

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

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)**

We are on session five in a twelve-part series on the Song of Solomon. In our last session we saw that the Bride asked one of the most important questions that devout believers ask in every age, in every generation. Where do You feed my heart? That is one of the most important questions for anyone who sincerely and deeply loves Jesus. Where will You satisfy the cry of my heart to encounter You more? In the last session we looked at the seven-fold answer He gave in Song of Solomon 1:8-11.

- 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)

Now we are building on that, and we are starting in verse 12. The King is continuing to give the answer that He began in verse 8-11: where and how He feeds His people. The reason I am saying this is that Song of Solomon 1:12-14 all the way to Song of Solomon 2:7 is critical information and truth for people who want to grow in passion for Jesus. Those who really want to go forward, I want to encourage you to be focused and locked in on the truths, the New Testament truths that are lodged in a part of this passage here.

Verse 12 says, "While the King is at His table." She is speaking about the King. Of course the table means the subject of feeding is still in focus here. My perfume sends forth its fragrance while the King is at His table, she says. "My perfume"—there is that element of love and worship that is ascending forth when He is feeding me at His table. When I am connecting Him at the heart level, my spikenard, my perfume, my worship ascends is what this passage is talking about in the spiritual interpretation.

Why? Because a bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me. She says, "I have understood He is like a bundle of myrrh that lies all night between my breast." Then she goes on and gives a second point, that not only is He like a bundle of myrrh, but He is like a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyard of En Gedi. She is at the table, and she is moved to worship. That is the picture we have in verse 12 as she feeds on the One who so values her. That is the point she is understanding. She understands how much He values her.

Many people in the Body of Christ never really grasp that; they never begin the journey of His value. Beloved, there is no journey greater than His value, His beauty, His worth. When we truly understand who He is, it inevitably leads us to see who we are to Him. In His greatness we see our value in His eyes, and when that connects with us, something about our human makeup is dynamically impacted.

C. **His Table:** God has provided a table that we may feed on the cross and its benefits (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, then our heart "starves" as guilt weighs us down.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...my cup runs over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. (Ps. 23:5-6)

*She is at the table, and she is feeding at His table. God provides a table for us. Of course we know that for us that table is what He did on the cross, the benefits of the cross. He feeds us on the truths of the cross. The truth of the cross is not only what He did on the cross—though that truth is beyond exaggeration in its importance, what He did on the cross—but it is also **why** He did what He did on the cross. That is part of the truth; that is part of the benefit of the cross.*

What He did and why He did it are both essential elements to the message of the cross. Now she feeds on these truths, and her worship ascends like fragrance. Her perfume arises before Him because worship and fragrance that ascends is compared regularly throughout the Old and New Testament. Worship is compared to perfume or incense or fragrance that arises before God.

Now we know that worship is a response to a revelation, meaning when we have a revelation of what He did or why He did it or who He is, anything that touches those subjects—what He did on the cross, why He did it, and the glory of who He is—that revelation provokes a response of worship in our heart.

David really grasped this in Psalm 23. He says that even in the presence of my enemies—whether it is the enemy armies chasing him or whether it is his own failure, which is an enemy that is chasing him in a different sort of way—he says in verse 6, the mercy of God follows me all of my days. Goodness and mercy—that was David's paradigm of God, his perspective of the God of Israel. Whether it was a physical enemy or a spiritual enemy that he was dealing with, his own giants that he was fighting to overcome in his life, David was locked in on this reality. Goodness and mercy chased me down all of my days. Even when I am in a spiritual funk, in a bad mood, mercy is chasing me down—that is how he viewed the God of Israel.

When we feed at that table like David did—that is the table the Lord prepares before us which is truth about Himself—then our hearts soar, and the fragrance of worship abounds. Many are starving. Their hearts are starving, weighed down under the weight of their own guilt and shame because they do not feed it at this table.

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

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

Paul said it this way, "Reckon yourself to be alive to God." See yourself differently is what Paul says in this most important chapter of Romans 6. It is the most important chapter in the New Testament on personal transformation with the how-tos. In Romans 6:11, Paul says, "Here is how to—number one—see yourself differently: see yourself as alive in God and see yourself as under the reign of grace."

