

Session 1 Introduction to Studying the Song: Why and How?

For **additional study material* pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org

I. WHY STUDY THE SONG OF SOLOMON?

- A. One of the greatest needs in the Church today is to understand Jesus' love. Leaders throughout church history have encouraged people to read the Song. (See **additional study material*.)

*Well, I have been teaching the Song of Solomon now for about twenty-five years, and so I get asked, "Why would you teach **that** book?" Of course that is the first question I asked the Lord when He really emphasized that He wanted me to do this. I will tell a little bit of that story briefly in just a little while.*

I did not like the Song of Solomon when I first read it. It was like "Ugh!" I mean really, I did not get anything! I just said, "Lord, are You sure that You are really want me to do this, to study this book?" Well, some years later I am really glad because I began to see the heart of Jesus in a new and a powerful way.

One of the greatest needs in the Church today is to understand Jesus' love. As simple as that is, I believe that is probably the greatest, not probably, the greatest gap and need of the people in this room. I mean the people who are on fire for the Lord across the earth, and there are millions of them. It is the greatest need in my life to go deeper in this. It is not to get more ministry skills, though I want more ministry skills. Not more leadership skills, though I need more leadership skills. But it is to experience the heart of God in a deeper way because that shifts everything when this happens progressively in our heart.

I have really appreciated the testimony of some of the most prominent leaders through church history and some of the great revivalists who have emphasized the value of the Song of Solomon. Each week I will have the teaching notes, and then I will have a corresponding set of notes on mikebickle.org that I am calling additional study material, which will give a lot more information. In this week's additional notes, I have a number of quotes from men like John Wesley, Charles Finney, and George Whitefield—some of the great revivalists of history—and what they felt about the Song of Solomon.

Now my favorite Bible teacher is Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones from London; some of you know this name. He was the pastor of Westminster Chapel for about fifty years right in the middle of the twentieth century, right there in London. Probably the largest church in the earth at that time, I am assuming. In my opinion and the opinion of many people, the best Bible teacher on the planet. I have talked to many scholars who said that Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones was unquestionably the man who had the deepest understanding of the Word. Now again, you really cannot give that title to any one man, but for those of you who do not know him, he is not a lightweight theologian; this is a deep man of God.

*"Has He ever said to you, whispered to you, 'My Beloved is Mine?'" **Read the Song of Solomon and see how the Bridegroom expresses His feeling to his Bride, His love.** How lightly we skip over these great statements so that we may argue about our pet ideas and theories! In one sense the whole object of being a Christian is that you may know the love of Jesus Christ, His personal love to you; that He may tell you in unmistakable language that He loves you, that He has given Himself for you, that He has loved you with 'an everlasting love'. He does this through the Holy Spirit . . . What do we know of these secret intimations? Read the lives of the saints throughout the centuries and you will find that they all know about this. They have known Him to come to them and speak to them, and love them, and tell them that He loves them. He embraces them and surrounds them, and lets them know, more certainly*

than they know anything else, that He loves them with all the intensity of His divine Being. It is because we are married to Him that He does this.” (From Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ commentary on Romans 7:4)

This is one of my favorite quotes on the Song of Solomon, I took this right out of one of his commentaries on the book of Romans, on Romans 7. He asks, “Has He ever said this to you? Has He ever whispered to your heart, My Beloved is Mine.” Then this great Bible teacher exhorts us, “Read the Song of Solomon, to see how the Bridegroom expresses His feelings for His Bride, His love. How lightly we skip over these great statements [in the Song of Solomon] so that we could argue our pet theories and our pet ideas!”

Now of course he was right in the middle of theological controversies through his whole ministry of fifty plus years. He says, “In one sense the whole subject of being a Christian is that you would know Jesus’ personal love, that He would tell you in unmistakable language that He loves you, that He has given Himself for you. He does this through the Holy Spirit.” He goes on to say, “Read the lives of the saints throughout the centuries.”— I mean the great men and women of God. I do not mean the famous ones per se. I mean the ones that are famous for going deep in God, not necessarily for having a big following. But they were well known in their generation for going deep with God. He says, “Read their lives throughout the centuries, and you will find they all know about this reality. They have known Him to come to them and to speak to Him and to receive the love of God...” You can read more about that on your own.

- B. I highlight two distinctives that are emphasized in the Song: God’s emotions for His people and the first commandment. By being students of God’s emotions, we will see more of God’s love.
1. **God’s emotions:** By seeing God’s love, delight, desire, and enjoyment of His people, we are empowered to love God with all of our heart (1 Jn. 4:19). The Song emphasizes the emotional side of God’s personality and His relationship with His people.
 2. **First commandment:** God’s first priority for His people is that they love Him with all of their heart. One purpose in studying the Song is to position ourselves to receive a greater impartation of the Father’s love for Jesus (Jn. 17:26).

²“I have declared to them Your [the Father’s] name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (Jn. 17:26)

When I think of the Song of Solomon, the eight-chapter love song, I think of two distinctives or themes. There are more than two, but these are two that I really lock into. I am not so interested in understanding every verse and what it means and the symbolism; I am interested in two major themes. So when people ask if they should study the Song of Solomon, I respond, “What you need to study are these two themes from the book.” I am going to highlight these two, and you will find them a deep well in the Song of Solomon.

So it is not the book itself that excites me. It is this two-fold message. One of the themes I emphasize in the song is God’s emotions for His people. David was a man after God’s own heart. He was a student of God’s emotions. When I look back over forty years of walking with the Lord and being a Bible teacher for forty years, I would say the number one issue that I locked into and tried to go deep was this subject. In my twenties, over thirty years ago plus, I wanted to be a student of God’s emotions. I wanted to see how God felt.

