

Session 5 A Believer's Identity in God's Beauty (Song 1:12-2:7)

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

I. THE BRIDE FEASTS AT THE KING'S TABLE (1:12-14)

- A. **Review:** The Bride asked the Bridegroom, “Where will You feed Your people spiritually?” (1:7). In other words, how will He satisfy the cry of our heart? First, He gave her a 7-fold answer (1:8-11) declaring her beauty, then a 3-fold instruction (1:8), and a 3-fold affirmation (1:9-11).

⁷*Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock... (Song 1:7)*

- B. The Bridegroom King continued His answer as to how He feeds His people (1:12-14). At His table, she is moved to worship (v. 12) as she feeds on Jesus as the One who so values her that He went to the cross (embraced myrrh, 1:13) to have relationship with His people, and as the One who is as delightful to her as fragrant flowers (henna blooms, 1:14).

¹²*While the King is at His table, my spikenard [perfume of worship] sends forth its fragrance.*

¹³*A bundle of myrrh [burial spice] is my Beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts.*

¹⁴*My Beloved is to me [as delightful as] a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi. (Song 1:12-14)*

- C. **His table:** God has provided a table that we may “feed on” the benefits of the cross (1 Cor. 10:21). As the Bride feeds on truths related to salvation, her worship ascends as fragrance.

1. In the presence of our enemies, we are to feed at the Lord's table (Ps. 23:5). If we neglect to feed on His mercy at His table, our heart “starves” as guilt weighs us down.

⁵*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...my cup runs over.*

⁶*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. (Ps. 23:5-6)*

2. We are to reckon, or see, ourselves as those who are alive to God, fully accepted by Him. We offer ourselves to God as those “alive to God”—free from condemnation.

¹¹*...reckon yourselves [see yourself] to be...alive to God in Christ... ¹³*present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead [without condemnation for our sin]... (Rom. 6:11-13)**

- D. **Spikenard:** Her worship ascends as the fragrance of perfume. Spikenard is literally a “spike of nard”—perfume. Nard, a plant found in India, is still used to make expensive perfumes.

1. When Jesus feeds our heart, worship ascends from us like perfume. He enjoys the “fragrance” arising from us as we focus on the provision of His table.

2. Our obedient love is also an expression of Christ's fragrance to God (2 Cor. 2:15). What kind of “fragrance” arises from your heart before God? Does the Lord “smell” the fragrance of gratitude and confidence in His love and the finished work of the cross?

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

- E. The Bride received more understanding of God's love and her value to God (1:13). Jesus' love and value for His people is seen in His going to the cross to have relationship with them.
¹³***A bundle of myrrh [burial spice] is my Beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts. (Song 1:13)***
- F. ***Myrrh***: An aromatic gum resin produced by various trees and shrubs in India, Arabia, etc., myrrh has a great fragrance, yet a bitter taste. It was used in making perfume and in preparing a body for burial (Jn. 19:39-40). The three wise men brought myrrh to Jesus' birth as a prophetic symbol of His death (Mt. 2:11). On the cross, He was offered myrrh (Mk. 15:23).
- G. ***Lies all night***: The Bride proclaimed that He was like a bundle of myrrh that lay continually on her heart, even through the night. Some wealthy women in the ancient world slept with a bundle, or large necklace, of myrrh to provide fragrance through the night.
1. *Through the night* speaks of consistency (it rests on her heart even throughout the night).
 2. The most worshipful saints think much about the cross. It is their constant meditation, and they never grow weary of meditating on it. It will fill us with gratitude for eternity.
- H. ***Henna blooms***: The Bride saw the beauty and delightfulness of Jesus (1:14). She compared Him to a cluster of beautiful, fragrant henna flowers in full bloom. He is delightful to all who see the truth about Him. He is not the burdensome, boring God that religion falsely proclaims.
¹⁴***My Beloved is to me [as delightful as] a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi. (Song 1:14)***
1. A henna is a shrub or small tree with fragrant white flowers used to make perfumes.
 2. We must boldly proclaim the truth about Jesus, who is as a *cluster of henna blooms*.
¹⁶***Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my friend! (Song 5:16)***

II. THE BRIDEGROOM DECLARED BOTH HIS LOVE AND HER BEAUTY (1:15)

- A. We see two foundational truths. First, the Bridegroom declared that she was beautiful to Him. Secondly, He revealed His affection for her as the one He called "My love," or "the one I love."
¹⁵***Behold, you are fair [beautiful], My love! Behold, you are fair [beautiful]! (Song 1:15)***
- B. ***Fair***: We are fair, or beautiful, to God. The beauty that God possesses is the very beauty that He imparts to His people (Isa. 61:3). We are beautiful to God for four reasons (see session 4).
³***...to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes... (Isa. 61:3)***
¹⁷***And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us... (Ps. 90:17)***
- C. We grow spiritually with confidence in God as we feel loved and beautiful in His grace. Many believers only see their sin, and thus they feel dirty and ashamed. A person who feels dirty will live dirty. An immature believer who feels beautiful and loved will run *to* God, not *from* Him.