In New Testament revelation, the grace of God includes the value we possess in God's eyes, in Jesus' eyes—the most beautiful man that ever walked the earth, fully God, fully Man. The most beautiful One links us and yokes us to His beauty. The beauty He possesses He imparts to us. It is a remarkable reality, under the doctrine of

grace, of being alive to God, the truth of His love for us, that the beauty we have before Him is all connected. It is the fullness of our being yoked and joined to the most beautiful, loving One who ever walked the earth.

*So we are to reckon ourselves—see ourselves—alive to God or fully accepted, fully accepted by Him. Again that involves His affection towards us. He does not just stamp our passport to let us in. He fully accepts us, not just into His empire, but into His heart; it is more than a stamped passport. To be fully accepted means **into His heart**, and the depth of fellowship and interaction, the very impartation of His glory and beauty is intrinsic to the relationship of being fully accepted.*

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

1. When Jesus feeds our heart, then 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)***

Her worship ascends like fragrance. Again in the Old and the New Testaments worship and fragrance are compared often, regularly. What kind of worship, what kind of fragrance ascends out of your life before God? Now we know the beauty that He gave us in Christ, but I am talking about our response.

When we have confidence, when we have gratitude in these truths about who we are to Him and who He is and what He did, when we have confidence, when we see ourselves as in these truths, I tell you it is a beautiful fragrance to God. So often we get stuck in the opposite of the fragrance of gratitude and confidence in love from seeing who He is and what He did and why He did it. We get entrenched in the non-fragrance of being filled with fear, anxiety, condemnation, shame, and retreating from the Lord, trying to find our satisfaction in other sources.

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)***

Here she gives one of her poetic statements about Him. She say, “A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me, and it lies all night between my breast in the night.” What she is understanding is God’s love for her and her value to God. Again this is a difficult thing for believers to lock into. There is a resistance, I have found over the years, in the human heart to see even the worth of Jesus to us and to the Father, but when it comes to seeing our worth to Him, even the most devout back away and retreat. They come up short in the fullness of who this Man really is, and the way He relates to us, the way He feels about us, and the fullness of whom the grace of God has yoked us to as heirs of eternal life with the Son.

Jesus’ love and His value for His people is seen most in His going to the cross. Why did He go to the cross? To have relationship with us and to bring us back to relationship with His Father. He went to the cross so that the Father could receive His inheritance from His people and so the Son could as well.

- F. **Myrrh:** an aromatic gum resin produced by various trees and shrubs in India, Arabia, etc. It 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 kings 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).

Myrrh throughout the Song of Solomon and actually throughout the Bible is symbolic, and it is clearly symbolic of embracing death. Myrrh has that paradox of being a very expensive and beautiful fragrance with a bitter taste. Myrrh has a tremendous fragrance, very expensive, very costly, but a very bitter taste. It was used in preparing a body for burial; it is funeral spice, using our terms today.

The three wise kings brought myrrh to Jesus at His birth. Can you imagine bringing burial spice to a baby shower? It was a prophetic symbol, that He would embrace the myrrh of suffering. On the cross He was offered myrrh to drink. There are many examples of the symbolism of myrrh relating it to the place of death.

- 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.

What she is saying is this: my Beloved is to me the One who paid the costly price. I see what He did. In the New Testament language that is what she is saying. Now some of the wealthy women in the ancient world would have a necklace of myrrh because of the great fragrance. It was very expensive, so not many could afford it. They would go to bed at night with that necklace of myrrh. In the ancient world, perfume was a very important thing; let's just say it that way. Showers were not as available as they are today.

1. *Through the night* speaks of consistency (it rests on her heart even throughout the night).

*She would lie all night with the necklace of myrrh is the idea. In this symbolic language number one, it speaks of the nighttime; **through the night** speaks of the consistency. In other words, all day, all night she never let go of this myrrh resting on her heart. She thought about, she pondered on these great truths of salvation. The night speaks of the consistency of the myrrh resting on her heart, meditating through the night.*

2. The most worshipful saints think much on the cross. It is their constant meditation, and they never grow weary of meditating on it. It will fill us with gratitude for eternity.