I love Allen Hood’s testimony when he was about twenty-one, twenty-two years old, and he first came from Florida and joined our church just to be a part of learning about this. He was captured by the idea of being a student of God’s emotions.

The second theme is the call to the first commandment. I believe those are the two primary distinctives or themes that have captured my heart, and that is what God wants me to emphasize from this book. Number one, God's emotions. What a radical, life-changing reality to see God delights in you, He desires you, He actually enjoys weak and broken you and weak and broken me. He actually enjoys you. He enjoys you far more than you enjoy you, seriously. That sounds kind of clever, but it is real. When I began to understand that, then I began to experience a little empowering of my own heart. But I need a lot more of this.

*I wrote a book many years ago, about twenty or twenty-five years ago, called **Passion for Jesus**. Anyway, people have asked me all of these years how to get passion for Jesus. I say, "I know for sure. Study Jesus' passion for you. Be a student of God's emotions."*

Number two, the first commandment. Of course you hear us say it like a broken record around here: the Holy Spirit is going to restore the first commandment to first place before the Lord returns. That can become a cliché. I pray it is more than a cliché. The number one priority, from God's point of view, in your life is that the first commandment would be first. That is what He is after. That is why He is revealing Himself. He is after that. He wrestles with us. He hems us in. He blesses us. He restricts us. He un-restricts us. He does all of those different dimensions because He is after this in our lives.

Just consider the prayer of Jesus in John 17. I encourage you, if you do not have a lifetime verse—you do not have to have one, but I have had one for years; it is this one. I have had this one for, I do not know, since my young days in my twenties. John 17:26; I just said, "That is the one I am going for."

Jesus is praying to the Father. He prayed and said, "Father, here is my prayer: that the love with which You loved Me would be imparted to them. They would love Me like You love Me, Father."

Beloved, I cannot imagine anything more dear or more important to God or to us than this prayer. Jesus ends His high priestly prayer with that statement. He says, "Abba"—right before He goes to the garden and then the cross—"Father, the love with which you love Me, that You would impart it, and they would be captured with it, empowered by it."

Beloved, when we understand the simple truths of the Song of Solomon—it is not a complex book—this thing will stir our hearts. It is not only in the Song of Solomon. You could find these truths from Genesis to Revelation. Actually you will find more in the book of Psalms from David than in Song of Solomon. Song of Solomon has it all condensed in one eight-chapter love song. I mean David actually says more than his son Solomon said, but it is spread out through the whole book of Psalms. Paul the apostle took the theme; many subjects on this in Paul's writings.

- C. The Song sets forth in a poetic way some key principles that we need to grow in love and partnership with Jesus. It gives us insight into how God's people are to grow in passion for Jesus. Understanding this Song equips us to discern what God is doing in the different seasons of our lives. People often find themselves in two different seasons of this Song at the same time.

Another reason why we study this book is that it gives us a pattern. It gives us a model of what I call the progression of holy passion. It gives us the progression. It shows us the steps. It shows us the principles. In this eight-chapter, love-song poem, the Spirit lays out the pattern that He is going to use to bring you and me forward. So when I read this song, and I understand the different seasons in the song, I can locate myself in that season.

Through the near-fifteen years of IHOPKC, how many leaders in the early days when they were learning this song, would say something like, "O man, I am struggling! I am in Song of Solomon 3." We all know what they

are talking about. “Oh no! I am in Song of Solomon 2. He is challenging the comfort zone.” “Now I am in Song of Solomon 4. I am rising up to go to the mountain.” We understand that those are all different seasons of our life. They have different challenges and different dimensions to them, and God captured these in poetic language.

One of the reasons I believe He put it in poetic language is because poetry is such that it feels different. That is, though the truths are the same, it feels different. A poem does to every single person, though we might understand the same general ideas. That is just a guess why He gave this song, this poem, and He put so much intensity about how He feels into this song or poem.

The song sets forth in a poetic way some of the key principles we need to grow in love and partnership with Jesus. He wants us to grow in love—that is not just a phrase—and He wants us to grow in partnership. He does not want us just to love Him. He actually wants us to do the things of the kingdom with Him.

It is not enough that we love Him, that we stand at a distance and say, “I love You. My heart is warmed for You.”

He says, “I want more than that.” Of course love always means partnership, always in the real sense. He says, “I want you engaged with Me in what I am doing.”

“Lord, it is so little what You are doing in me.”

“It means something to Me,” the Lord would say, “that we do it together.”

When I began to see my ministry as partnering with the Lord and seeing what He sees and what He feels, and I try to respond to that—I do not mean in just trying to find out the “mysterious direction for the future.” Because people would say, “So you know what is the Lord doing? You know what is He saying about the future?” I mean more than that. I mean how does He feel when we are in the midst of challenges, when the money is not working right, where there is conflicts, when we are in the routine and the mundane?

I say, “Lord I want to be faithful in this. How do You feel about me being faithful when it is mundane and routine and just day in and day out?” That is what I mean by partnership; that is a very powerful dimension of partnership.

Some people have the idea of love that they stand at a distance and just feel warm feelings for Jesus, and that is it. Love is so much more than that! Love and partnership are really the same thing. This Song, when you understand it, helps you to locate what season you are in. Sometimes you are in two places; in one season in your life you are in two different places in the book at the same time.

- D. The end-time church must be equipped with the revelation of God’s love and beauty to walk in victory in the midst of the most emotionally wounded and sexually broken generation in history.

Why is this book is such an important book now, at this time? Because I believe we are in the early days of that generation. I will say this a thousand times: it is not a prophecy! People have asked, “Are you prophesying?” No, nothing like that. I just see the signs of the times. It is an opinion, but it is an opinion that I feel stronger about as the decades unfold and things are escalating so fast. I may not see it in my day, but it is not too early to begin to get ready and prepare spiritually. And, the preparation is spiritual.