III. DOVE'S EYES: LOYAL AND SINGLE-MINDED (1:15)

- A. The King affirms the Bride for having dove's eyes (1:9). This speaks of being single-minded and loyal to Jesus. In the Scripture, a dove is a picture of the Holy Spirit.
¹⁵Behold, you are fair, My love...you have dove's eyes. (Song 1:15)
- B. **Single-minded:** A dove has no peripheral vision. It only sees straight ahead. It is not distracted by what is happening on its right or left. Thus, to have "dove's eyes" speaks of being loyal to God, with singleness of vision and devotion (Mt. 6:22).
- C. **Loyalty:** A dove will mate once in its life. If its mate dies, it never mates again. This speaks symbolically of loyalty. (Note: it is not disloyal for one to marry again after one's spouse dies).

IV. THE BRIDE SAW THE KING AS BEAUTIFUL, BELOVED, AND PLEASANT (1:16)

- A. The Bride saw the Bridegroom as handsome (beautiful God), as the one she loves (her Beloved), and as pleasant (1:16). This is her response to being loved and seen as beautiful to God (1:15).
¹⁶Behold, You are handsome [beautiful], my Beloved! Yes, pleasant! (Song 1:16)
- B. **Handsome:** She begins her journey into being fascinated by God's beauty. David, the man after God's heart, set his heart to see the beauty of the Lord (Ps. 27:4). She sees salvation as more than being forgiven and blessed in circumstances, but as an invitation to live fascinated.
⁴One thing...will I seek...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD. (Ps. 27:4)
- C. **Pleasant:** Jesus is pleasant. The more the Bride sees of His beauty and love, the more she loves Him and enjoys her relationship with God. When we see Jesus as beautiful and pleasant, then obedience seems reasonable. Jesus promised that we could have fullness of joy, or enjoy our relationship with God, as we abide in and focus on His love (Jn. 15:9-11).
⁹Abide in My love...¹¹These things I have spoken...that your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:9-11)

V. THE BRIDE'S REST, CONFIDENCE, AND ETERNAL GLORY (1:16-17)

- A. The Bride saw that God provided rest and prepared an enduring house for His people (1:16b-17). She was resting on a *bed that is green* (*luxuriant couch*, NASB). A green field is a luxuriant field, one with much growth. His couch is plush, green, and filled with life, not a parched desert.
*¹⁶You are handsome, my Beloved! Yes, pleasant! Our bed is green [couch is luxuriant, NASB].
¹⁷The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir. (Song 1:16-17)*
- B. **Beams and rafters:** The beams of their houses were of cedar, and the rafters were of fir (1:17). Cedar and fir were the strongest, most permanent, beautiful woods to build with in Solomon's day. We will live forever in "His house"—in a mansion filled with beauty and strength.
²In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. (Jn. 14:2)
²...the holy city, New Jerusalem...prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Rev. 21:2)

VI. THE BRIDE'S IDENTITY AND LIFE PURPOSE (2:1-2)

- A. The Father promised to give Jesus an inheritance—one that He knew Jesus would desire. One aspect of Jesus' inheritance involves the mandatory obedience of all creation, but Jesus wants more than this. He longs for an eternal companion (Bride) who voluntarily chooses to love Him.
¹⁷ *...that the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation...that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Eph. 1:17-18)*
- B. The Bride is pictured as a *beautiful rose* and a *pure lily*, whose life purpose and spiritual identity is found in seeking to fully love (rose) and obey (lily) Jesus (2:1-2). The Bridegroom declares that she is as a lily (2:2). The rose and the lily are the same person—identified as the Bride (2:2).
¹ *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. ² Like a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. (Song 2:1-2)*
1. **The rose**: The rose speaks of loving God with all our heart. A rose is the chief of flowers, the one that we most see as communicating love, because of its beauty and fragrance. Thus it is commonly used in our celebrations for weddings and wedding anniversaries.
 2. **The lily**: A lily speaks of purity, of obeying God with all our heart. The valley speaks of the low and dark places in this fallen world. As a lily, she lives in purity in the midst of the dark valley of this fallen world.
 3. **Thorns**: The King saw her like a pure lily among the thorns of a fallen and sinful world. Thorns speak of sin; they came as the result of Adam's fall (Gen. 3:17-18; Heb. 6:7-8).
¹⁷ *To Adam He said, "...cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it..."*
¹⁸ *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you..." (Gen. 3:17-18)*
- C. The Bride saw her spiritual identity and life purpose as being a *beautiful rose and pure lily* to be given to Jesus as the inheritance that He desires most. Jesus awaits the Bride—the great prize of all the ages. The affections of the human heart are a most precious possession to Him; this is what He deeply desires. He died to redeem and, thus, fully possess human affections.
- D. The Bride's first confession was that she was dark in her heart, but lovely to God (1:5). Now she sees more of her life purpose, confessing, "I am the rose"—the inheritance that Jesus desires.
- E. Our identity is based on the way we define our value or measure our success. Our primary identity and success is to be found in our relationship with Jesus—in being desired by God and in loving Him, not in our recognition or accomplishments before people.
- F. When our primary success comes from being desired by God and loving Him, we need not fear being a failure. We confess, "*I am loved by God, and I love God; therefore, I am successful.*"
- G. Our primary identity is not in what we do with our hands, but in what we pursue with our hearts. Seeing that we are *His rose and lily* breaks any sense of purposelessness, failure, and inferiority.

