

Session 3 The Bride's Life Vision (Song 1:2-4)

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

I. REVIEW: THE THEME OF THE SONG

- A. The Bride made her request to the One with authority over 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 for grace to love Jesus with all of our heart so as to walk out the first commandment. The Word of God is what proceeds from God's mouth. For 3,000 years, rabbis have *referred* to this verse as the "kisses of the Torah" (Deut. 8:3).
²Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth [Word], for Your love is better than wine. (Song 1:2)
- B. The Bride's reason for wanting the kisses of His Word is that His love is "better than," or "more delightful than" (NIV), the wine of this fallen world. Jesus' affections are better than anything that this world can offer. In the context of marital love, wine speaks of a drink of gladness that celebrates love. She spoke in the second person saying, "*Your love is better than wine*" (1:2).
- C. Wine here speaks of the intoxicating things of this world, both good and bad. There is both the "good wine" of God's blessing on our circumstances and the "bad wine" of sin. Encountering God's love in our heart is obviously better than the pleasures of sin, but it is also better than blessed circumstances such as increased favor in our finances, ministry, etc. As wonderful as God's blessings are on our circumstances, they are not to be our primary focus.
- D. This passage highlights the superior pleasures that come from experiencing God's affection. These superior pleasures contrast with the inferior pleasures of sin. God frees us from the dominion of the inferior pleasures of sin by allowing us to experience the pleasure of His Word.
- E. There are many different categories of pleasures (physical, emotional, and mental) that we can celebrate under the leadership of Jesus. God made us spiritually, physically, and emotionally hungry or needy. We yearn for pleasure because we are designed by God to be pleasure seekers.
- F. God created the human spirit with longings that draw us to Him, with a "God-shaped vacuum" in our heart that can only be filled by God. We are made in His image; thus we have longings that reflect His glory and His personality, which is filled with pleasure and delight. Each longing has an element of delight, pain, and ache as it woos us deeper into God's presence.
- G. See the book **7 Longings of the Human Heart** by M. Bickle & D. Hiebert. These longings are identified as the longing for the *assurance that we are enjoyed by God*, the longing to be *fascinated*, the longing to be *beautiful*, the longing to be *great*, the longing for *intimacy without shame*, the longing to be *wholehearted and passionate*, and the longing to make a *lasting impact*.

H. Satan counterfeits the pleasures that God created so that he might draw us from God. We sin, believing it will give us pleasure that is superior to obeying God. The power of temptation rests on “deceptive lusts” which promise that sin will bring more satisfaction than living for God.

²²*Put off...the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. (Eph. 4:22)*

¹³*...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb. 3:13)*

I. The greatest “pleasures” we can experience are spiritual, and come from encountering the presence of God. They fascinate our heart with beauty and exhilarate our heart with love. God does not call us to holiness so that He can test us by keeping us from a life of pleasure. Holiness is a call to experience forever the perfect pleasure of God’s presence.

¹¹*In Your presence is fullness of joy...at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16:11)*

J. The Bride develops the theme of the superior pleasures in God throughout the Song. The reward of love is the power to love fully. One who loves will always outwork the one who works only for pay. When workers become lovers, the way they view their work changes greatly.

³*I sat down in His shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. (Song 2:3)*

K. God loves us in the same way that God loves God. The measure of the Father’s love for Jesus is the measure of Jesus’ love for us (Jn. 15:9). This is the ultimate statement of our worth.

⁹*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you.” (Jn. 15:9)*

II. AFFECTION-BASED OBEDIENCE: MOTIVATED BY SATISFACTION IN JESUS

- A. “*Affection-based obedience*” flows from experiencing Jesus’ affection for us and then returning our affection to Him. This results in the deepest and most consistent obedience.
- B. “*Duty-based obedience*” is our commitment to obedience, even if we do not feel God’s presence.
- C. “*Fear-based obedience*” is motivated by the fear of negative consequences. The approach of many is to use only shame and fear to motivate people into keeping a list of do’s and don’ts. Holiness has often been presented in a negative way, with endless lists of threats and warnings of the consequences of sin. The Word of God has many prohibitions, but these laws and restrictions were never designed by God to transform the heart. We must present the consequences of sin, but we must realize that this is not enough to transform hearts; something more is needed.
- D. C. S. Lewis said: “We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with alcohol and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us. We are like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at the sea.” That’s the choice we make when we sin. It looks as if it will satisfy us, when in fact it is spoiled meat. The pleasures of God are a banquet that delivers us from the emptiness of sinful pleasure.
- E. We sin when our heart is not satisfied in God. The temptation to experience the pleasure of sin is usually more powerful than the fear of punishment. The fear of sin’s consequences does not usually overpower the tendency to sin; instead, it causes us to sin in secret.

