***Friend of the Bridegroom Messengers (Jn. 3:29)***

1. the forerunner ministry
	1. On May 7, 1997, the Lord spoke to me about believing Him to raise up 10,000 forerunners who would live in the spirit of John the Baptist as friends of the Bridegroom. IHOPKC is to function as a “boot camp” to train messengers who are inspired by John the Baptist's dedication and message. One of IHOPKC’s specific ministry assignments is to minister with a “forerunner spirit.”

29The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)

* 1. Forerunners prepare people spiritually for the unique dynamics of the generation that Jesus returns.
	2. The coming “eschatological revolution” will be the most comprehensive revolution in history as Jesus replaces all the evil governments on earth. He will remove all the wicked leaders on the earth and will replace them with the saints. (*Eschatology* means study of the end times). The Lord will transition the earth to the age to come. This is be the most dramatic transition in human history.

15The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord… (Rev. 11:15)

19The kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered to make war against Him [Jesus]…20The Beast was captured, and with him the false prophet…these two were cast alive into the lake of fire…21The rest were killed with the sword…20:4I saw thrones and… they [the saints] lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years… (Rev. 19:19-20:4)

25He [Antichrist] shall…persecute the saints…27Then the…greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to…the saints of the Most High. (Dan. 7:25-27)

* 1. The years leading up to Jesus’ return will see ***unique dynamics***, in both positive and negative ways. The greatest outpouring of the Spirit is yet coming. It will surpass the book of Acts in power and impact as the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17-21). All nations will receive the witness of the kingdom with power (Mt. 24:14). As the light gets brighter, so the darkness will get darker.

17In the last days…I will pour My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy… 20 before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. (Acts 2:17-20)

21There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time…22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved… (Mt. 24:21-22)

* 1. The forerunner ministry does not make sense to the multitudes until the intense activities begin.
	The wisdom of Noah’s ark was not apparent until it began to rain.
	2. Even now, God is preparing forerunners in many different streams in the Body of Christ worldwide. These forerunners will function in many different ways and ministry callings. They include those called as evangelists, pastors, teachers, media missionaries, artists, singers, musicians, actors, writers, and those in the marketplace. Many will focus on making disciples by leading small groups in their church, university, or workplace. Moms and dads are some of the most effective forerunners as they teach their children about Jesus’ coming and its implications.
1. John the Baptist: the model for the forerunner ministry
	1. John is the clearest model in Scripture of the end-time forerunner as prophesied in Isaiah 40:3-5.
	2. We gain important direction and inspiration from John the Baptist's life and ministry.
		1. ***John’s lifestyle***: the fasted lifestyle
		2. ***John’s ministry style***: with humility, refusing to draw attention to himself
		3. ***John’s message***: preparing for the unique dynamics of the coming of the Lord
		4. ***John’s view of God***: Jesus as a passionate Bridegroom, powerful King, and righteous Judge.
	3. Isaiah prophesied end-time forerunners. They will prepare the way of the Lord at the time when
	***all nations*** see the manifest glory of God ***together*** in the events culminating with Jesus’ return.
	John the Baptist fulfilled this passage (Lk. 3:4-6) but only in part. Its complete fulfillment will occur only when ***all flesh*** or all nations see God’s glory ***together*** (40:5) in the end times.

3The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God…5 The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh [all nations] shall see it together [at Jesus’ second coming]…” (Isa. 40:3-5)

* 1. John the Baptist fulfilled this passage (Lk. 3:4-6) but only in part. Its complete fulfillment will occur only when ***all flesh*** or all nations see God’s glory ***together*** (40:5) in the end times.

17It is he [John Baptist] who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah…so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Lk. 1:17, NAS)

* 1. John prepared people by ministering as a prophet and evangelist, calling many to come to Jesus.
	He announced Jesus’ first coming while winning souls and making disciples by teaching them to pray, fast, and live righteously (Mt. 9:14; Lk. 3:3-18; 11:1).
	2. We are to imitate John the Baptist's dedication and message since Jesus described him as having a burning heart and being a shining lamp of ministry that clearly made known God’s values and ways. John brought together the forerunner lifestyle (burning heart) with the forerunner message (lamp).