There is always a guy up in a mountain, you know, storing guns. I have no thoughts about that. I do not even want to bother with the guy unless he comes and knocks on my door. The preparation from the biblical point of view is spiritual preparation, so that we do not get offended, so we do not get seduced, we do not get deceived, and so we do not get angry at God. It is spiritual preparation.

In my opinion we are in the early days of that generation that is going to escalate. Again, it may unfold in many decades; it may go faster or it may go slower. I do not know. You may not see it in your day, but you might. Your children may see it or maybe their children, but we are in that day where it is escalating and things are intensifying.

I will tell you this, the generation in which the Lord returns will be the most emotionally broken—sexually, I mean—the most wounded, sexually broken generation in human history. The knowledge of how God feels about us heals our wounds; it fascinates us in a way that the seductions of society of the culture have far less power when our heart is fascinated. With the emotional brokenness and the sexual brokenness that is escalating so rapidly, I can understand why the Lord is saying, “I want My Church to know how I feel. It is not enough to keep them busy; they have to know what I feel about them and how I see them. I want to touch their emotions, not just use their hands in labor.”

- E. The Lord spoke to me in July 1988 while I was reading Song 8:6 and praying, “Let Jesus seal my heart with the seal of His love.” The Lord said He would release grace to the Body of Christ worldwide to walk in Song 8:6-7; this speaks of walking out the first commandment in our life.

It was 1988. I have the story written down in detail in several places, so I am not going to spend a lot of time on this. After a morning prayer meeting, I went to my office about eight o’clock. I was looking through the mail. I was looking at a wedding card, and it had the verse Song of Solomon 8:6 on it, “Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire.” I thought, “Okay, that is a cool verse for a wedding.” A lot of weddings use that; I have seen it many times over the years.

Something happened differently this time when I saw this Song of Solomon 8:6, about putting the seal of love on the heart. Suddenly I just prayed in a way that I had never done before with this verse. I said, “Jesus, put the seal of Your love on my heart.” I began to weep, and the presence of God began to rest on me. I was just so overwhelmed, struck by this because it was so sudden and so intense.

It went on for a few minutes, and so I picked up the phone—it was at the church office—I called the receptionist and I said, “Hey, if somebody comes by, just say that I cannot talk right now. Something is happening, and I do not know what it is.” You know, in thirty-five years plus of pastoring I have only done that one time in my life where the Spirit moved on me and I actually picked the phone up and said, “Please no matter what, even if it is the boss”—that would be my wife—“no matter what, don’t interrupt me.” Because my heart was so touched and I was weeping.

I said, “Jesus, seal my heart with Your love. I do not even fully know what it means.” Suddenly the phone rings about ten minutes later. I could not believe it! It is amazing how you can go from the heights of engagement with the Lord to being in the flesh. I went, “What?!” The whole thing kind of lifted. Picked the phone up, “Yeah?”

The guy on the phone said, “Hey, I hate to do this, but Bob Jones is on the phone.” Most of you know the name Bob Jones, a prophetic man. He said, “Bob says he heard the audible voice of the Lord. He has a message for you, and it is urgent.”

I thought, “I better let him in.” I said, “Yeah, that is good.” I am on my knees, Bible open, wedding card there, weeping. I say, “Hello Bob.”

Bob says, “I only got one minute.” He says, “I just heard the audible voice of the Lord. He told me Song of Solomon 8:6-7.” I cannot believe it! He says, “The Lord told me it is for you. Whatever the message of that is,

you are to lock into that all of your days, but it is more than that. The Lord said He is going to release grace, an anointing of the Spirit worldwide. He is going to raise up people all over the world. He is going to release whatever the theme of this is about, and He is going to empower people to walk this out.”

Well, the theme is the first commandment and understanding of God’s emotions. I mean he talked to me less than a minute, sixty seconds, maybe two minutes maximum, probably one minute. He hung the phone up.

I was sitting there just overwhelmed. I said, “Okay God, this is amazing.” So after a little time it lifts, and I mean this thing—it was so intense. So I call my wife and I say, “I have the most remarkable thing, Bob Jones just called me and said ‘Song of Solomon.’ Thing is, I was reading it, I mean the very passage. Nobody knew I was reading it. How did that happen? The Spirit of the Lord was resting on me in a way I have never talked about before at that kind of level.”

She says, “Wow, this is amazing.”

*So I hang up, and I decide to read the book. I mean, he really said Song of Solomon 8:6-7, but, hey, you know it is at the end of the book. I had never read the book in a serious way. I had read the book in a joking way, you know, to make jokes to the junior high group and stuff when I was a youth pastor, but please do not do that! So I read it through in a serious way, all eight chapters. It was horrible! No, I mean **horrible**. You know: flowers, perfume, body parts, flowers, perfume, body parts, I said, “NO!” I mean it was horrible.*

I come home that night from the office, and Diane says, “Hey, fantastic day! Tell me more about it.”

I say, “Well, before I tell you that about what happened with Bob, have you ever read Song of Solomon?”

She says, “Yeah, it is amazing.”

I say, “No! It is horrible!” I told her, “I asked the Lord to give it to the ladies’ ministry. I do not want, I do NOT want to do this book.”

I could not get any connect with it because I was not thinking of the heart of Jesus for His people. I could not even connect at all; it took me a while. I knew the Lord wanted me to stay with it so I stayed with it. My point is, it was unfamiliar, but I stayed with it. Again, it is not the book itself. He wanted me to study it to catch these themes about His heart and, over time, you know a couple years—it did not take so long—a year, two or three, probably two or three years, if I remember right.

