

Session 4 The Paradox of Grace: Dark but Lovely (Song 1:5-11)

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I. THE PARADOX OF GRACE: DARK, BUT LOVELY (1:5-6)

- A. The Bride's spiritual journey begins with what I refer to as the "paradox of grace," because, as she discovers her sin, she sees that she is lovely to God. We see this in her twofold confession of faith (1:5). The Holy Spirit allows her to see her sinfulness as well as her loveliness to God. The tents in the fields of Kedar were dirty, while the curtains in Solomon's temple were beautiful.

⁵I am dark [in my heart], but lovely [to God], O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. ⁶Do not look upon me, because I am dark... (Song 1:5-6)

*We are doing only twelve sessions on Song of Solomon, which means we cannot go very deep. I am calling this session **The Paradox of Grace**. It is here where the Bride's journey begins, in verse 5, with what I call the paradox of grace. She is dark in heart, but she is lovely to God.*

Now Stuart Greaves always quotes this verse to me. He says, "It does not say dark 'in heart.'" He says, "The African-Americans are the most lovely to God."

"You know what?" I say as I go with it. I say, "You know what? I will do it your way." Then I get him in Song of Solomon 5:10 where it says, "I am white, but radiant."

He says, "yeah, but da-da-da-da..." Anyway, we actually have a lot of fun with these verses.

In the spiritual interpretation this is the paradox of grace, where the journey begins, because verses 1-4 are the theme of the book. It is what we do with this paradox that will determine our spiritual future, because the first thing she discovers is her sin. That is her first discovery. When we are really walking close to God, we actually will see our sin more clearly.

A lot of believers, maybe not a lot, but there is a bunch out there who not even hardly aware of sin in their life because they are not close enough to the Holy Spirit and to the Word to see the darkness of their heart.

It does not end there. She has a tremendous revelation of the darkness of her heart, but she also sees that she is lovely to God. So she says, "I am dark, but I am lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar." The tents of Kedar, in the fields of Kedar, are very dirty. She says, "I am like one of the dirty tents out in the field, but I am also like the curtains in Solomon's temple that are magnificent, beautiful, and fragrant. She says, "I am like both a dirty tent and a fragrant curtain that is filled with color and light and the glory of God." This is her two-fold confession of faith.

Every believer who is going to mature in the Lord is going have to hold this confession because, again, the closer we get to Him, the more clearly we see our sin, and yet the more deeply we see His love and how beautiful we are to Him. It is really an intense reality that gets more intense the closer we get to the Lord.

- B. The spiritual crisis of stumbling and failing is common to every believer. How we respond to this crisis determines whether we go forward to grow strong in the Lord or draw back in shame. The Bridegroom King gave the maiden a sevenfold answer to her spiritual crisis (1:8-11).

The spiritual crisis of stumbling while reaching for the highest things in the Word of God in our life and coming up short is common for every believer. How we respond to the crisis of stumbling determines if we will go forward. I am talking to people who really love Jesus. Stumbling to them is a crisis. It is not casual. If stumbling

is casual to you, then ask the Holy Spirit where you and Him are at, because it is not casual to stumble; it is a crisis in our life when it happens.

How we respond to this crisis determines if we will go forward to grow strong in the Lord. How we respond to this crisis determines if we will go forward or if we will draw back. A lot of folks when they see their sin, the depths of sin, they get so discouraged because they do not see the loveliness of who they are in Christ, so they want to just quit. They think, "Forget it. What am I worth?" If you have an "I just want to give up, it is not worth it" feeling, then this message is for you. You need a revelation, not only of the darkness of the heart, but how lovely you are before God in Christ.

- C. God shows different emotions, depending on how people respond to Him. Some people are confused, not knowing whether God is mad, sad, or glad. We must not think God is mad with us and live in *condemnation*, when He is actually delighting over us. Neither should we live in *presumption* and think He delights in us when He is grieved over our intentional compromise.

God has different emotions related to how people respond to Him. Now some believers live in confusion about how God is feeling about them. They do not know if He is mad. They do not know if He is glad. They do not know if He is sad. They cannot tell you know what is going on. "Are You mad at me, angry? Are You sad, just grieving? I know You love me, but You are just grieved all the time when we relate? Do you actually enjoy the relationship?" Again, how we answer this greatly determines if we are going to go forward or we are going to draw back.

We do not want to think God is mad at us and so live in condemnation imagining that we are balancing the score out, thinking that if we wallow in our sorrow a bit, then we feel like we have evened the score, you know? We just feel bad and say, "God, are You glad that we feel bad? Are we even now?" That is a completely wrong approach.

- D. We must understand the foundational premise that spiritual immaturity is not rebellion. They may sometimes look outwardly the same, but they come from different heart responses. A sincere yet immature believer shows their sincerity by quickly repenting and renewing their war against the sin they just stumbled in. God enjoys His relationship with the sincere believer who stumbles, but rebellion (consistent intentional compromise) arouses His anger.

The foundational premise of this whole teaching in this first part of Song of Solomon 1 is that spiritual immaturity is not the same thing as rebellion. A lot of folks confuse those two because sometimes they look the same outwardly. You can look at a believer living in rebellion, and you can look at a believer who loves Jesus who is very sincere, and sometimes their outward behavior and their attitudes look the same. You look at them and think, "Wow, I cannot tell which it is." But immaturity and rebellion come from different heart responses.

A sincere believer stumbles in their sin, but they are quickly repenting and reestablishing their war against that area they stumbled in. It is not okay to them that they sinned. They will probably stumble in it again and again, but it is not a small thing to them; they take it very seriously.