The most worshipful saints think much on the cross; it is their constant meditation. What He did, why He did it, who He is—all of those are deeply connected truths related to the cross and the subject of the grace of God. It was their constant meditation. They never grew weary of it, never grew weary of it. Beloved, forever and ever we will be filled gratitude for our Beloved who is like a bundle of an abundance of myrrh. We will always see forever the costly death and the reason He did it and what it achieved. We will delight in it throughout all the ages in the future.

- 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. Henna is a shrub or small tree with fragrant white flowers used to make perfumes.

The henna blooms are very beautiful, fragrant flowers. The Bride saw the beauty and the delightfulness of Jesus. She said that not only is my Beloved like a bundle of myrrh, not only do I see the abundance of what it

cost Him and what He endured, not only that, but my Beloved is to me as delightful as a cluster of henna blooms. He is delightful to all who see the truth about Him. He is not the burdensome, boring God that religion, even Christian religion falsely promotes. It is not a “grit your teeth and pay the price to endure a boring God.”

I have heard people talk about seeking God and prayer that way. I am not putting it down. I totally understand it. I taught a little bit like that for a few years myself. I do understand it, that it was like “grit your teeth, pay the price.” The unspoken messages—endure a boring God and if you endure Him long enough, pressing in, He will reward you because He does not have many friends anyway—that whole concept is not according to the truth of who He is. My Beloved is to me delightful! He is like a cluster of henna blooms. He is fragrant. He is beautiful. He is delightful to me.

2. We must boldly proclaim the truth about Jesus, who is as a cluster of henna blooms.

¹⁶Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my friend! (Song 5:16)

We will boldly proclaim, “This is our delight, to boldly proclaim the truth about Him who is a cluster of henna blooms.” Now I would not use that language, as you might confuse somebody. We are using the Song of Solomon as that poetic language, in the agricultural language of the Shulamite bride. You might say it this way—you are saying the same thing but you might say it this way here in Song of Solomon 5:16—“He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved. This is my Friend.” That is saying the same truth. You will probably connect in a better way if you say that.

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.”

¹⁵Behold, you are fair [beautiful], My love! Behold, you are fair [beautiful]! (Song 1:15)

The Bridegroom declared His love, and He declared His beauty to her. Now we see two very foundational truths in verse 15. These two foundational truths are repeated over and over in Song of Solomon 1 actually. I want you to identify these two truths, though they are put together in many verses, throughout not just Song of Solomon 1, but the whole of Song of Solomon.

This idea that we are beautiful; “behold you are fair, My love, behold you are fair,” that the Bridegroom declared that she was beautiful to Him. He declared she was beautiful to Him. Again the subject of the beauty that we receive from Him is part of the doctrine of grace—that we are heirs, and we are yoked and joined forever to the most beautiful King. It is not like He is beautiful and the one who is His partner forever is the opposite of beautiful is the point I am trying to say.

The second truth is that He revealed His affection for her. These are two foundational truths for anybody who wants to grow in their passion for Jesus, who wants to grow in their love for God, who wants to be strengthened in the first commandment. I tell you the paradigm of love and beauty—His fiery love and the beauty He possesses and the beauty He imparts—those subjects intrinsic to the doctrine of grace.

When grace is understood in its fullness, it is more than just stamping our passport so we go to heaven instead of hell. We are in the deepest relationship ever with the King who is most beautiful. Forever we are the darling of His heart, sharing His reign on the earth forever, at His side as He praises His Father. What a remarkable heritage we have!

I have found many people over the years who want to grow in their holiness through purity, who want to be more fervent, but they approach it a different way than the paradigm of love and beauty. I want to encourage

you these two truths are not just helpful, but they are foundational to growing consistent in your devotion to the Lord. This is something the Lord began to get my attention about in a really direct way back in the 1980s. It was a new idea to me, but I can tell you these many years later I am a satisfied customer. I just want more. I am so glad the Lord interrupted me and began to talk to me along these lines.