*Now I look back twenty-five years later, and I am telling you the encounters. Meaning, I do not mean some exaggerated thing. I do **not** mean encounter like “Wow!” I am talking about the **little stirrings of my heart multitudes of times through twenty-five years** is what I mean. I am using encounter—small “e” for encounter. I tell you it is the most precious reality, and I have found these truths in the book of Psalms. I have found them all through the New Testament. I found them all through the writing of the Prophets. It is the heart of Jesus.*

II. INTERPRETING THE SONG OF SOLOMON

- A. **Natural interpretation:** This view depicts a love story between King Solomon and his bride, a Shulamite maiden. It sets forth principles that honor the beauty of love within marriage. We take the Song at face value where Solomon mentions his courtship and the various stages of his marriage.

We are going to look at how to interpret the Song. There is the natural interpretation that says the Song depicts a real love story between King Solomon and his bride, the Shulamite. She is called the Shulamite—and I have

that written down here in the notes—because she came from the city of Shunem. So she is called the Shulamite because of the town, the little village that she lived in.

I have a bit more detail on this in the additional notes and there is a little bit on the website tonight; we are going to have a lot more in the next couple of days. I mean I have got pages and pages and pages that we are getting it all edited, etc. So I have a lot more about the natural interpretation. This is a very valuable interpretation.

The natural interpretation sets forth the principles that honor the beauty of love within marriage or the beauty of married love, a very powerful biblical theme in the Song of Solomon. I have studied that. I love that theme, the natural interpretation. It is a real story of which Solomon wrote a song about the journey that he went on with a young woman that became his wife.

- B. **Spiritual interpretation:** This view employs a symbolic interpretation of the Song to emphasize the Lord's relationship with His people as the Bridegroom King. The typological approach to the Song recognizes the OT historical events in Solomon's life and marriage, while celebrating Jesus' love for His Bride, the Church, in the NT. I will use this approach in our study of the Song, so that we may grow in understanding of the relationship between Jesus and the individual believer. This has been the most common interpretation of the Song for the last 3,000 years.

Again I have quite a bit on the website, besides the teaching notes tonight, on the natural and the spiritual interpretation. The spiritual interpretation uses symbolic interpretation to emphasize the Lord's relationship with His people as their Bridegroom King. He is not just a Bridegroom, but He is a Bridegroom King. He is a **King with power, AND He is a Bridegroom with desire. He is a Bridegroom King.**

- C. Allegorical and typological interpretations can be helpful if used to illustrate truths that are clearly established throughout the New Testament. See mikebickle.org for my article "Avoiding the Dangers of Allegorical Interpretation."
1. An allegory is a fictional story with symbolic meaning, not based on historical facts. It is a literary form in which truths are presented through symbols. Paul on occasion gave an allegorical interpretation of an Old Testament passage (1 Cor. 9:9-10; 10:4; Gal. 4:24-26; Eph. 5:32).
 2. The typological approach to Scripture honors the historical situation set forth in a passage and then makes a spiritual application.
 3. The majority of commentaries throughout church history have interpreted the Song as a typological or allegorical portrayal of the relationship between Jesus and the Church.

Now if you are going to use the spiritual interpretation, which we are using in this course, or the allegorical interpretation, we want to make sure that we are only embracing truths that are clearly established by the New Testament. Some people use a spiritual interpretation of Old Testament stories, and they come up with truths that are not found anywhere. If it is not found in the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and the apostles, do not accept it. The only valid spiritual interpretation of Song of Solomon must be rooted in New Testament truth. Again, I have a bit more on that online.

- D. I strongly encourage the use of the historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture, which is to seek to understand a biblical passage in its plain meaning by taking it at its face value. We are to understand its historical context and see how its author intended it to be understood.
- E. Each book of the Bible was given by the inspiration of the Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). He exalts Jesus in all that He does. He has a fierce loyalty to fill people with love for Jesus. It seems improbable that the Spirit would inspire a book in the Bible that would not ultimately magnify Jesus.

¹⁴“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” (Jn. 16:14)

Each book of the Bible was written, given, by inspiration of the Spirit. Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit will glorify Me.” The Holy Spirit has a fierce loyalty to Jesus. Some people have said that Song of Solomon is not about Jesus. I say that the Song of Solomon is an eternal book. We will be reading the Song of Solomon a million years from now in the resurrection. It is in the Bible. There is no book in the Bible that does not last forever. I believe it is inconceivable that a Holy Spirit-inspired book, inspired by the fierce jealousy of the Holy Spirit, does not find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. I just cannot fathom that. I cannot imagine that a million years from now we have a book about marriage when marriage does not exist in the age to come, in the resurrection. We just talk about “way back there you know, a couple of billion years ago, when there was marriage.” No, I do not think so. I think the book has its fullest meaning in Jesus. It has meaning in natural marriage, but it could not possibly, in my opinion, have its ultimate meaning there, because a million years from now we will still be edified by reading this book.

- F. We must refuse all sensual overtones in interpreting the Song of Solomon allegorically, and in our understanding of the Bride of Christ message. Jesus is not our “lover” or “boyfriend.”

*I say this like a broken record. I have said it for twenty-five years. We **must** refuse all sensual overtones in interpreting the book, and 99.9 percent of people do. I have only met two or three people—I mean literally two or three in twenty-five years, maybe three or four, but it is a very small number—who actually thought Jesus was their boyfriend. I said, “Really?”*

They said, “Yeah.”

I said, “Really?”

“Yes, let me tell you why.”

I said, “Do not tell me! It is perverse, and that is darkness, and that is deception. He is not your boyfriend. He is not your lover, never. He is your God forever.”