The analogy I have used over the years is from the Old Testament. There are clean animals and unclean animals in the Old Testament from the Levitical priesthood point of view. There are the swine or the pigs, and there are the sheep. The swine, that is the pigs, are unclean. The sheep are clean. Yet, both the swine and the sheep get stuck in the mud. They both get stuck in the mud, but only the sheep are kicking and struggling to get out of the mud. When the shepherd comes and delivers them, they think, "Oh, I do not want to go back there again. That was horrible!" Then you get that little pig out of the mud, and the minute you turn around, he will

go right back to the mud! He is looking for mud holes. So that is an analogy, though imperfect, of the difference between spiritual immaturity and rebellion.

- E. One who genuinely loves God has a “willing spirit”—they are sincerely seeking to obey Him. Our obedience and love for God are sincere, even while weak and flawed; weak love is not false love. But the *sincere intention* to pursue full obedience is different from the *attainment* of it.

⁴¹“**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**” (Mt. 26:41)

We can see one of the key concepts in this issue of the willing spirit in Matthew 26:41. On the night when Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus told him, “You are going to betray Me.”

Peter said, “You are wrong. I am not.”

Jesus said, “No, you are. Here is the situation, Peter. Your spirit is willing. I see your willing spirit, but you have weak flesh. You do not see how weak your flesh is. When you stumble, you are going to be so overcome with sorrow and shame that you are going to lose sight of the fact that I see that you have a willing spirit.”

When we stumble, when a sincere believer stumbles, and we discover a new dimension of our weak flesh, the Lord sees our willing spirit. Remember the Lord told Peter before he fell, “Your spirit has a yes in it. There is a yes in your spirit.” That is what I refer to as a willing spirit, a spirit that is willing. There is a yes in your heart and that yes in your spirit really matters to God.

As a matter of fact, that yes in your spirit is the beginning of victory. We think that victory only matters when we are completely free in every issue of our behavior, but beloved, the victory begins with the yes in your spirit. That is a part of the victory. Now I want the whole victory, but I do not want to undermine the value of the yes in our spirit to God. It moves Him. It matters to Him.

We get condemned because of an unrenewed mind, and the devil is accusing us, so we think that we are so bad we are going to quit. The Lord says, “Wait! I have worked in you a willing spirit, and it is beautiful to Me.”

“It is? There is nothing about my life that is beautiful to you, Lord.”

He answers, “Oh, yeah, there is a lot in your life that is beautiful to Me!”

- F. I believe that the most powerful longing of the human heart is for the assurance that we are enjoyed by God. We were created with a longing to be pursued, delighted in, and enjoyed by God. The fear of rejection and the trauma of shame are emotionally devastating. If we “feel” rejection from God, even though He is not rejecting us, it greatly hinders our spiritual life.

I believe the most powerful longing of the human heart is to have the assurance that we are enjoyed by God. We can say God loves us, and it is biblical to say God loves us. I like to say it a little more in a different way, that He actually enjoys the relationship. He can disagree with an area of our life, but enjoy the relationship. Just like a father and mother may disagree with their children in an area of their behavior, for example with their seven-year-old child, but still love the relationship. If we as weak and sinful parents can figure that out, cannot God figure that out? He actually enjoys us and enjoys the relationship with us while the issue in our life is being settled, because we are warring against that sin and there is a yes in our spirit.

We are created with the longing to be delighted in by God. There is a longing in us to be enjoyed by God, and that is what the devil takes advantage of when he accuses you. The devil is called the accuser in Revelation 12:10; he is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses you, saying that God is finished with you. The reason that

is so painful to you is because you were created with a longing to want to be enjoyed by God. God built you with that longing. It is that God-shaped vacuum that drives us back to Him constantly.

The trauma of shame or the fear that God is finished with us, the fear of that rejection, I mean the fear that He is finished with us, is emotionally devastating. That trauma, that fear that God is finished with us, will really hinder our spiritual life if we do not bring that emotion and submit it to what the Word of God says about who we are in Christ and about who God is and what He is like.

- G. A sincere yet weak believer will grow most effectively with **confidence in love**—confidence in God’s love for them and confidence in knowing that He esteems their love for Him as genuine. The foundation for this confidence comes by understanding Jesus’ work on the cross. When we understand **what** He did on the cross, then we can understand **why** He did it.

*A believer will grow most effectively when they have **confidence in love**. That is a phrase we use a lot around here. I encourage you to use it, confidence in love. That is the same thing as the assurance that we are enjoyed; it is exactly the same thing, confidence in love.*

When I talk about confidence in love, I mean the confidence that He loves me, that He enjoys me, and not only that, but the confidence that He sees my weak love as genuine though it is weak. It still moves Him is the idea. When I have confidence that He enjoys me in my weakness, and I have confidence that the love I offer Him in my weakness is still genuine and it moves Him, beloved, that sets your life on an entirely different path.

The devil loses so much ground in your inner life if you settle that issue. It is not like one day it is just settled. It is not that kind of thing because we renew our mind over and over. We confess the Word, and we bring these truths to God, and we speak them and ask the Holy Spirit to write them on our heart, and we thank God for them.

- H. God enjoys and delights in the relationship with His people, even now in our spiritual immaturity (Lk. 15:4-5, 8-10, 20). A hypocrite is not one who says one thing, but does another thing; rather, it is one who says something about obeying God without *seeking or intending* to obey it.

*A hypocrite is not a person who says one thing and does another. Typically that is what we say a hypocrite is, that they say one thing and do another. No, really here is what a hypocrite is. It is somebody who says one thing **without seeking or intending to obey it**. Everybody says one thing and does another at some level. I mean, if we say, “Walk in love,” and if you come up one degree short of perfect love, which we come up a lot shorter than that, then you are a hypocrite by that definition.*

You are not a hypocrite because you are aiming high and coming up short. You are a hypocrite if you proclaim something but you are not seeking to obey it or you are not intending to obey it. Use whatever word you want, that is what a hypocrite is. If I tell you to seek God, but I am not trying to live that lifestyle, that’s a hypocrite. I can come up short and still be truthful to call people to it.