You know I was more the warrior—get the task done, count the cost, pay the price, die in the process if I have to as a worthy soldier. I did not have much of the understanding of love and beauty as truly the foundation and the whole paradigm of the relationship. When the Lord began to talk to me about this, I struggled with it. It just did not connect for a while. I found a repelling of it in my heart.

I thought, "Ah, I do not really like that." It was hard to say, hard to connect with, hard to get a hold of, but as I began to see it a little bit, I began to see it everywhere. Once you have those lenses, those new set of glasses, you find the truth of love and beauty everywhere Old and New Testament. Again it is the doctrine of grace in its fullest implications.

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)***

The beauty that God possesses is the very beauty He imparts to His people. Can you imagine He imparts His beauty? It says in Isaiah 63, one of the foundational descriptions of salvation and redemption, that He gives beauty for the broken ash heap of our sinful, injured, defiled humanity. We spend our life burning our lives up in wrong passion, and we have an ash heap to show. We have broken dreams, wrong ideas, and all kinds of pains, aches, shames, and failures. We have spent the fires of our life burning for the wrong things, and we only have a heap of ash to show.

He says, "I will take those ashes. I actually want them, and I will give you My beauty for your ashes." What a trade off! Any view of the grace of God that minimizes this foundational description of redemption that Jesus appealed to is missing a huge dimension of salvation. Moses spoke about it in Psalm 90, back 1,500 years before Christ, Moses had a glimpse of it, that the beauty of the Lord would be on us; that is where God was taking His people.

Now in our last session, session four, I gave four reasons why we are beautiful in God's sight, even in our weakness. You can look at our last session at mikebickle.org if you are first time here tonight.

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.

I am going to say the same thing I have already said three times, but I just like saying it. We grow in confidence in God when we feel loved by Him. When we feel beautiful in the grace of God in His eyes—though the eyes of men do not see that beauty, but He does—beloved, when you feel loved and you feel beautiful, you respond very differently with your free time and with your resources. What you do with your time and money is changed dramatically. What you do in your imagination, in the secret place of your own thought life, is really different if you feel beautiful and loved than if you feel shameful and dirty. Believers are in both camps, and it is a tragedy.

A person who feels dirty—I am talking about a born-again believer—they will live dirty, they will run from Him, they will not run to Him. They will hide from Him, to try to fix it on their own, and then come later when they

have a better offering, but that is futile. We come in our weakness, and we accept the truth of how He feels about us because of who He is and what He did.

We accept the beauty that He imparts, that even in the willing spirit we have He sees beauty in it. I tell you it changes the way that we process our life; our own imaginations, our thought life, the secret thought life is very different when it is rooted in this reality.

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)

The King now moves on, and in New Testament language the King obviously is Jesus speaking to His Bride, to His Church. He says, "You have dove's eyes." He says, "I love you, and you are beautiful. Let me tell you one thing I love about you. I love the fact that you have dove's eyes." This speaks of her being single-minded, and it speaks of her being loyal to Jesus.

He sees her single-mindedness, even in her weakness because in Song of Solomon 1 she is still at the beginning of her journey, but He sees the reach of her heart to be single-minded. Now she sets her heart to be single-minded, to have dove's eyes, to live in that focus, but she comes up short. Then she re-signs up, she comes up short, she re-signs up, she comes up short.

We say, "Lord, what are You going to do with me?"

*He says, "Oh, My fair one." My **beautiful** one is how most translations translate the word **fair**. My beautiful one, the one I love, I see your dove's eyes, even in your weakness. I see the re-signing up over and over. I see your desire to be loyal to Me.*

Beloved, when you see that He values even that re-signing up, it gives you all the new motivation you need to keep doing it. If you think that He looks at you and says, "I have had it! That is the last time. I told you before that it is ..." You have heard that voice, you know that tone. I mean it is all over the earth, that tone. "One more time and you are out of here. I have had it with you..." That is not the voice of our Beloved! That is not how He talks to His people.

- B. **Single-minded:** A dove has no peripheral vision. It only sees straight ahead. It is not distracted by what is happening at 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 their 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)

Now she responds to Him. She is so thrilled. In effect she says, "If You like me that much, it is only because Your personality is so beautiful. I mean anyone who likes a weak one like me with that kind of intensity must

have a unique beauty about who they are.” She declares back after these affirmations in verses 12-14, she says, “You are beautiful.” Again in this language here handsome or beautiful is the meaning.