What He is talking about is our heart being stirred by the power of God in the first commandment. Nothing that has its roots in a sensual, romantic relationship in anyway, whatsoever. True, God is the author of natural, romantic, sensual love within marriage, He is the author of that, and it is beautiful and glorious, but that is not what this book is about in the spiritual application.

- G. Jesus spoke of Himself to the disciples on the Emmaus road from all the scriptures.

²⁷He expounded...in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Lk. 24:27)

*Jesus spoke of Himself to the disciples on the road of Emmaus from all the scriptures. He did not just pick out three or four books. The Bible says He used **all** of the scriptures to speak about Himself. He knows the Bible*

really well, so I think that He did not need any notes, did not need any handouts, nothing. He talked from His heart about Himself from the Word of God. I believe He taught from all of the scripture—the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament including the Song of Solomon.

H. God’s Word lasts forever, and earthly marriage does not continue in the resurrection (Mt. 22:30). The redeemed will forever read all of God’s Word. Thus, I do not believe that the themes related to natural marriage can exhaust the eternal message and scope of this part of the Scriptures.

I. Paul described believers as betrothed, or “engaged,” to Jesus in this age (2 Cor. 11:2). The “consummation” of the marriage is in the age to come when we see Him face to face.

²For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)

J. Jesus is returning for a Church established in her bridal identity before Him (Rev. 22:17).

¹⁷And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”...²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:17-20)

Jesus is returning for a Church established in her bridal identity. It is not just the Church as an army, though the Church is an army. It is not the Church as a family, though we are the family of God forever. It is not just the Church as a Body, though we are the Body of Christ forever. Yet there is one generation where the Spirit will emphasize the Church in her bridal identity as a cherished Bride.

We will look at this in the days to come. The Bride of Christ doctrine is not about being male or female. Women are the sons of God; men are the Bride of Christ. As sons of God, we have access to God’s throne and God’s power. As the Bride of Christ we have access to His heart, to His emotions. So we have both: we have His throne and His heart. We have His power and His emotions. We do not pick between them. He is a Bridegroom King. Both are part of destiny of His people.

The Spirit has never emphasized this. He has spoken it to a group here and a group there. I believe we are in that hour of history where there are going to be millions of people worldwide speaking and capturing this. It is already happening. In the last ten or twenty years there have arisen thousands of ministries capturing these themes about the Bride of Christ, talking and singing, prayer ministries and preachers. The Lord is stirring it up all over the earth.

I remember twenty-five years ago, I was looking for people that could give me a little comfort on this. I found a guy here and a gal there, here and there, but I am telling you there are now thousands of people across the earth being touched by this theme. I believe it is one of the signs of the times of the early days of that generation, this awakening globally of intrigue and interest and more to the theme of the Bride of Christ.

*When Jesus returns, He is returning to a Church. Yes, they are sons of God. Yes, they are in the family of God. Yes, they are the Body of Christ **AND** they are in their bridal identity as a Bride saying, “Come, Lord Jesus. We know who we are to You now. Come, we know who You are.”*

K. The essence of the message of the Bride of Christ is the revelation of Jesus’ beauty, His emotions for us, His commitments to share His heart, throne, secrets, and beauty with us as our Bridegroom King, and our response of wholehearted love and obedience to Him.

The essence of the message of the Bride of Christ is the Bridegroom message. It is the revelation of His beauty. It is the revelation of His emotions. Here it is the revelation of His commitments to share His heart. To open His heart, to share His heart, His throne, His secrets. He is not allowing us to witness just His power. He is sharing His heart, His throne, His secrets, and His beauty with His people. He is saying, “Come near. I have things to share with you.”

Beloved, this is amazing! What a fascinating journey we are on for those who have ears to hear! Meaning the Spirit is beckoning people to say, “Hey, Jesus has things to share about His heart. Do you want to? Do you care? Do you have time?”

- L. Some see the Bride of Christ as only consisting of those who walked in mature love in this age. In the resurrection, I believe that the Bride includes the *entire Church* from all history. The Spirit will bring God’s work to completion in every believer (Phil. 1:6). I see the Bride of Christ as including all believers, since they will all eventually be perfected in love, in the resurrection.

III. THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE SONG

- A. **King Solomon:** In the spiritual interpretation, King Solomon is a picture of the triumphant Christ as the Bridegroom King who possesses all power, yet is filled with affection for His people.

King Solomon is a picture of the triumphant Christ as the Bridegroom King. He is the Bridegroom King, obviously.

- B. **Shulamite maiden:** In the spiritual interpretation, the Shulamite is a picture of the Bride of Christ. She is introduced as a maiden who grows up to become the Bride who enjoys mature partnership with Jesus. She is mentioned once by her name (6:13), which is derived from the city of Shunem.

The Shulamite is a picture of the Bride of Christ. She starts off in the book as the maiden, but right in the middle of the book, Song of Solomon 4, she becomes the Bride.

- C. **Daughters of Jerusalem:** In the spiritual interpretation, they speak of sincere yet spiritually immature believers. They look to the Shulamite for answers on how to grow close to the King. They are not an actual group that we can identify in history. They typify immature believers.

The daughters of Jerusalem speak of sincere yet spiritually immature believers. They are sincere. I mean they are the real thing, and they are all through the book. The times they show up in the song, they are eager to learn, and they are attentive.

I want to mention one more point. It is not an actual group of people. I have had people ask, “Well, would that group over there be like the daughters...?”

I say, “No! Do not pick that church on the other side of town or that denomination and say they are the daughters of Jerusalem. No! It is completely wrong. The daughters are just personifying sincere but immature that is in the process of learning.”