- I. Her journey begins with the paradox of grace (1:5-11).
- J. The paradox of our faith is that we are dark in our heart, yet lovely to God. Some emphasize how sinful we are (darkness of heart), and others how beautiful we are to God (in Christ). Both of these truths must be held in tension to properly understand our relationship with God in Christ.

⁵*I am dark [in heart], but **lovely** [to God]...⁶*my own vineyard [heart] I have not kept. (Song 1:5-6)**

K. We are lovely before God, even in our weakness, for four reasons:

1. **God's personality:** God has a loving and kind personality. In other words, because of who God is, He sees us in His generosity—*"Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder."*

Why are we lovely to God? For four reasons we are lovely to Him. Number one, because He is so kind. He is so generous in His personality. You have heard the phrase, "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder." Well, the One who is looking at us is so kind, so we are in a good position already because the One evaluating us is so filled with mercy and so generous. So one reason we are lovely is because of the very personality of God, what He is like. I mean if somebody else looked at you, they would not have the same opinion, even though they knew you were in Christ.

2. **The gift of righteousness:** We receive the beauty of Jesus' righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

Number two, we are lovely to God because we have the gift of righteousness. I cannot exaggerate the significance of having a righteousness so perfect even God cannot improve it because it is His. We are talking about the very righteousness of God that has been imputed to you and dwells in your spirit. Your born-again spirit was actually made the righteousness of God so the Holy Spirit could live in you comfortably. If your born-again spirit were not made righteous, the Holy Spirit could not dwell in you.

3. **A willing spirit:** A willing spirit, the sincere intention to obey God, is beautiful to Him.

⁴¹***The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mt. 26:41)***

⁴***The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit...is precious in the sight of God. (1 Pet. 3:4)***

Number three, Jesus sees our willing spirit, the sincere intention to obey, the yes in our spirit. Look at 1 Peter 3:4, where Peter calls it the incorruptible beauty of a right spirit with God. That is what it is in essence. You could put different phrases in there. It is an incorruptible beauty to have a right spirit before God. It is very precious in God's sight. God looks at your right spirit and it is not as if He thinks, "Well, that is kind of neat, you know." No, it is very precious, and it is incorruptibly beautiful to God.

4. **Our eternal destiny:** In the resurrection we will live in perfect love forever. God sees the end from the beginning and sees us now in the light of eternity, with perfect obedience.

Then we are lovely in light of our eternal destiny. God sees the end from the beginning. So when He looks at you, He sees you in the light of how you are going to respond to Him for billions and billions and billions of years. These seventy years on the earth, a little bit more, a little bit less, is a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of your life with Him. He actually sees us in the fullness of how we will be with Him forever and forever and forever. That is part of our relationship with Him even right now. That is part of our hope. That is who we are, and He sees this.

There is just nothing more enjoyable than feeling God enjoys you even though you know there are issues that are not yet settled, but you are bringing them into the conversation with Him, and you care intensely about it. You are not casual about dealing with sin; you care intensely about it.

So the maiden makes the two-fold confession: I am dark, but lovely.

II. HER SPIRITUAL CRISIS (1:6-7)

- A. The maiden described five pressures related to her spiritual crisis (1:6-7). She felt shame when people stared at her because of her failure; she felt rejected by her angry brothers; she was overworked by being forced to keep other vineyards; she allowed her own vineyard (heart) not to be kept with fresh love for Jesus; she served Him at a distance, instead of drawing near.

⁶Do not look [stare] upon me, because I am dark because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard [heart] I have not kept. ⁷Tell me, O You [Jesus] whom I love, where you feed Your flock...for why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companions? (Song 1:6-7)

We see five different negative points of pressure in her spiritual crisis here in verse 6-7. She says, “Do not stare at me because I am dark. My mother's sons were angry with me, so they gave me a lot of extra work in the vineyard. They overworked me so my own vineyard—the vineyard of my heart in the spiritual interpretation—I have not kept my own vineyard.”

So she cries out in verse 7, “Tell me, O You whom I love.” She is talking to the King, the Bridegroom King. “Tell me, O You whom I love.” She loves the Lord! This is not a weak, struggling believer who does not care. She is weak and struggling, but she really cares, and her love is real. “Tell me, O You whom I love, where will You feed Your flock?” Where will You feed me, is what she is really saying. Where is the place where my heart can get fed like it was in the early days of our relationship?

“For why should I be like one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companion.” What she is really saying here is why should I be like one who serves you at a distance? We will break that down in just a few moments.

So again, she felt ashamed because of those that were staring at her because of her failure. She says that the brothers are staring at her, and this is not an inviting stare, this is not an affirming stare. They are staring at her because they see the darkness of her heart because of her failure.

Then she felt rejected by her angry brothers. They were angry, and they overworked her. They gave her the “way out of the way” assignment and just made it as hard on her as possible. So she felt rejected by her brothers, then she felt overworked, then her own vineyard was not kept, and then she served the one she loved at a distance. She said, “By the flocks of Your companion as a veiled woman,” instead of drawing near to Him, which was what she had signed up for.

Remember the theme of the song is, “Draw me near to You. Let me know the kisses of Your Word. Let me know the fragrance of Your good perfumes. Oh, that is why the people of God love You because Your love is better than wine.” That is the vision of her heart. That is what she signed up for, and that is what you signed up for.

- B. **Shame:** She felt shame as others stared (NASB) at her because of her dark heart (failure).
- C. **Rejected:** The sons were angry because of her youthful zeal. The sons speak of older, spiritually dull leaders who do not value the fervency in young believers. Why?

So the sons were angry with her in her youthful zeal. The sons speak of the older, spiritually dull leaders. They are angry with her, they are overworking her, and they do not value her fervency. There are those in the Body of Christ who have been at it for years. They would be symbolized by the sons, and they do not value the fervency of the young believer.