Number one, You are beautiful. Number two, You are my Beloved, You are the One I have set my heart to love. Number three, I enjoy You. You are pleasant to me. Three foundational truths; He is beautiful, He is the One we set our heart to love, and we enjoy the relationship, He is pleasant.

- 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)

She begins her journey into being fascinated by God’s beauty. You know King David, the man after God’s own heart. He began a journey in his youth of being fascinated by God’s beauty. He said, “I seek this one thing: to behold His beauty.”

I am sad. I do not know how to get through the paradox, that we have so much language about love and beauty, and the sadness is it can become IHOPKC rhetoric instead of spiritual reality. Everybody that has been here a day and a half knows about beauty and love, and it is easy to say. Beloved, I want to appeal to your greatness and to your spiritual enjoyment of God. I want to appeal to the glory of God as well, for you to make it a real pursuit to behold His beauty, to see Him as the beautiful God who is pleasant.

I tell you it will be worth all the effort that you put into it. It is more than rhetoric. It is a genuine vision in her heart to pursue this lifestyle. She sees salvation as more than being forgiven, more than just blessed circumstances. Beloved, salvation is an invitation to live fascinated, for real, not just IHOPKC rhetoric. It is real! It is real.

Some of you have been here five or ten years. I’ve got good news; it is real. It is not just a poster. It is not just a CD. It is not just an album cover. It is real. When that becomes real to you, I mean in the secret place of your heart where you say, “I am going for it,” I tell you the way you view time and money and energy and opportunity changes when that vision to behold, to experience beauty becomes a personal vision in your life.

- 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 or focus on His love (Jn. 15:9-11).

⁹...abide in My love...¹¹These things I have spoken...that your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:9-11)

Now, so I do not overstate my own journey, I have had a hold of that understanding, I mean in a real grip, and then I have lost it. Then the Holy Spirit brings back, brings it back to my remembrance, and I sign back up. I go strong for some time, and I lose it again. Beloved, I know how to lose it—I have lost it a number of times—but I know what it means to sign back up. I have got good news for you; it works to sign back up. Some of you tonight have been here for years, and you need to sign back up. Some of you are new, and this needs to be a journey you begin tonight.

She says, “You are pleasant. You are not just beautiful and the One I love, but You are actually pleasant.” The more she sees of His beauty and love, the more she loves Him and the more she enjoys her relationship with God. O, the pleasure of loving God. Someone ought to write a book on that, the pleasure of loving God, the genuine pleasure. Not that it is so overwhelming that every other temptation and every negative thought is done

away with, but there is a pleasure despite the presence of the negative thoughts and the negative feelings. That pleasure of loving Him begins to dominate little by little as we stay with it. That is the place where obedience seems reasonable.

I tell you, when we enjoy the relationship, obedience seems reasonable. When we do not enjoy the relationship, obedience just feels like legalism, even when it is not. Legalism is kind of a code word for “do not press into God.” Most people that I have talked to over the years who use legalism to justify a spiritually passive life do not even know what legalism really is. It is just code for, “I do not want to press in.”

I want to encourage you—there is a reasonableness to pressing into God when we see He is pleasant, He is altogether lovely. Now there is real legalism, but the way I have heard it used in the last ten years or so it is mostly not by people that even understand the details of what it really is. Now I only say that so you do not get taken off the track and the journey by religious rhetoric even using that word.

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* or on a *luxuriant couch*. A green field is a luxuriant field or one with much growth. His couch is plush, green, and filled with life, not a parched desert.

¹⁶*You are handsome, my Beloved! Yes, pleasant! Our bed is green [couch is luxuriant, NAS].*

¹⁷*The 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” or in a mansion filled with beauty and strength.

²*In 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)*

Let's go on to Song of Solomon 2:2-7. Really Song of Solomon 1:12 - 2:7 is one big theme, and it is just delicious. I must have the greatest job on the earth! My job the last few days is to prepare these notes, to write, pray, cry, write, pray, cry, what a job! Anyway, let's go on. I am so grateful for these truths and being able to feel a little bit of the power of them. I am so jealous that you would feel the power of these. I know that some of you do, some of you long to, and some of you are starting to think, “Well, maybe it is not going to work for me.” That is a lie. It **will** work for you.