So if you get really mad at someone, do not say, “You daughter of Jerusalem, I mean, how dare you?”

“You Shulamite!”

“Ah, thank you, thank you!” Forget all of that stuff! Do not go there.

- D. **The watchmen:** In the spiritual interpretation they represent spiritual leadership. The watchmen were the keepers of the walls, who guarded the walls of the city to protect the people. Initially, the Bride seeks their help (3:3), but eventually they strike and wound her (5:7).

The fourth group is the watchmen who represent spiritual leadership. They are the ones watching the wall. We have a little bit more on that. They are spiritual leadership.

- E. The Song of Solomon has two primary sections: chapters 1-4 and 5-8.
1. The first four chapters of the Song focus on the **Bride's inheritance in Christ**. These chapters emphasize how God views and desires her and what we seek in Him.
 2. The last four chapters of the Song focus on **Jesus' inheritance in the Bride**. These chapters emphasize what He seeks from His people. He wants us to love Him with all our heart. The focus of the book makes a dramatic shift in the middle (4:16-5:1).

There are two primary sections in this book. Of course we will unpack it in these twelve sessions. We are going to have twelve evenings on this. We are not going to break down verse by verse, but we are going to get to the key themes.

The first four chapters, oh, this is glorious! I love this. The first four chapters focus on the Bride's inheritance. It is our inheritance in Him, how He feels, how He loves us, how He woos us. When we understand who we are to Him, it is the Bride's inheritance.

*Section number two, the last four chapters shift gears. It is Jesus' inheritance in you. Beloved, you have an inheritance in Him, but **He** has an inheritance in **you**. He gave you everything. I mean the finished work of the cross—it is done. But it is not the end of the story that you have an inheritance in Him. Some people say, "He went to the cross. I have an inheritance. It is finished."*

*I respond, "No, He has an inheritance **in you**. This should empower us to give ourselves fully back to Him."*

*Is that not amazing that He actually wants an inheritance in you and me? I look at myself and think, "Why would You want **me** to be Your inheritance? I mean Lord?" You know, in my early days when that first dawned on me, I felt like apologizing to the Lord that the Father made me the gift. I would think, "Sorry, Jesus. I did not know He was going to choose me for Your gift." You have no need to apologize! You are the inheritance—the whole Body of Christ through history is what He longs for.*

IV. TURNING THE SONG INTO PRAYER DIALOGUE WITH JESUS

- A. To receive the full benefits of the Song, we must turn it into an ongoing dialogue with Jesus. Learning the truths of the Song is only our starting point; the truths transform us as they become part of our prayer life and conversation with God. No one goes to a famous restaurant to study its menu; the menu is there to help them obtain a good meal. Likewise, we are missing out if we are just "connoisseurs" of the Song of Solomon; it must get into our conversation with God.

Again I have more on this, in the additional notes. In order to receive the full benefit of the Song of Solomon, you have to turn this song into dialogue. It is not enough to learn the phrases and understand the symbolism. We have to turn it into conversation with the Person. Learning the truths, which the class is about, is only a starting point.

I mean you do not go to a famous restaurant to study the menu. “Oh, did you hear about that one restaurant? It is so amazing! The food is amazing. I mean, I just go there for hours and study the menu! I just study it.”

“Do you ever eat there?”

“Well, no, but I love the menu.” Some people are connoisseurs of the Song of Solomon, but they do not actually talk to Jesus about it. It does not become personal. It becomes a theory and an idea that excites them, but it is not something that actually moves them, those connoisseurs of the menu.

- B. I observe two general categories of truth in relation to meditating on the Word. The first category is related to truths that exhort us to believe something about God and/or His promises. The second category is related to truths that exhort us to obey God’s Word.

There are two general ideas, two general truths, related to meditating on the Word. I talk about this a lot, and I have several documents on the website about it. The first category is related to truths that exhort us to believe something about God. There are truths in the Bible we are supposed to believe. God loves you, God forgives you, God will direct you, God will provide for you, you believe those, that is what you are suppose to do. There is a second category of truths that exhort us to obey.

- C. Here are two ways to pray-read the Scriptures that exhort us **to believe** God’s Word.
*See *additional study material on this session for more on how to pray-read the Song.*

1. First, we **thank God** for the particular truth set forth, by turning it into a dialogue that includes taking time to say, “Thank You, Jesus” in a specific way. For example, when reading, “*You have ravished my heart,*” we respond by thanking God for this truth by praying, “Thank you, Jesus, that I ravish Your heart, that you delight in Your people.”
⁹You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse. (Song 4:9)
2. Second, we **ask for understanding** of the truth as we seek to believe more. Ask God to release revelation that causes us to know and feel the power of specific truths (Eph. 1:17). For example, when reading, “*You have ravished my heart, my bride,*” ask Jesus for more insight by praying, “Show me how *I ravish Your heart* and fill you with delight.”

Now when we come to a truth, it is very simple. I urge you to use this simple, little principle. When I come to a verse that exhorts me to believe, like in Song of Solomon—I will just use Song of Solomon—it says the Lord is speaking, “You have ravished My heart,” so I am suppose to believe that I have ravished His heart, that I have moved His heart.

So what I do is I thank Him. Have you ever stopped and thanked Him when it says, for example, God forgives you or God loves you? Do you say, “Thank You, Jesus, for loving me?” I tell you something will happen if you pause and actually say that. I do not mean every time, but when you approach the Bible and it says something like, “you have ravished His heart,” you stop, and instead of just underlining it, you say, “Thank You,” and you talk for just a few seconds.