35He was the burning (heart) and shining lamp (ministry) and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. (Jn. 5:35)

* 1. Jesus described John as the greatest man in history. No one ever obeyed God more consistently nor prepared for ministry more diligently than John the Baptist.

10This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I [the Father] send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your [Jesus’] way before You.’ 11“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist…” 18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ (Mt. 11:10-11, 18)

1. John the Baptist’s view: his life, ministry, and paradigm of Jesus
	1. John saw himself as a “friend of the Bridegroom” in light of viewing Jesus as “the Bridegroom.”

29He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice…this joy of mine is fulfilled.
(Jn. 3:29)

* + 1. ***He that has the Bride***: Jesus has a bride in His heart because God promised Him a prepared Bride at the end of natural history (Rev. 19:7).
		2. ***He is the Bridegroom***: He has tender love and burns with desire for His people.
	1. John described his ministry and lifestyle as a friend of the Bridegroom who stands and hears Him.
		1. ***The friend of the Bridegroom***: The best man in a wedding does not seek to draw the bride’s attention and affections to himself but to prepare her to receive the embrace of the Bridegroom. Paul spoke of ministries who preached or showcased “themselves” (2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:19-21). Friends of the Bridegroom prepare people to receive Jesus’ embrace as the Bridegroom God empowering them to walk out the first commandment.
		2. ***Who stands***: To stand in God’s presence diligently seeking Him in prayer, fasting, and the Word, etc.

18For who has stood in the counsel of the Lord, and has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it? (Jer. 23:18)

* + 1. ***Who hears him***: This speaks of a responsive heart that follows through with obedience.
	1. John described the joyful, emotional impact that hearing the Bridegroom’s voice had on him.
		1. ***Bridegroom’s voice***: John was empowered by revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God.
		2. ***This joy of mine is fulfilled***: John empowered with sustainable joy even in the difficulty of a desert lifestyle. This speaks of his gratitude and being preoccupied with Jesus instead of the difficulty of this lifestyle. He had no complaints or regrets about the lonely, fasted lifestyle.
	2. God is raising up forerunners who will be a voice and not merely an echo. Jesus desires to be equally yoked with us in love so that we may be equipped to walk in full partnership with Him in all that the Father entrusted to Him in ruling the earth.
	3. The “Bridegroom message” calls us to a life of abandonment to Jesus. The intimacy message is more than God’s mercy. Sin is more than a little dirt on our garment that has to be washed off. It is like taking the oxygen mask off in a toxic chemical atmosphere. Those who take the mask off die.
	4. The Lord is calling some to embrace a season of rigorous preparation to equip them to proclaim the forerunner message more effectively in the midst of the coming pressures. Forerunners prepare themselves by going deep in God through studying the Scripture with prayer and fasting, walking in purity, ministering to people, and learning to minister in the Spirit’s power. ***Because of love,*** *they prepare themselves to prepare others for the greatest transition in history.*
1. the friend of the Bridegroom ministry Paradigm - 7 examples
	1. The phrase, *the friend of the Bridegroom*, is used 4 times in Scripture in two different settings.
	2. It is used by Jesus in describing the ministry of His apostles (Mt. 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk. 5:34) and then by John the Baptist (Jn. 3:29).
	3. Jesus’ paradigm of ministry (Mt. 9:15):

15Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away…then they will fast. (Mt. 9:15)

* 1. John the Baptist’s paradigm of ministry (Jn. 3:29)

29“…but the friend of the bridegroom…rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice…  (Jn. 3:29)

C. Paul’s paradigm of ministry (2 Cor. 11:2)

2I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)

D. The angel’s final revelation to the apostle John was of the Bride (Rev. 21:9)

9Then one of the seven angels…talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” (Rev. 21:9)

E. The servant preachers of the wedding parable (Mt. 22:3-4)

3“sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding…4Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited…all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’… 9‘Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’” (Mt. 22:3-4, 9)

F. The virgin ministries of the parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1)

1“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who…went out to meet the bridegroom… 10…the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding…” (Mt. 25:1, 10)

G. The prophetic voice in the parable of the ten virgins: (Mt. 25:6)

6“…at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’” (Mt. 25:6)