VII. THE BRIDE DEEPLY ENJOYS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KING (2:3-5)

- A. The Bride declared that the King is the apple tree who refreshes her heart spiritually (2:3).
³Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my Beloved among the sons [human race]. I sat down in His shade [resting in grace] with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. ⁴He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner [leadership] over me was love. ⁵Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. (Song 2:3-5)
- B. **Apple tree:** The apple tree is defined as that which refreshes (2:3a, 5). As we rest in God's grace under the shade of the cross, and as we pursue loving Jesus, we find delight in God's presence.
- C. **Sat down:** As we sit before God, we experience more of the delight of His presence (2:3b)—the Word becomes a delight, and His presence is sweet to those who faithfully sit before Him.
³I sat down in His shade with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. (Song 2:3b)
1. The cross is the only tree that can shade us from the scorching heat of our sin and guilt. We only enjoy the shade of God's presence by resting in the shade of Jesus' cross. We cannot rest in our achievements by relating to God based on our spiritual maturity.
 2. Jesus declared the wisdom of Mary of Bethany's life as she sat at His feet (Lk. 10:39). Jesus called this the *one thing needed* and choosing the *good* way to live (v. 42).
³⁹Mary...sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word... ⁴¹Jesus answered, "One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Lk. 10:39-42)
- D. Jesus' banner, or leadership, over her life led her to experience and express His love (2:4).
⁴He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner [leadership] over me was love. (Song 2:4)
1. **Banqueting house:** Jesus' plan for each of us is to lead us to God's banqueting table—to the place where we celebrate His love for us and ours for Him. The ultimate fulfillment of this table is the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). We enjoy tokens of the *wedding table* in this age by the power of the Word and the Spirit.
 2. **Banner:** In the ancient world, armies marched in battalions under a flag or banner. The banner over our life is Jesus' leadership, which leads us to grow in love. God's first priority—or His *banner purpose*—for our life is greater than giving us more physical comfort, money, ministry influence, etc. His banner over our life is that we would grow in understanding and impartation of His love.
- E. The Bride cried out for greater encounter with God's love (2:5). She became sick with love, and so His leadership in her life was effective. She cried out to be sustained and refreshed by experiencing a greater measure of His love, Presence, and Word.
⁵Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. (Song 2:5)

VIII. EXPERIENCING GOD'S TWOFOLD EMBRACE (2:6)

- A. Now that she is lovesick, the Bride sees new dimensions of God's leadership in her life (2:6). With a heart of love, she is able to see more clearly both the "right and left hand of God."
⁶His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me. (Song 2:6)
- B. **Left hand of God:** This speaks of the activity of God that we cannot see with our natural eyes. The left hand is "under" her head and is therefore out of her view. The Lord does many things for us that we do not see. He withholds and releases many things to bless, provide, and protect us. He spares us from troubles that we are not even aware of in this age.
- C. **Right hand of God:** This speaks of the activity of God that we can see and easily discern. When the King stood in front of the Bride to embrace her, she could see and feel it. This speaks of the "sweet" manifest presence of God that can be felt and discerned.

IX. THE HOLY SPIRIT GUARDS US IN STRATEGIC SPIRITUAL SEASONS (2:7)

- A. The Spirit ordains strategic seasons in each one's spiritual life (2:7). I see the Spirit as speaking in verse 7. There are seasons when He desires to establish us in new experiences and insights.
⁷I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up [disturb] nor awaken love until it pleases. (Song 2:7)
- B. **Daughters of Jerusalem:** They represent believers who lack discernment of the various operations of the Spirit and the different seasons in one's spiritual life.
- C. **Do not stir up:** The Spirit charged other believers not to disrupt or disturb the Bride in this season with their opinions and judgments. The Spirit tells those who were insensitive to His ways not to disturb the Bride in this particular season of sitting at the table to grow in the Word. In the phrase, *until it pleases*, the Hebrew can be translated as *it*, *he*, or *she*. The NASB accurately translates the phrase as "do not awaken love until *she* pleases."
- D. **Gazelles or does:** The Spirit charged them by the gazelles or does of the field (2:7). Gazelles and does have a sensitive nature and can be easily startled. Gazelles or does speak of the importance of gentleness and sensitivity in relating to the young Bride. Many are easily distracted from the Word. We must have sensitivity in relating to others who are in different seasons.
- E. There are four different seasons in a year—spring, summer, autumn, and winter. In the spring season, the Lord sows exciting, new truths in our lives. In the summer season, we work in the hot sun to cultivate and grow in those truths. There is joy in seeing the growth of new things, but there is labor under the hot sun. In the autumn season, we enjoy the harvest. We all like the harvest. In the winter season, there is death. The cycle does not work without the winter season.

X. 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?