

Maturing
The Bride

SERIES: BOOK 1

GOD IS LOOKING FOR
A **MATURE** BRIDE
FOR HIS SON

BY: BOB SJOGREN



***This book coincides
with the
YouTube Channel:
Maturing The Bride***

(Click On The Logo Above
If You Wish to See The
Videos That Coincides With
Each Chapter.)

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CHAPTER ONE

God is Looking for a Mature Bride for His Son

Hi, and welcome to *Maturing the Bride*. My name is Bob Sjogren and I am so excited you are reading this book. I hope and pray that what you are going to find in this book will blow you away. Personally, I've never heard it preached in any church that I've ever attended or visited. I've never heard it from any speaker on YouTube. It is something new, fresh, and I hope you agree, very biblical! Why it hasn't been talked about before is a mystery to me.

Before you begin reading, let me tell you a little bit about me so hopefully you can relate to me, at least a little. I came to know Christ personally my freshman year in college at Penn State University. I was involved in a college ministry and grew spiritually very quickly. By the end of my freshman year I was in one Bible study and leading another. By the end of my senior year, I had a group of three guys who each had their own groups, with some of those having groups. All in all, God had placed me over 52 young lives.

Upon graduating, I was challenged to take the Gospel where it had not been in decades—to Libya. I, along with three other young men, responded to that challenge. We formed a team and went to Libya, teaching English as a second language. After teaching for one year, I discovered that there was only one missionary for every one million Muslims I decided to come back and work at raising up laborers for the Muslim world.

After returning to the U.S., I helped a man by the name of Greg Livingstone start up a mission agency called *Frontiers*. I was with them for 20 years as a recruiter. During my time with *Frontiers*, I met a beautiful Southern belle who became my wife. We've been married now for over 35 years. We have four adult children who are all married, as well as three grandchildren as of the writing of this book (but we're hoping for a whole lot more)!

Regarding my spiritual journey, I've never been to seminary.

I've also never been to Bible School. In fact, I've never had a Bible course in my life. Probably like you, I'm your average lay person.

I have personally walked with God for over 40 years, but it has only been in the last five to ten years that my eyes have really been opened up to the material that is found in this book.

This material has changed my life completely and has helped me to understand God's Word so much better. I can now understand some of the tough passages that were so hard to understand before.

God's Word does not just instruct us about how to live this life here on earth, it also shows us what God is doing for all of eternity future. Learning this can change the way you live your life today. This book is here to challenge you to understand eternity future and what God's ultimate destiny is for you.

Depressing News

To accomplish this goal, I'm going to start with depressing news. Now you may be like my wife by asking, "Why is he starting off with depressing news?" The reason I am doing it is to show you that there is a problem. Once you understand that there is a problem, then you can find a solution.

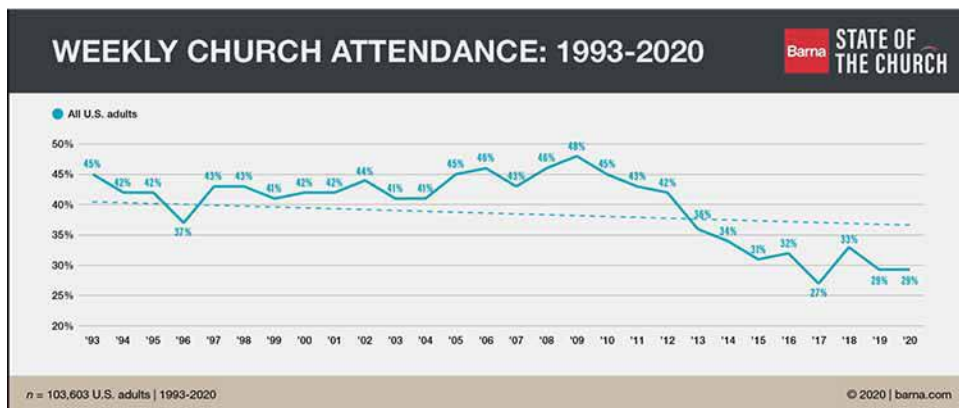
I believe that the church in America has a temperature, or a fever, or has been infected with a virus. Something is not right for the church as a whole in America. I base that theory on very simple statistics. I've been looking at statistics for a decade by following researchers who are documenting them. (These statistics are all pre-Covid; these numbers have nothing to do with Covid.)

Let me go over with you the basic statistics that put up some red flags in my mind; hopefully, you will also see these concerns. They are listed in bullet points to make them easier to digest.

- Six in ten Protestant churches are declining in attendance.
- Seventy-six churches close every week. That means that ten churches close every day.
- For every four churches that open, seven close. It is clear that the church is NOT gaining ground.
- Fifty-four pastors quit the pulpit every day.
- Eighty percent of all pastors believe pastoral ministries have negatively affected their families.
- Many pastors' children do not attend church now because of what the church has done to their parents. They say, "I'm

done with church.”