Now a young believer is not always young in age. A young believer may be a year or two old in the Lord, but they may be seventy years old in age, and they are on fire because they are just going for it and are excited. The older ones say, “Well, we will see, you know. We will give you a little time, and you will calm down.”

1. First, zealous believers bring conviction to spiritually dull believers, who often simply dismiss true spiritual zeal as legalism.

Here’s one reason that the brothers are angry if you are on fire for the Lord. I do not mean you are just exuberant in your style of relating; that is not what I mean by “on fire.” Some people think “on fire” means being verbally bold and boisterous. No, “on fire” means that you are going for the highest things of God’s heart and of obeying. You can have a quiet spirit, pressing into God, and it brings a spirit of conviction to the people around you. I do not mean because you get in their face and you tell them everything you are doing. I mean your lifestyle bothers them.

I will just tell you something. Going through my early years, the number one thing that the older guys would tell me, though I had a lot of encouragement from older guys too, but when I was bothering them, when I was in my twenties, I was pressing in to have a prayer life, times of fasting, and wanting to devour the Word of God X amount of hours in the course of a day or a week, whatever it was, and I had older pastor friends. They were saying, “You are going to burn out! You better slow down.” They said it was legalism anyway.

I asked, “What is legalism?”

“Well, if you are doing all that stuff, it must be legalism.” So I found out that legalism was code for “you are convicting me by your lifestyle.” Because if you say legalism, I mean that is the ultimate cuss word in the kingdom. Legalism, oh no! Okay, I will get drunk, and I will quit praying, anything but not legalism! Please do not use the L word on me.

A lot of folks get so scared if somebody says, “Legalism.” It just really scares them. When I was in my early days, whenever I bothered somebody by my devotion, and they were older, they would say some word like that or they would say, “You are going to get burned out,” or “It is unnecessary.”

2. Second, the untempered zeal and pride of zealous believers often make spiritually dull leaders angry. Our zeal must be seasoned with wisdom and humility. Some new believers condemn others who do not express devotion to God in the same way that they do.

There is another reason that the sons can be angry, and that is the untempered zeal and pride of zealous believers. I know in my case, in my twenties, I had untempered zeal. My zeal for God was good, but I was expressing it to them in ways that had pride in it. It did not have humility. It did not have wisdom in it. So I was poking them in the eye, making them angry. It was not only my dedication. You put the two together, and it is a perfect storm. You got a young person whose lifestyle is convicting the others, and then they just lack enough wisdom and humility to where they poke the others in the eye while they are being dedicated, and it is a perfect storm.

- D. **Burnout:** She was mistreated by the angry sons who overworked her, giving her many responsibilities in different vineyards (plural). Spiritual burnout does not come from hard work as much as from working with a wrong spirit—by seeking to gain approval from people, and by not connecting with the Spirit in the work. Embracing too many responsibilities out of the desire to be noticed by others often leads to burnout.

Next is burnout. She is being mistreated by the angry brothers. The angry brothers overworked her. They made her take on more vineyards. They said, “Hey, go to the vineyards, plural. Take all these vineyards; care for them.” She did not care for the vineyard of her own heart. I have said this many times over the years that spiritual burnout does not come from hard work nearly as much as working with a wrong spirit. Working with a wrong spirit is where burnout mostly comes. There is that one guy that puts too many hours in, but over forty years I have looked back and evaluated that when most people burnout, it is not because they are putting too much effort in. It is because they are seeking God or serving in the kingdom or whatever they are doing with a wrong spirit. They are trying to gain the approval and the attention of people, but nobody will applaud them so their feelings get hurt. They get burned out because they are not being applauded or they are competing with other people, trying to outdo them. And they get burned out because they are living with competition, spiritual competition.

People can get burned out because they are serving in ministry but not actually connecting with the Lord. You know you can lead a worship team, or you can sing on the sets here, and not connect with the Holy Spirit at all. You get burned out and think it is the effort that burned you out. It is the fact that you are serving without connecting or you are comparing or you are seeking someone’s approval; that will burn you out so quickly.

So do not automatically think it is the hard work that burns you out. I do know a few folks who need to do a little bit less, but that is about one percent; really, it is not more than one percent. So do not go there. Go to, look at, say to yourself, “In what spirit am I doing it? Am I praying, fasting, seeking God so the leaders, so the people, so the girl I am trying to get her attention thinks I amazing?”

Is that why you are doing it? You think, “Oh no, he caught me!” Well, hey man, I was twenty once, you know. I was not born at age fifty-eight. I did some of that. And I did get the girl, okay. It is a great story, but I had a couple of negative things between the da-da-da-da. Anyway, that is for another day. Just got to say it, you know a little bit more of the story. It has been fun for thirty-seven years. There were a couple hard years before that, okay.

- E. **Dullness:** She did not keep her own vineyard (heart). Taking care of her own vineyard speaks of nurturing her personal relationship with Jesus. We cannot impart to others what we do not possess in our own hearts. The most important thing we can do in our ministry for others is to cultivate spiritual depth in our own hearts. Originally, what she most wanted was the kisses of His Word. Yet the vineyard of her heart was choked by the weeds of busyness, sin, and shame.

⁶**They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept. (Song 1:6)**

Dullness. She said, in essence, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards, plural. I was working. They made me do this, but my own heart I did not keep.” Taking care of her vineyard speaks of nurturing her personal relationship with the Lord. Taking care of your own vineyard speaks of nurturing your personal relationship with the Lord. Do you keep your own vineyard? Or are you so focused on having responsibility so that others can see you in a place of impact and influence, and you are not even keeping the vineyard of your heart? My point is not how bad you are. I mean, we all know how to do that. I have done that a number of times over the years. My point is, it is a problem when we do not keep the vineyard of our own heart.