Then you add more than “Thank You.” You say, “Show me more.” That is simple. “Thank You that You love me. Show me more.” When I do that, “Thank You that You will provide for me. Show me, Lord.” “Thank You that You will lead me. Show me.” “Thank You, Abba, for the glory of Your Son. Show me.” I tell you, it is amazing how that simple little dialogue will change your Bible study time.

- D. Here are two ways to pray-read the Scriptures with truths that exhort us **to obey** God’s Word.
1. First, we **commit to obey** Jesus in the way described in a particular passage. We turn that specific truth into a simple dialogue with God that includes declaring our intention and commitment to obey Him according to the exhortation in that passage. For example, when He exhorted the Bride to “*rise up and come away*” to leave the comfort zone and follow Him, we commit to obey this truth by praying, “Jesus, I will rise from the comfort zone to meet You on the mountains of costly obedience (according to Song 4:6).”
*¹⁰My Beloved...said to me: “**Rise up, my love...and come away.**” (Song 2:10)*
 2. Second, we **ask for God’s help to obey** a particular truth in a passage. Ask the Spirit for help to obey specific exhortations in a passage. For example, when the Lord exhorts the Bride to “*arise and come away*” and follow Him in obedience to the mountains, we ask the Spirit to help us obey by praying, “Jesus, empower me to obey You as I arise from the comfort zone to meet you in costly obedience.”

There is the second category of scriptures in the Song of Solomon or the whole Bible. They are exhortations to obey. So when it is time to obey—I mean a passage to obey—number one, we stop and commit to it. Number two, we ask God for help.

Like in Song of Solomon it says to rise up. In other words, challenge the comfort zone. When I read that passage, and we will look at that in a few weeks, I stop and say, “Lord, I commit myself to obey You when I am challenged, when You are challenging the comfort zone in my life.” I pause, and I actually say something to Him, and then I ask Him for help.

- E. Take time to journal and write down your thoughts, prayers, and meditations as you pray-read through the Song. This will help you to capture the truths that the Lord puts on your heart. Be patient, speak slowly and softly, then journal your thoughts. You may be surprised how the Spirit will give you revelation, strengthen your obedience, and tenderize your heart as you do this.

V. THE GREATEST SONG

- A. Solomon was a prolific songwriter, writing 1005 songs (1 Kgs. 4:32). The Spirit inspired him to name this song using a superlative, the Song of Songs (like King of kings, Lord of lords, etc.). The Song of Solomon is one of the greatest songs in redemptive history. I refer to it as the Song.

*¹The **Song of Songs**, which is Solomon’s. (Song 1:1)*

Solomon was a prolific songwriter. Okay, somebody, without looking in your Bible, how many songs did Solomon write? Does anybody know? This is IHOPKC! Come on, we do songs. You are right, 1,005. He wrote 1,005 songs. That is remarkable, but only one song out of 1,000 songs did he title “The Song of all Songs.” He says, “This is my absolute chief song,” but it was the Spirit who inspired him to title it that. The Spirit used the superlative like, King of kings, Lord of lords, meaning the ultimate.

- B. The advice I offer to those writing songs from the Song is to interpret the meaning of a passage and then sing the truth extolled in it, instead of using its exact symbolic language. For example, instead of singing of Jesus as being “*like a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi*” (1:14), sing of His beauty as “matchless, perfect and beyond compare.”

VI. THE THEME OF THE SONG: TO ENCOUNTER JESUS IN HIS WORD

- A. The maiden made her request to the One with authority over the king, instead of directly asking the king. She said, “Let Him...” She asked the One who could influence the king in personal matters. We cry, “Father, let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Word.” This is a prayer request for grace to love Jesus with all our heart so as to walk out the first commandment (Mt. 22:37-38).

²***Let him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth [Word]. (Song 1:2)***

The theme of the song is right here at the beginning. We will look at this next week in more detail. She cries out, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” Of course I have made a rule in IHOPKC, literally fifteen years ago, even right before we starting, and we were getting everything organized in the spring of 1999. As I began to talk about Song of Solomon, I said that we were not going to talk about or sing about kiss with “the kisses of His mouth” but “the kisses of His Word” because that is what it means. The rabbis for 3,000 years have used this passage to talk about the kisses of the Torah, the kisses of God’s Word.

She is asking the Father, “Father”—she asking one in authority over the King. She is talking to One that has authority over the King. “Hey, ask Him, tell Him, let Him...” So in New Testament words, we are asking the Father about the Son. “This is what we long for, Father.” The kisses of His word is the Word of God that awakens understanding in our heart about His heart, His glory, His beauty, His love for us, our love for Him. We want the Word to touch us and awaken our hearts.

- B. The Word of God proceeds from God's mouth. Our hearts live by the Word that comes from God's mouth. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 during His temptation in the wilderness (Mt. 4:4). For 3,000 years, rabbis have referred to these “kisses of the mouth” as the “kiss of the Torah.”

³***...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut. 8:3)***

It is the word that proceeds out of God’s mouth. That is why it is called the kisses of the mouth. It is the word that comes out of the mouth of God. The Torah. For the word shall proceed from God’s mouth is what the scripture says.

- C. ***Kiss of the Word:*** This refers to encountering the Word in a way that reveals God’s love and emotions for us. ***It is a metaphor for spiritual intimacy with God.*** We think of the Spirit touching our heart with the Word to expand our capacity to receive His love and to respond in love. Do not think of kissing Jesus on the mouth—such a perverse idea is not from God. We reject all interpretations of the “kisses of the Word” that relate to human sensuality.

The “kisses of the Word” is talking about encountering the Word. I am talking about reading the Bible and the Holy Spirit touching us in a way that reveals God’s love and God’s emotions—which are really the same, God’s love and God’s emotions.

