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Jesus is a true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. That is why He calls Himself Bridegroom in the Scriptures. His great love desires a bride, a bridal soul. He longs fervently for her love. He looks for her to see whether she is about to come to Him, to see whether she longs and yearns for Him, to see whether she really wants Him alone.

Jesus is a true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. He wants to give us His love; but He is also waiting for us to return His love. Jesus is a true Bridegroom. His love is a jealous love. He wants you, your soul, completely. He is jealous when you give your love to other people and to other things. He is jealous when you pay more attention to them, when you give them more time, more of yourself, than you give Him. Then He stands beside you, grieved. Then He is hurt and wounded, because He loves you so much.

Jesus is a true Bridegroom. He does not force you to love Him. He asks: "Will you give Me your love?", and He gets what He wants when you do this. Only one thing will satisfy Him "your love. All else is too small for Him: that you believe in Him, that you obey Him, that you come to Him for forgiveness. He is not only your Physician who heals you. He is not only your Redeemer who delivers you from your bonds. He wants to be your Bridegroom, and as Bridegroom He gives you His great, His tender, His most intimate love. Now He is waiting for you to give Him your love. He who loves wants to be loved in return.

Because Jesus is the Bridegroom, He can be wounded if you take up self-chosen crosses, choosing the way of poverty and resolving to make sacrifices simply for ascetic reasons. Certainly He wants you to follow Him on the way of the cross. But His heart is filled with grief and sorrow if it is not love that impels you. You should not take the way of the cross for your own sanctification, but rather "as He repeatedly said while He was on earth " "For My sake you should lose your life, for My sake you should forsake houses, brethren . . . Out of love for Him, out of love alone you should choose obedience, lowliness, humility and disgrace. Only the dedication which springs from love will make Him happy. Indeed, this is the only dedication which He will accept. Nothing else. All else is insufficient. Anything else would be more likely to wound Him, because it is simply pious deceit; we seem to be going His way, but it is really for our own sake.

Jesus, the Bridegroom, is the Man of Sorrows. He suffers to this present day. He is seeking a bride who will share with Him what is in His heart. His heart is filled not only with love, but also with suffering " past and present. He is seeking a bride who will really live out the bridal state, whose heart will beat with His, who will bear things with Him, who not only suffers through her own afflictions, but also suffers His afflictions with Him, who in reality enters into the fellowship of suffering with Him. Only she is a true bride who is concerned about His concerns " about the needs of His people and His Church and the things which hinder His dominion among the peoples.

For Him the bride is the soul who suffers with Him and who is prepared to do everything to alleviate His sufferings. She seeks ways through sacrifice and prayer and does her utmost to ensure that the things which trouble Him may be changed. She labors so that He may be honored where He is not now honored, that He may be feared where He is not now feared. She strives to lead back to God the people who are not living according to His commandments and statutes, and so she comforts His heart and makes Him happy. She spends her life for Him and suffers until she has loved souls home to Him by whom they can be saved, until people set themselves under His dominion and begin to love Him. Not until her Bridegroom is comforted will she be satisfied. The bride keeps asking Him: "How can I comfort You?", and in the quietness the Bridegroom will tell her what grieves Him. She will go with Him to comfort Him.

Jesus is a true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. That is why He is not satisfied when we simply set ourselves under His dominion and give Him slavish obedience. He wants more " He wants our heart, our very hearts blood. As the Bridegroom, He asks: "How much am I worth to you? How much can you sacrifice for Me? Can you give Me your beloved children? Can you give Me father and mother and friends? Can you give Me your home and your native land out of love if I ask for these? Will you go anywhere I call you to serve, and lead to Me the souls for which I hunger? Can you sacrifice your honor, your strength, your longing to be loved, your deepest secret wishes for Me?"

Jesus is a true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. He waits for His bride. He does not seek to force love; it must be spontaneous. He knocks softly on the door. He waits until someone opens it. He stands behind the door and looks to see whether His bride will open up and come out to Him (Song of Solomon 5:2). His eyes follow her sadly if all day long she is

busy and in a hurry, if she goes about everything quickly and vigorously and yet spiritually is becoming estranged from Him, because she is completely engrossed with her work and earthly business.

Jesus is a true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. His ardent concern is to impart His likeness to His bride so that she too may radiate divine beauty and be adorned with many virtues. He works with special care, loving care for His bride. He guides her and leads her along paths of chastisement, for this will bring her to where He is. He dreams of the full beauty that shall be hers. He loves her too much to suffer her to have any "spots" or "wrinkles", because she is His bride. Full of pride and joy, His loving eyes behold her as though she were perfect. Through the power of His blood He, the Almighty, can bring her to the perfection of divine beauty.

Jesus is a true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. So He stands as a Protector besides His bride. He is intent upon protecting her from all who may want to harm her. He strives on her behalf. To be a bride means that one is no longer alone. It means that one has an intimate partner who lives for his bride, and to do everything that he can for her. So, Jesus, the Bridegroom, lives to do everything for His bride, to help her in every situation, in every need, in every impossibility. She is no longer alone. Jesus is true Bridegroom; this is His very nature. He is waiting in heaven for the day when His bride will come to Him so that He can be united with her for ever. He seeks her in unending love.

I will betroth you to Me forever; I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness; And you shall know the Lord. (Hosea 2:19-20).