We cannot impart to others what we do not possess in our own secret life in God. What I do not have in my own life in God—my secret life that is between me and Him that you do not know and nobody else can understand. Everybody has a secret history in God, a secret life in God—You cannot impart to others what you do not have there. You can be a gifted musician, a gifted singer, a gifted preacher, a gifted writer, you can stir

people up, but that does not mean you are imparting something that is going to change their life in a way that is lasting change.

I am not interested in just getting people excited in a meeting, I want people to actually believe that they can interact with God in a deeper way and actually go do it afterwards. That is what I am after. The reason I say that is because if you are a gifted communicator, a great singer, or you know how to play the drums and the bass, you can get people excited and still have a completely barren life in God and think, “Hey, it is working.” No, I am not talking about a room that is enthusiastic or talking about you. I am talking about imparting something that moves people’s hearts to God in a way that they change the way they live outside of the meeting. That is what I am interested in, and that is what so many of you are interested in as well.

Well, originally what she wanted most was the kisses of His Word, but the vineyard of her own heart is choked with busyness, it is choked with sin, it is choked with shame, with comparison, with trying to get people’s approval. I mean it is a rat race to be working hard, fasting and praying, searching out the Word and doing ministry and serving, when the core thing driving you is to get people’s attention to think you are amazing, and nobody does. You know one year goes by, five years go by, and you still do not have some great ministry. You think, “What am I doing this for?”

The Lord says, “I thought it was about you and Me.”

- F. **Distance:** She felt the pain of serving Jesus at a distance as a “veiled woman.” Women veiled themselves when working with strangers with whom they were unfamiliar. She asked, “Why should I serve down the road instead of near to You?” She lost her sense of nearness to Him.

⁷***For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companions? (Song 1:7)***

She says, “Why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of my companion.” Now women veiled themselves when they were working with strangers, when they were working with somebody they were not familiar with or in a family relationship. She is saying, “Why am I serving at a distance from You in other fields? You are the One I love! Why am I doing this? I am serving at a distance from You. I am like a veiled woman. I am in the other part of the field or the pasture out there, and I am not even close to You. I am like a veiled woman and I cannot even interact with others because I am so far away from You.” Because if it were a family relationship, if it were a married relationship, in those kind of relationships she would not have her veil on. So she is saying, “I am far away from You, serving at a distance.”

III. HER DESPERATE CRY TO HAVE MORE OF JESUS

- A. The maiden longs to be to fed by Him and recover her sense of nearness to Him (1:7).

⁷***Tell me, O You [Jesus’] whom I love, where you feed Your flock, where You make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companions? (Song 1:7)***

The maiden’s desperate cry in verse 7, “Tell me, O You whom I love. She cries out. She saying, “I’m burned out. I am keeping other vineyards. I am dark. The brothers are angry with me. Nothing is working right. My own vineyard has got weeds in it. My heart is dull. Tell me, O You whom I love, where do You feed Your flock? I want You to touch my heart. Where will You touch me?” She wasn’t asking, “Where will I get the attention of people or get a new open door or get a bigger platform.” No, she was asking, “Where will You touch my heart? That is what I am in this thing for.”

- B. In her crisis, she cried out to Him in desperation. She was saying: “I have been fed by others, but now I want You to feed me and satisfy the cry of my heart.” She remembered the sweetness of her communion with God in her times spent in His “chamber” (1:4). She asked for counsel, “Tell me, where do you feed Your flock?” This is an expression of her prayer, “Draw me away.” She is desperate to encounter Jesus. Ministry activity and even promotion will never be enough.

“Where will You make the flock rest at noon?” Because the sheep would only rest at noon in the heat of the day after they were fed and satisfied or they would not lie down. So when she says, “Where will they rest at noon?” in essence she is saying, “Where can I be so satisfied like the sheep who will lie down when they are full? Psalm 23:2 says, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” That means I am full; I am satisfied. That is when the sheep lie down.

“Why should I be like the one who veils herself?” Why should I serve at a distance? That is the cry. There are a number of you in this room right now, and that is the cry of your heart. You are thinking, “Why should I be serving at a distance?” She remembers the sweet times of communion in the King’s chamber back in verse 4.

- C. Bible teachers can inspire and point us to the green pastures of truth. However, for truth to feed our heart, we must turn it into a dialogue with Jesus.

Bible teachers can inspire you. Bible teachers can point you to the green pastures of truth. Like tonight I can point you to green pastures. I can point you to truths. That is what I am doing, but those are truths that will not touch you if you do not feed on them outside of a meeting. All I am doing here really is advertising truth for you so you know where to go. The Holy Spirit will stir you a little bit and touch you, and you will say, “Yeah, I am going there. If some of you say that you are going to go and study that later, then this is a successful meeting. “I am going to go talk to God about that later.”

It does not change you or feed you until it gets into your conversation with Jesus in private. These are verses that you write down, and you tell them to a friend or put them on Facebook. That is all cool, but if it does not get into your conversation with Jesus, it does not feed you. Truth alone does not feed you.

A lot of folks are happy to know truth and to have truth so they can tell somebody else the truth. But the Lord wants you to talk to Him about truth, and that is the only time you get really fed. Again, you can be stirred by somebody else singing or teaching or by a drama, but it is what you do with that stirring that determines if you are fed or not. Now I have heard people say, “Boy, I was really fed in the Word tonight.” That is great, and they can keep saying that, but I know they are not really fed. They are stirred. They have to go and talk to the Lord about a couple of truths, and it enters into their dialogue with the Lord, then they are fed.

- D. She longs to be satisfied with Jesus. She cried out, “Where will You satisfy me, even in the heat of the day?” At noon, or in the heat of the day, sheep will lie down if their stomachs are full. God wants us to rest in the midst of the heat of the day (life pressures) by connecting with Him.