III. THE FRAGRANCE OF JESUS (1:3)

- A. The fragrance of a rose comes from its internal qualities. In a similar way, the King's perfume in the Song speaks of His internal life, or what He thinks and feels. Jesus' perfume speaks of His thoughts and emotions. Thus the Bride enjoys the perfume of God's thoughts and affection. Paul spoke of the fragrance of Jesus; it is figurative for the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 2:14)

³***Because of the fragrance of Your good ointments [perfumes, NIV], Your Name is ointment [perfume, NIV] poured forth; therefore the virgins love You. (Song 1:3)***

- B. Because of the fragrance of Jesus' perfumes (His internal qualities), two things will occur.

1. First, God will pour Jesus' name forth; that is, He will exalt and reveal it to the nations. Because Jesus' life is perfume before God, His name will be supremely honored on earth.

⁹***God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,***
¹⁰***that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. (Phil. 2:9-10)***

2. Second, receiving the knowledge of God awakens love in our heart for Jesus (Jn. 17:26).

- C. The Church will love Jesus as the Father pours forth, (reveals more of) the beauty of His name. The Bride knows that the beauty of Jesus will cause all believers (the virgins) to love Jesus. The virgins speak of the daughters of Jerusalem in the Song. They are genuine, yet immature, believers who seek Jesus throughout the Song, but are never fully committed as the Bride is.

³***Your Name is ointment [perfume] poured forth; therefore the virgins love You. (Song 1:3)***

- D. There is only one "perfumed name" that can transform our heart and empower us to love God. There is nothing more powerful or pleasurable than when God reveals God to the human spirit.

⁸***I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:8)***

- E. Jesus declares God's name or personality to awaken love in our heart for God.

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

- F. Jesus knows how the human heart works. He explained to Simon that when people experience the power of being forgiven, they will overflow with greater love. This causes us to grow in gratitude, and it renews our love.

⁴⁷***"I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." (Lk. 7:47)***

- G. Throughout the Song, the perfume of God is imparted to the Bride. His perfume becomes her perfume. I encourage you to study the place of God's perfume in the Bride's life in the Song.

¹⁶***Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat its pleasant fruits. (Song 4:16)***

¹⁵***For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved. (2 Cor. 2:15)***

IV. THE BRIDE'S LIFE VISION (1:4)

- A. In Song 1:4, the Bride describes her spiritual goals and primary life vision. She expresses her twofold life vision in the form of a prayer. Her primary life vision is to be one who is drawn near to Jesus in intimacy and who receives grace to run after Him with others in ministry.

⁴*Draw me away! We will run after You. The King has brought me into His chambers. We will be glad and rejoice in You. We will remember Your love more than wine. (Song 1:4)*

1. Being drawn is *singular*—it speaks of intimacy with God. Being drawn close to God's heart speaks of our relationship and private interaction with Him. This points to developing our secret life in God. The words "after You" modify "draw me" in some translations, as in the NASB—"draw me after You."
 2. Running after Him with others is *plural*—it speaks of ministry and community. It refers to running after Jesus in ministry with others. She longs to run after Jesus in relationship with those who love Him. Running together represents service that involves reaching out to others, building relationships in the Lord, etc.
- B. Throughout our spiritual journey we are to embrace both "drawing" and "running." In each season, we are to be drawn to Him and run after Him with others. We must not neglect either aspect of the kingdom; as we are drawn in intimacy with God will we run effectively in ministry.
- C. Many begin by being focused on running in ministry without being drawn in intimacy. Because running brings conflict and rejection, many soon burn out, even as the maiden did in Song 1:5-7.
- D. Our life vision is a lifelong commitment to a primary goal, regardless of our occupation, family status, economic status, etc. Without a vision, the people perish. In other words, without a clear life vision, people live *without restraint* (or discipline) in their time, resources, etc.