The kiss of the word is a metaphor for spiritual intimacy. Think of Jesus touching your spirit, touching your heart, and warming your heart. One man said, “I do not want to kiss Jesus on the mouth.”

I said, “That is good! You are not supposed to.” Do not imagine, ‘let Him kiss me’ and you know put your lips up like that. No! If you want to picture something, picture the Spirit like fire touching your heart when you are reading the book of Romans, reading the Gospel of John, reading the book of Psalms.

- D. There are three metaphors of spiritual intimacy with God in the Song—the Divine kiss (1:2), the Divine seal (8:6), and the Divine embrace (2:5; 8:4). The Bride’s journey starts with vision to receive the kisses of God’s Word (1:2), and ends by her heart being sealed by God’s love (8:6).
- E. Solomon writes this love song in a way that is reminiscent of his own experience with God. In his early years as king of Israel, God visited him in a dream to test him (2 Chr. 1; 1 Kgs. 3). The Lord allowed Solomon to make one supreme request, to ask God for anything.

⁷God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, “Ask! What shall I give you?”...¹⁰Now give me wisdom and knowledge...for who can judge this great people of Yours?”¹¹God said to Solomon: “Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life--but have asked wisdom and knowledge...¹²wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you.” (2 Chr. 1:7-12)

Solomon wrote this song in a way—this is my opinion—that is reminiscent of what he experienced. In his early days as a king he had a dream, and in the dream right here in 2 Chronicles 1:7, God appeared to him and said, “Solomon, ask for anything you want.”

Beloved, this is borrowing from the New Testament when Jesus said, “Pray for anything that you want, believing you will receive it.” When I say God is borrowing from the New Testament, I mean He offered that truth to Solomon.

Solomon said, “I want wisdom. I want knowledge.” I want to serve You with excellence is the meaning.

Verse 11, God said, “Because it was in your heart to get wisdom”—in other words, to be more useful in My purposes with My hand on you—“You could have asked for riches, honor, long life, but instead you asked to be more useful and to be a blessing to My people.” So He said, “Now I am going to give you a double portion of everything.”

- F. Over the last fifty years, the Holy Spirit has emphasized various truths in the Bible that some call the “faith movement.” They are truths related to blessings that are released by praying in faith.

¹⁵The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. (Jas. 5:15)

²³“Whoever...believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says.” (Mk. 11:23)

I believe over the last fifty years plus, the Holy Spirit has emphasized truths in the Bible that are related to how we can receive blessings related to faith. If we pray the prayer of faith, we have blessing. Some people call this emphasis “the faith movement.” I remember in the seventies and eighties, people were talking about the faith movement. People were talking about that there were these guys and gals saying, “If you understand what God promises to give, your faith is stirred, and you can get more.” The Holy Spirit anointed this truth of “ask anything you want, and you can have it.”

- G. God calls us to pray the prayer of faith that He might release the highest things in His heart to us. The prayer to receive the kisses of the Word is to ask for grace to love God with all our heart.

What happened is the Lord really anointed that truth—it is a real truth—but most people use the truth of the prayer faith for getting anything they want by asking for riches, honor, and long life. They ask for the opposite of what Solomon asked for. God told Solomon, “I was testing you when I gave you that offer.”

I believe for fifty years God has anointed this message of faith, and many people under that anointing have asked for riches, honor, and long life. Those are good things, and those are things to ask for, but we are better to first make the request, “Lord, I want the anointing to walk in the first commandment. I want to love You like the Father loves You. I am going to use the prayer of faith to press into that.”

If the Lord appeared to you in a dream and said, “Anything you want,” what would you ask for? Again, most people ask for riches, honor, and long life. Solomon did not, and God said, “I was testing you.” I believe God has been testing a generation by that real truth. It is a real truth, that He really will answer the cry of our heart, but He would that the primary cry of our heart would not be for riches, honor, and long life. Those are good blessings, but those are second. We do ask for those, but those are second. We ask for the supreme request, that He would release the highest things in our heart.

- H. This is the most important prayer of faith for our personal lives. The Lord continues to test His people by allowing them to ask for anything, to see who will prioritize loving Him with all their heart over other blessings of God that may include receiving riches, honor, long life, etc.

²²“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (Mt. 21:22)

- I. The Spirit’s first priority and emphasis for the Church and for every believer’s life is to cultivate love for Jesus. Jesus referred to loving God as the first and greatest issue in the life of a believer. The grace to receive God’s love and to love Him in return is the greatest work of the Spirit in us. The greatest calling for anyone is to walk out the first commandment as they receive and express God’s love. This is to be the primary dream of our heart.

³⁷“You shall love the LORD...”³⁸This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)

The Holy Spirit’s first priority and the Holy Spirit’s first emphasis is that we ask for the grace of God to walk in the first commandment. That is what He wants us to do. That is the kisses of His Word. That is the cry. If the Lord says, “Ask anything,” I want the kisses of His Word. I want to walk in the revelation of God’s heart and have my heart stirred by the love of God. Amen and amen.

- J. We are to define our *primary success in life* as being ones who are loved by God and who love God. This is what determines our personal worth. We are to be anchored in this truth as the basis of our success and worth, rather than in our accomplishments, recognition, or possessions.

VII. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- A. Praying for the “kisses of God’s Word” (1:2) or for God to seal our heart with His love (8:6) points to asking for more *insight into God’s emotions* (how He loves, desires, delights in His people) and growing in grace to faithfully *walk out the first and second commandments*.
- B. One way to receive the kisses of God’s Word is by pray-reading God’s Word as we set our heart to grow in grace to understand God’s love and to faithfully walk in love.

- C. We must learn to live before an audience of One and receive our approval from our Master, which is more powerful than the approval of all others, and empowers the hearts of those who love Him.