She longs to be satisfied with Jesus. Not with ministry but Jesus. Not just the kingdom activity. She wants to be satisfied with the Man who is fully God, fully man and fully God, to be satisfied with Jesus.

- E. Her love for Him was sincere as she cried out, “Tell me, O You whom I love.” She is not a hypocrite, but has confidence that her love is real, even in her crisis and spiritual dullness.
- F. God’s love is beyond comprehension (Eph. 3:19), and there is no condemnation in Christ.

¹⁹...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. (Eph. 3:19)

¹***There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ. (Rom. 8:1)***

- G. Many sincere, repentant believers expect to be rebuked after seeing their sin and weakness. The Bridegroom King speaks comfort to the heart of His people when addressing their sin and shame. He wants the spirit of shame and rejection to be broken off their hearts.

To some folks stumble only means coming up short; to other it means a scandalous sin. Now I want my tongue to be bridled. I want to have a spirit of prayer. I want to spend my time rightly. I want to spend my money rightly. I want to love my enemies well. I am talking about a definition of walking with God that is bigger than, “Well, I have not done scandalous sin. I have not stolen any money, and I have not beaten anybody up. I think I am doing pretty well.”

No. I am talking about living without a spirit of prayer, without loving the unlovely, without communicating with God, not spending my time and money right, not processing my inner life right. I want more. I want to touch Him at that level—that is important to say. Because some people say, “Well, repent of what?” They are thinking only of the big, outward, scandalous kind of sins.

We want to abide with Him. We want to connect deeply. Is that the vision of your heart? Well, I think it is or most of you would not be in this room. Many repentant believers expect to be rebuked. That is what they expect when they come up short. They are expecting to be rebuked by the Lord. It is shocking when the Lord actually does opposite of rebuking them. From the spirit of the Word He wants to speak comfort to our hearts. He wants the spirit of shame to be broken off our lives.

1. The Lord promised to give Jerusalem double honor in place of her shame (Isa. 61:7) and commands us to speak comfort to her after her many years of shame (Isa. 40:1-2).

⁷***Instead of your shame you shall have double honor...therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. (Isa. 61:7)***

¹***“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” Says your God.*** ²***“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her...that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD’S hand double [honor] for all her sins.” (Isa. 40:1-2)***

The Lord wants to give Jerusalem double honor. You can read it right there in Isaiah 40:2. He wants to give her double honor in place of shame. What He does for Jerusalem is indicative of what kind of personality He has. This is what He is like. He takes those who deserve shame when they come to Him in their brokenness with repentance and sincerity, and He says, “I want to give you double honor. I do not want to give you what you deserve. You deserve shame. I want to take it away and give you double honor.”

He commands us to speak comfort to Jerusalem because God speaks comfort to those who are in sin and are in the process of repenting of their sin. He gives them comfort. Look at Isaiah 40:1, “Comfort, yes, comfort My people.”

Somebody could say, “Comfort them? Like a question mark, comfort them? Look at them! They are not obeying You.”

The Lord says, “Yes, comfort them. Speak comfort. Cry out for them, for her, that her sin is pardoned.” This is talking about the Jewish people, but my point is not that right now, though that is a glorious point. The point I am making is—this is what God is like.

*When we deserve to have our sin crush us, God says, “I want My people to comfort you because I am speaking comfort.” He says to us, “That is why I want you to speak comfort to those ones. They have come to Me in sincerity. They are in their brokenness. They deserve shame, but I want you to speak comfort because I, the Lord, am speaking comfort.” That translates to—He is speaking comfort to **you** right now.*

Beloved, when I feel His comfort and His double honor for my sin, I say, “What kind of God are You that this is how You talk, this is how You think, and this is how You want us to talk. Wow!”

2. The Lord gives a new name to His people to show He delights in them (Isa. 62:4-5). He reveals His heart as a Bridegroom in removing shame from His people (Isa. 54:4-8).

⁴You shall no longer be termed Forsaken...but you shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you...⁵as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:4-5)

⁴You will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth...⁵For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts...⁸But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you.” (Isa. 54:4-8)

He gives His people a new name to show that He delights in them. He delights in them! What a powerful statement here in Isaiah 62! I have told this dream many times; I had it in November 1995, a very powerful dream. I am in a big auditorium, like at the convention center. There are thousands of young people, and I am up on the platform with the microphone. I hear an audible voice of God like thunder, and it is coming from the right, not that that matters. It is booming voice that says, “Call them Hephzibah. Tell them I delight in them.” This voice, this thunderous audible voice, was saying this to me, and I was supposed to say this.

Well, you are supposed to say it too. We are all supposed to say it. Tell them—and the “them” are sincere believers. I am not talking about a person who is not sincere, who is hanging out in the church world, but is not trying to walk with God, who is trying to get away with whatever they can get away with and still have a little prestige in the church world. I am not talking about that. I am talking about people who are trying hard but are coming up short, which is everybody who loves Jesus. We are trying hard, and we are coming up short in one of those areas—the Lord says, “Speak comfort. Tell them I delight in the relationship, that I like talking to them, I like relating with them.”

IV. THE BRIDEGROOM’S SEVENFOLD ANSWER (1:8-11)

- A. The Bridegroom answered the maiden’s prayer (1:7) by giving her seven statements telling her where she could find Him and be fed by Him (1:8-11). He affirmed her as beautiful in His eyes, and gave her a threefold instruction (1:8), a threefold affirmation (1:9-10), and a promise (1:11). His seven statements in this passage represent a vital part of the theology of holy passion.