I thought for some years that it would work for everybody but me. I got the shock of my life when it began to work for me. It is not about you or me. It is about the power of the truth. It is the measure of the power of the truth, not my capacity or my proneness to it. Nobody is prone to it, and nobody has a natural capacity for spiritual truth. The power of the truth is why the breakthrough comes, if you stay with it.

I mean I really was depressed a few years thinking I would never enjoy the presence of God, the Bible was boring, prayer was miserable, and fasting was anathema. If you would have told me then that I would be doing what I am doing now, I would have just been in total despair. I am glad I stayed with it. The power of the truth warmed my cold heart. I mean I was on fire for God, but had a cold heart in these truths.

*The Father promised to give Jesus an inheritance. Song of Solomon 2:1-7 is about the inheritance, particularly verse 1-2. The Father knew the inheritance that Jesus wanted most. Beloved, I have got good news, the inheritance He wants most is not more property; He owns all the nations. He does not need more money. He does not want more power. He wants **you**. **You are the great prize of all the ages** which the Father promised to Him as His inheritance. When He promised the nations to Jesus, He was not talking about the real estate. He was talking about the people in the nations. He gets the real estate too, but that was already His. He wanted **you**.*

When it says that He will possess the nations, He wants to possess the people in the nations. That is what He is after. He so loves being loved by you, and He loves loving you. The Father knows what He wants. He says, "I have an inheritance for You. I've got a prize for You, and it is what You want. I know You best."

- 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 people—identified as the Bride (2:2).

¹I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. ²Like a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. (Song 2:1-2)

So now the Bride takes this stand. What a glorious statement! "I am the rose of Sharon; I am the lily of the valleys." This is the Bride speaking. She is making a confession of her life purpose and identity before the Lord as His inheritance.

Then the King speaks in agreement in verse 2. He says, "Yes, you are the lily."

In verse 1 the Bride says, "I am the rose and the lily."

In verse 2 the King says, "You are the lily. That is right, and you are a lily among the thorns of a fallen, sinful, dark world. You are in a deep valley of darkness among the thorns, but to Me you are the pure lily whom I want in this world." The rose speaks of her loving God with all of her heart. She is the rose. It speaks of her loving God. Of course there is movement in how you can apply this symbolism, but again it is in the love language of the agricultural society in which the Shulamite maiden is living. The King is coming to woo her to be His companion, His Bride.

1. **The rose:** The rose speaks of loving God with all our heart. A rose is the chief of flowers, being the one that communicates love because of its beauty and fragrance. Thus it is commonly used to celebrate weddings and wedding anniversaries.

*A rose is the chief of the flowers. It is the flower that communicates love because of its beauty and its fragrance. It is the flower that is commonly used to celebrate marriage and love. She is saying, "I am the celebration. I am what You celebrate. I love You. I am Your rose. I am the great prize of all the ages that the Father has cultivated for You. The inheritance He promised You, it is me!" It is **you**, beloved! When you see yourself in that light, everything is different about your life.*

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).

¹⁷To Adam He said, "...cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it... ¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you..." (Gen. 3:17-18)

She says, "I am not only the rose, I am the lily." It speaks of purity or obeying God with all of our heart. She is the lily of the valley, the valley of the dark places of this fallen world.

It goes on in verse 2 where the King says, "You are a lily among thorns." The thorns speak of the fallenness of this sinful world. In the midst of the valley of darkness, in the midst of the thorns, you are the pure people, the people of God. He is saying, in essence, "My people in the nations—that is where they are salt and light—they are the source of purity, My purity released into the nations." Beloved, even in our weakness that purity is still there. We want it in a greater way in our everyday lifestyle, but it is already the cry of our heart to have it. There is already a token and an expression of its growth in our life.

- 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. The Bride is the great prize of all the ages that Jesus awaits. 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 the Jesus desires.