¹⁸*Where there is no vision, the people perish. (Prov. 29:18, KJV)*

¹⁸*Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint. (Prov. 29:18)*

- E. When I was young, my leaders emphasized the necessity of writing down my life vision. So I wrote my life vision: to be *an extravagant worshiper of God and an anointed deliverer of people*, so as to walk out the two great commandments (Mt. 22:37-39) and the Great Commission.
- F. The components of a focused life include having an overall life vision with life goals in each of the main areas of our life such as our ***spiritual life*** (prayer time, fasting days, Bible study, etc.); ***relationships*** (family, friends, etc.); ***vocation*** (marketplace calling); ***ministry*** (in the Church, outside the Church); ***economic*** (earning, spending, giving, saving, investing); ***physical*** (exercise, health, diet, etc.); and ***rest*** (recreation, vacation, play, entertainment, sports, etc.).
- G. We must have an ***action plan*** for each long- and short-term goal in each main area of our life. We set long-term goals to achieve in 10 or so years, and short-term goals in 3 months to 3 years. We must have a detailed ***schedule*** for each action plan to help us focus and prioritize our time. For more on this subject, see my teaching series *The Power of a Focused Life* on mikebickle.org

V. BEING EQUIPPED TO WALK OUT OUR LIFE VISION: CHAMBER EXPERIENCES

- A. **King's chamber:** I refer to “chamber experiences” as the times in which God communicates to us in a deeply personal way. In such times He highlights passages in His Word. (Sometimes He confirms them with prophetic dreams.) On these occasions, the Lord draws near to us by His Word to give us promises or new perspectives about our life and future with Him.
⁴Draw me away! We will run after You. The King has brought me into His chambers. We will be glad and rejoice in You. We will remember Your love [affection] more than wine. (Song 1:4)
- B. One example of my personal “chamber experiences” with the King is when I encountered the judgment seat of Christ in a prophetic dream in October 1978.
- C. The Bride declares to the daughters of Jerusalem, with resolution and faith, that together they would “be glad and rejoice in God and remember His love.”
⁴We will be glad and rejoice in You. We will remember Your love [affection] more than wine. (Song 1:4)
- D. **Remember Your love:** We are to intentionally engage our mind and heart to remember His love. Jesus has a plan to bring each of us to the place of feasting on His love at His table (2:4).
⁴He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner [leadership] over me was love. (Song 2:4)
- E. **Be glad and rejoice:** We are to be glad and rejoice in God and remember His love in three ways. First, we rejoice in His tender mercy, even in our weakness, as we refuse condemnation. Second, we remember how fascinating Jesus is as we resist temptation (inferior pleasures). Third, we rejoice in and remember His leadership over our lives in times of difficulty.
¹¹We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:11)
- F. This was the Bride's confession of faith through each season in life. In the face of difficulty, temptation, and mundaneness, she confessed that she would be glad in Jesus and remember His love. This confession is one way that we are to engage in spiritual warfare to resist the enemy's assault against our hearts (2 Cor. 10:4-5).
⁴The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)
- G. This faith confession in times of despair and testing is an expression of spiritual warfare as we declare that God is good and the devil is a liar. This confession of faith foreshadows the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. We will use these very words on the great Wedding Day.
⁷Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)

VI. REMEMBERING CAUSES US TO LOVE GOD

- A. When we remember Jesus' love for us, it awakens love in our heart for God (1 Jn. 4:19).
⁴We will remember Your love [affection] more than wine. Rightly do they love You. (Song 1:4)
¹⁹We love Him because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)
- B. The Bride knows the way to maintain the fervency for Jesus that she received in "His chamber." In His chamber we receive personal encouragement and assurances in God. It is not enough to know *about* God's love. We are to remember, or regularly recall, His encouragement.
- C. By faith we remember and realign our heart with what God's Word says about His love.
1. In difficult circumstances we rejoice in God and confess His loving leadership, knowing that all things will work together for good.
²⁸We know that all things work together for good to those who love God. (Rom. 8:28)
 2. In temptation we rejoice in God and confess that His love and promises are better than the wine of this fallen world.
²⁴By faith Moses...²⁵choosing rather to suffer affliction...than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin ²⁶...for he looked to the reward. (Heb. 11:24-26)
 3. In failure we confess His love as we trust in His mercy and refuse both condemnation and the accusations of the enemy.
- D. In difficult circumstances, temptation, and failure, we declare that the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever (1 Chr. 16:34, 41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Ps. 52:1; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 117:2; 118:1-4, 29; 138; Jer. 33:11).
¹¹They sang responsively...giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel." (Ezra 3:11)

VII. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (e.g., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?