⁸If you do not know, O fairest [most beautiful] among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents. (Song 1:8)

Here is the Bridegroom’s seven-fold answer to the maiden’s prayer. She says, “Where will You feed me? Where will You make the flock lie down at noon?” Where will You satisfy me is what she is really saying in verse 7. In verses 8-11, the Bridegroom gives seven statements to answer that prayer of where she could find Him, where she could be fed, and where she could be satisfied and lie down as the sheep lie down in green pastures.

The Lord speaks up in verse 8. Because she asked where will He feed her, He answers, basically, “Good, I am glad you asked. I have the answer.” Verse 8, “If you do not know, O most beautiful one, follow in the footsteps of the flock. Feed your little goats besides the shepherds’ tents.” Again this is in that agricultural language in which the entire love song is set. So I think the meaning is pretty easy to follow.

- B. Jesus wooed her heart by saying, “O most beautiful of women.” He knows that her garden is not being kept, but He sees the cry in her heart to love Him. She is unlovely to the angry sons, but is most beautiful to Him, even in the midst of her failure. The word *fair* is translated in most other versions of the Bible as “beautiful” (NASB/NIV). The first issue in understanding how the Lord feeds the heart of His people starts with understanding how He sees them in their weakness.

The first thing He says to her—here she is, her vineyard is not kept, she is dark in heart, she has lost her way, she is not fed, she is serving at a distance—He says, “You are beautiful to Me.”

“Me? You mean like now? Or You mean down the road?”

“No, right now! The cry of your heart to touch Me and please Me,” says the Lord, “is beautiful to Me.”

“Really? No, Lord, I have got this going on and that going on. Let me remind You again how bad I am.”

“Oh, I see you are dark, but you are not only dark in heart, you are also lovely to Me.” He starts off saying, “You are beautiful.”

- C. He gave a threefold instruction as to where He feeds her and establishes intimacy with her (1:8). He emphasized the importance of not living in isolation, idleness, or with an independent spirit.

⁸Follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents. (Song 1:8)

*He gave a three-fold instruction. He said, “Follow in the footsteps of the flock, feed the little goats, and feed them besides the shepherds’ tents.” He gives a three-fold instruction in verse 8 there. We will do this ever so fast. I am just going to mention the points really quickly because they are really simple points. We just need to do them. **They are not hard to do, but they need to be done.***

- D. **Instruction #1:** “Follow in the footsteps of the flock” by being involved in a church (1:8c). Scripture emphasizes the importance of belonging to a church, and *not living isolated from it.*

1. He tells her to follow in the footsteps of the flock, to get involved in the fellowship of the Body. The *footsteps of the flock* speak of where all the sheep walk with God. He was saying *follow in the place* where the Body walks, or *get back into fellowship* and do not overreact to the angry brothers who judged and mistreated you. People isolate themselves from the Body as a result of feeling rejection, bitterness, or shame related to the Church.

Instruction number one of the three-fold instruction: follow in the footsteps of the flock. In other words, be involved in the Body of Christ. That is what He is saying to us. Be involved in My kingdom purposes. Don’t just go to a ministry trip; be involved in the local Body of Christ in your area. Do not be aloof. Be where the flock gathers and be a part of it.

2. Jesus prophesied that He would build His Church (Mt. 16:18). He is returning for a connected Church filled with glory. Much is lost in our spiritual life (and in our children) if we forsake assembling together and instead embrace a “churchless Christianity.”

¹⁸***“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail...” (Mt. 16:18)***

²⁵***...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another... (Heb. 10:25)***

I have said over the years that the church is really out-of-style right now in the Western world, but I have good news. The Church is about to have a major comeback because Jesus is building the Church and He is coming for a Church filled with glory. Do not buy into the rhetoric that the Church is over and that we are just going to have a little fun time and go on some ministry trips. He wants the Body functioning in every geographic area according to the New Testament pattern. He is committed to His Church.

Every believer needs to be a functioning, contributing, serving, giving member of a local church. You do that when you're in Bible school, you do that when you are on the mission field, you do that when you work at Sprint, you do it wherever you are. Wherever you are, get involved in the Body of Christ in that geographic area. That is God's purpose.

Follow the footsteps of the flock by being involved in a local church. Do not live in isolation from it though that is a popular trend. That is not what the Spirit is saying. The Holy Spirit is not following Facebook trends. The Holy Spirit is not following anybody! He is leading His own agenda that is revealed in the Word. I look at the Word, and I know what He is building.

- E. **Instruction #2:** “Feed your little goats” by serving others in a local church (1:8d). Scripture emphasizes the importance of serving and *not living in idleness*. We are to take care of our God-given responsibilities in caring for and discipling those who are younger in the Lord. God ordained that each believer be a “joint of supply” that reveals His love to others (Eph. 4:16).

¹⁶***... the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body... (Eph. 4:16)***

Instruction number two, He says, “Feed your little goats.” He is talking about the younger believers. Now do not call them “little goats” from Song of Solomon. By serving others is how you are feeding them. He says, “Go invest in those who are younger spiritually.” Again, they may be seventy years old, but only one year old in the Lord. You may be twenty and ten years older in the Lord, so go help them. They do not have to be younger than you physically. Just a younger believer, go serve them, go give yourself. Disciple some younger ones.

Do not just hang out with Christian friends who socialize together, though that is good. There is more to the kingdom than having some fun with a few friends. We want to disciple a generation, and that is one-on-one, one-on-two, one-on-five. It takes work. It is not easy to do, not that it is hard work, but it takes time and effort, and it is not always fun. Get a vision to be a discipler.

- F. **Instruction #3:** “Besides the shepherds’ tent”—by honoring spiritual authority (1:8e). Scripture emphasizes honoring spiritual authority, *not living in a spirit of independence* that disregards it.

¹⁷***Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive [cooperate with], for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you... (Heb. 13:17)***

1. She was called to serve the Body “beside” the tents of the true shepherds. Jesus wants us to have a humble heart toward the shepherds (leaders) under whom He places us.
One practical reason for submission is so that a body of believers can function in unity.