A simple graph illustrates this concerning trend:



If we look at the weekly church attendance between 1993 and 2020 (pre-Covid), we find that in 1993, 45% of Americans attended church weekly. Just before Covid in 2019-2020, 29% attended church weekly. We have dropped from 45% down to 29% in less than seven years.

In the 1960's attendance was up to 63%. We have almost lost half of our church attendance in one generation.

Here's our final statistic:

- Three thousand five hundred (3,500) people leave the church every day.

Does this sound right to you? Does this sound like something God wants? I don't think so either.

Because this is not the way it is supposed to be, we have to ask a question: Could something be wrong in how we are reading and understanding the Bible? Could there be a problem with our focus or what we are getting from it?

I want to suggest to you that the answer is, "Yes, there could be something wrong." The goal of this book and the videos on YouTube is to give you the big picture in understanding the Bible and to see where we have been off just a little!

Now, different people have different ways of looking at the Scriptures to see the big picture. On the next page are some of the ways that I see quite frequently.

- The Bible is all about salvation. Therefore, how can we get saved?

- It's all about Jesus and we have to worship Jesus and exalt Him.
- It's all about love; God is love and so it's about loving God.
- It's all about the kingdom of God and getting that kingdom here and now on this earth.
- It's all about helping people live their lives here on this earth.

These are just a few, but I hope it is obvious to you that there are a lot of different ways of understanding the big picture of this Book.

If you go to a seminary bookstore, you can find a book called Major Bible Themes and the contents cover 52 vital doctrines of Scriptures simplified. Fifty-two vital Bible themes—are we supposed to know all these? Do all these have differences?

Some researchers report that there are 32,000 different denominations here on this earth. Thirty-two thousand different ways of living out Christianity on this third rock from the sun. Is that what God wants? Are all of these divisions and separations a part of God's plan?

Is the Bible really that hard to understand? Do we need a seminary degree or a Bible college degree to grasp it, or is it possible that lay people like you and me can truly understand this Book?

It Is Possible for the Average Lay Person to Understand the Bible. You Do Not Need A Seminary or Bible College Degree.

I want you to hear this: Yes, it is possible for the average lay person to understand this book. You do not need a seminary or Bible college degree. You just need a little tweak on where your focus lies.

We usually focus on our lives on this earth, but I want to challenge you. We need a bigger picture. We need to look at living with an eternal perspective—living for eternity future. Once you understand what God is doing in eternity future, so many things begin to make sense.

If you don't understand the big picture of what God is doing in eternity future, you are never truly going to understand your purpose here on earth. You will be spiritually blinded in so many ways. There will be huge chunks of Scripture that will baffle or confuse you because they do not seem to make sense, or, they

may seem to totally contradict each other. In both cases, you are left scratching your head thinking, “This just doesn’t make sense.”

For many Christians, these contradictions build up over time and many just give up on God. This may be right where you are now. Or maybe you’re spiritually young and feeling great about God. However, five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years from now you may want to throw in the towel. I have seen it so many times—people in their fifties and sixties giving up on God. I do not want that for you because then you will become one of the 3,500 who leave the church every day.

The Big Picture

Summarizing the big picture of the Bible isn’t that tough to do. In fact, it is quite simple, and here it is:

God is looking for a bride for His Son.

The idea of a bride and groom draws a picture of deep intimacy. God wants deep intimacy with your soul. He wants you to have oneness with Him. He wants you to have eternal love—His steadfast love that never ceases. He wants that for you—that oneness between Him and you in life. He wants you to have eternal significance.

God is basically telling each one of us, “I want you to be My bride; I desire eternal intimacy and significance for you.”

This concept is found from cover to cover in the Bible. It starts in Genesis and ends in Revelation.

Did you know that in the very beginning there was a wedding? This wedding was between Adam and Eve. God made Adam and said it was not good for him to be alone. Then God created and brought Eve to Adam to be his wife.

“It is not good for man to be alone,” said the Lord. “Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.” “At last, this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ because she was taken out of man,” said the man. (Genesis 2:18, 22-23)

At the very end of the Bible there is another wedding: that of Jesus and His bride. Jesus is going to marry His bride for all eternity future.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made

Epilogue:

Congratulations on finishing the first book in the “Maturing the Bride” series. Please know that this is just the tip of the iceberg. So much more is coming.

For now, practice what you have learned. Deny now so you can gain later! And please know that you will never really “know” this material until you can teach it. So I encourage you, go out and find two other people you can teach this to!

Our next series is “One Degree Off.” It challenges us to see that the church has been “one degree off” for nearly two thousand years.

Please don’t miss this series!

The pages 6-62 are not included in this sample.

Enjoying this sample?

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