In those days Catholics were forbidden to read the Bible, so I was considered a heretic.

One day I failed to do my homework properly and the teacher, in front of all the other children, said to me: "Juan Carlos: instead of reading that book you should be more careful with your homework." All children laughed. I was so embarrassed that I went home and told my mother to switch me to another school. I was in tears. My mother then asked me:

"Did the teacher spit in your face?" I said of course not!

"Did she put thorns on your head?" I said, no Mom!

"Did she nail you to a cross?" No, Mom!

Finally, she said: "Then what's the problem?"

I never forgot that. It was a tremendous lesson. Ever since then, anytime somebody tries to hurt me, I say to myself, "What's the problem?" Hebrews 12:4.

Sometimes I asked myself how could the disciples of Jesus face martyrdom? The holy martyrs gave their lives for Jesus. Why? Because they loved Him. There is no other explanation. The experience of salvation is something great, eternal, infinite, and glorious.

God welcomes us as we are, lost sinners, and transforms us into priests and kings **and members of His family!** God is our father... and father-in-law! Thanks to our union with His Son Jesus Christ.

The difference between the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of God is very clear: in the realm of darkness each person lives as it pleases himself. Each follows the will of their flesh because we have inherited Adam's disobedient and rebellious character. But those of us who are born again are new creatures and have entered the Kingdom of God. In this realm the Holy Spirit gives us the desire to please Jesus Philippians 2:13 and instead of doing the will of the flesh we do the will of God. As He taught us to pray: "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven". When His Kingdom comes into our lives, God prints His will in us Jeremiah 31:33.

Our desire to please Him confirms that we are born again. We don't have to behave well to be born again, but we must be born again to be able to behave well. The change of life begins to be noticed the moment Christ is revealed in us and we believe in Him. At this point discipleship and preparation for the Royal Wedding begins. Surely today in this place many will be born again when we make the final prayer, escaping thus from the realm of darkness and entering into the Kingdom of God, where His will is done on earth as in heaven.

St. Paul says...:

**2 Timothy 1:9** Contemporary English Version (CEV)

God saved us and chose us to be his holy people. We did nothing to deserve this, but God planned it because he is so kind. Even before time began God planned for Christ Jesus to show kindness to us.

How do I know that I have been chosen by God? If you are chosen then you will want to love Him, obey Him and persevere in the faith voluntarily and joyfully. This is the evidence that I am predestined. **Wanting to be good indicates that we are born again and that we were predestined since before the foundation of the world to be part of the family of God.** Even if we are not perfect, to be willing to is the sign of salvation. Believing in Jesus is to believe not only that our sins are forgiven, but also that now, by his grace, we are able to live as it pleases Him. This is the proof that I am not only called, but I am a chosen.

## **CONCLUSION**

Where are you in your spiritual endeavor? Have you met Christ? Are you one of His disciples? Are you part of a small group? Is Jesus your Lord? Have you reached to the understanding that He loves you? Do you have an intimate friendship with Him as a very close friend to whom you tell everything about your life? Do you have a desire to please Him more and more? Are you already savoring the day you will be with Him in glory? Can you imagine the wedding feast of the Lamb Jesus with us? Can you imagine the banquet? Revelation 19:9 Can you imagine the city called "New Jerusalem" whose precious stones and gleaming gold shines in such a way that it lights up all the Nations? Revelation 21:9-25. Pity for those who have no faith! Blessed are those who are here today hearing these words of God and making their decision to become Disciples and friends of Jesus.

Today, Jesus is telling you "I love you, I forgive you all your sins, I will help you to transform your life for the better, and give you eternal life, but... do you love me?" Courtship begins when we respond **Yes**.

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A ROMANCE!** To serve a person you love is a pleasure.

**Invitation:** If you now want to respond to the love of Jesus Christ, stand up and come to the front now and I will make a prayer introducing you to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Prayer:** Lord, I acknowledge I am a sinner, but in the depths of my being I do not want to be a sinner. There is an evil force that leads me to do what I shouldn't. But today, now, I open my heart to You, come into my mind and into my conscience, forgive me and cleanse me of all my errors, past, present and future. Start today to transform my life and give me the will to live a clean life for You, thinking about the day that I will be with You forever. I want to be a person of integrity and please You in everything. I know that it will help me to attend the celebrations of the Church and to be part of a small group to start my training in becoming like You. I place my life in your hands in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Declaration: All your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

If you are not baptized, get baptized as soon as possible, and start to attend a small group to grow spiritually.