2. The function of leadership in the New Testament was “to rule,” which consisted of shepherding the people and giving direction to the local church so that it could function in unity (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thes. 5:12; Heb. 13:17, 24). This includes establishing its vision, values, action plans, and problem solving in spiritual and administrative issues, etc.
The elder should never dominate a believer’s faith (2 Cor. 1:24; Mt. 20:25; 1 Pet. 5:3).

Instruction three: do this serving by the shepherd’s tent. In other words, do this while honoring spiritual authority. One of the primary characteristics of the generation the Lord returns is the spirit of lawlessness. Lawlessness will be in the Church activities as well. The Lord wants the Body of Christ to walk in humility, to honor spiritual authority from a biblical point of view. That is a very important part of the Church walking in victory.

- G. **Summary:** The Bridegroom’s answer touches three common temptations. First is the temptation to isolation or bitterness by feeling mistreated by the angry sons or shame related to our sin. Second is the temptation to selfishness that allows us to idly use all our free time on ourselves. Jesus wants us to take care of the little ones. Third is the temptation to live with an independent spirit that resists spiritual authority and walks in lawlessness and pride.

V. THE BRIDEGROOM’S 3-FOLD AFFIRMATION (1:9-10)

- A. The Bridegroom gave a threefold affirmation of her beauty and sincere desire to obey. He spoke affectionately, calling her “My love” and affirming her as “lovely,” beautiful, in His eyes (1:9).

⁹I have compared you, My love, to My filly among Pharaoh’s chariots. ¹⁰Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. (Song 1:9-10)

Now He gives the three affirmations. He has just said, “You want Me to feed you? I want you in the Body, in the life of the Body, I want you giving out this to young people, and I want you in a right relationship to spiritual authority.”

“Wow, I was thinking of more of a heavenly visitation with an angel or something.”

Lord says, “No, this is where I feed My people.”

Ugh, because humility is involved in it, denying our own rights, laying down our pride. All of that is involved in those three things.

Then He affirms her, He says, “I have compared you, my love,”—again, this language of affection. Here she is, she has not changed anything, but He says, “I love you. You are beautiful.” It is this paradigm of love and beauty. Right through the song it is “I love you, and you are beautiful.” Every stage of the way it is, “I love you, and you are beautiful.” That is the paradigm in which the kingdom grows strong. He gives three affirmations.

- B. **Affirmation #1:** “My filly among Pharaoh’s chariots” speaks of the Bridegroom seeing her strong desire to follow Him. A filly is a young female horse. Pharaoh had thousands of horses. The horses that pulled his personal chariot were the most obedient and strongest horses on earth.

“I have compared you, my love, to my filly among the Pharaoh’s chariots.” Pharaoh had the strongest and the most obedient or trained horses in the world. Pharaoh was famous for them. He says, “I compare you to this dedicated, trained, submissive horse that was the glory of Pharaoh’s court. That is how I see you are.” He is looking at this young believer, and the Lord is saying, “You have brought your strength into the relationship. You are seeking to love Me with all of your heart. You are resolute. Yes, you are weak, but I see in you a heart

cry of love. You are beautiful like Pharaoh's horses are to me." Again, using this language of the ancient world.

- C. **Affirmation #2:** "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments" speaks of the Bridegroom seeing her emotions as beautiful. He sees the sincere devotion of His people even in their weakness. Cheeks speak of emotions throughout the Song, because they reveal emotions of anger, joy, sadness, etc.

He goes on, "Your cheeks are lovely." The cheeks throughout the Song of Solomon speak of the emotions because through the cheeks you can see anger, you can see joy, you can see sadness. The countenance of the face reveals the emotions of the heart. He says, "Your cheeks, your emotions—though you are not there yet, though you are unsettled in some areas—but you are beautiful to me right now."

- D. **Affirmation #3:** "Your neck is [lovely] with chains of gold" speaks of the Bridegroom seeing her submission to His authority, and her resolve to obey Him even in her weakness.
1. The neck speaks symbolically of the will. Scripture speaks of those who are stiff-necked, which means they are stubborn or rebellious. The neck also speaks of godly submission. The neck is what turns the head as it chooses which way to go, right or left. In time of war, a conquering king put his foot on a defeated king's neck to show his submission.
 2. The chains of gold bear the king's emblem and speak of royal authority. A chain of gold with the king's emblem on it was worn by the prince as he walked through the town.

Then He goes on, "Your neck is lovely." The neck throughout the Song of Solomon speaks of the will because in the Scripture there are the stiff-necked who are the rebellious. The neck is not just the stubborn will, but the neck speaks of the act of the will. He says, "The choices you are making are lovely to Me, I see them even though they are weak and small. I see them. I see what is in your heart, even though you think there is a storm on the inside of you. I see your cheeks are lovely. There is a cry in your heart that touches Me when I see it."

VI. THE LORD'S PROMISE TO MAKE HER LIFE BEAUTIFUL IN HIS SIGHT (1:11)

- A. The Bridegroom is still answering the question, "Where will You feed me?" (1:7). He will beautify her life. The ornaments of gold speak of Christ-like character worked in her.

¹¹***We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver. (Song 1:11)***

⁴***The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit...is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Pet. 3:4-5)***

- B. "We will make you" is God's promise to complete His work in her character and ministry. The beauty that Jesus possesses is the beauty that He imparts to His people (Isa. 61:3).

³***...to give them beauty for ashes [our brokenness], the oil of joy for mourning. (Isa. 61:3)***

The very beauty that Jesus possesses is the beauty He imparts to her. He ends in verse 11 by promising to make her beautiful before Him, to bring forth the beauty of the Lord. The beauty you possess is the beauty He imparts. Beloved, this is the journey that we are on. We are on it individually, and we are on it together. Amen and amen.