*The Bride's first confession was back in Song of Solomon 1:5, where she says, "I am dark in my heart, but I am lovely to God." This is her second confession. She sees her life purpose, "I am the rose. I am the inheritance. I am not just dark, but lovely, because of His graciousness. I am the rose. I am the lily. I am the inheritance. I am what He **wants**, not just one that He forgave. I am the one He **wants**." You can see a progression in her growth of understanding through the Song.*

- E. Our identity is based on the way we define our value or measure our success. Our primary identity is to be found in our relationship with Jesus. Our identity and success are found in being desired by God and in loving Him, not in our recognition and accomplishments before people.

Our identity, and her identity, is as the rose and the lily, the one who loves Him, the one who is committed to obey Him. Our identity determines the way we define our value and the measure of our success. How successful are you? What is the measure of your success?

Well, by nature we measure our success by our accomplishments in the eyes of men. If we make a big impact whatever sphere of life we are in, if we get recognition and make an impact, then we are successful. If we get money, whatever sphere we are in, if we get recognition, money, accomplishment. But He sees differently.

Our identity is being the rose and lily. When we grow in love as the rose and in purity as the lily, beloved, we are more successful unrelated to what we accomplish in the eyes of men. Our influence in the eyes of men may be decreasing, but our heart is increasing. I have good news for you: you are actually more successful. Now we do not need to make a point of decreasing. Some people, not many I have seen, try on purpose to decrease

everything so they feel more humble. I say, “No, go for the full blessing of what God will give you, but do not measure your life by it. Measure your life by growing as the rose and the lily.”

- F. Our primary success comes from being desired by God and in 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. By seeing that we are *His rose and lily* breaks a 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)

So she says, I am the rose. Then He says, you are. Yeah I am the rose, the lily; that is verse 1. Verse 2, He say that she is the lily. They are going back and forth, and now in verse 3 she is talking. She says, “You are that refreshing apple tree. That is what my Beloved is like among the sons of men. Among all the men of the human race, there is none other who refreshes like my Beloved refreshes.”

The Bride declared to the King that the King is the apple tree who refreshes her heart. Beloved, when you really believe He refreshes your heart more than all the others, this one truth will change marriage. I have seen a number of devout young women, they fall in love, and accidentally their young husband in their young marriage, he becomes, he usurps ever so slightly, and suddenly he moves into that place. The bride, the young bride, becomes shocked that he cannot satisfy her in the way she hoped.

Beloved, no matter how beloved your beloved is, there is only One who is the apple tree among the sons of men. There is only One who satisfies fully. When we understand that, it changes. We do not try to get that from a friendship. We do not get that out of a relationship. We get a secondary pleasure, but not the primary satisfaction. This one issue I have seen has been paramount whether in friendships or in marriages, getting this truth straight. I have seen many people trying to find the apple of refreshing in the primary way from another, not from Him who alone is the apple tree among the trees of the woods.

Verse 4, she says, I sat down in His shade, Oh, when I sat down in His shade, this is how refreshing He is—with great delight. I tell you, when He gives you delight, then you can enjoy relationships with others far better. Your friendships, your marriage, all of your important relationships will have far more delight when there is a chief delight that you both share together in Him.

His fruit is sweet to my taste, He brought me to the banqueting table, and His leadership over me is love. Then she cries out, “Sustain me, refresh me for my heart is sick with love.” Meaning, I have been touched and I want more, I long for more. The “sick with love” has a pain dimension, not just a feeling of satisfaction. When the love of God touches you, there is the paradox. It satisfies you, but leaves you longing and aching for more, because your capacity to experience increases. So the more love you touch, the deeper the satisfaction, and the greater the longing for more love because your capacity to experience increases, so you are in the continual paradox of encountering but ever longing for more. That is what lovesickness is. I have a little bit more of this in the additional notes on each of the sessions.

- 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.

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

As we sit before the Lord, we experience more of His delight, of His presence. Beloved, when we sit before Him—there is no substitute for time spent talking to Him, your Bible open! We've got such an incredible situation with an anointed prayer room, not that you have to be in a prayer room. I do not spend all of my time talking to God in the prayer room, meaning I talk to God outside of the prayer room. I mean that in this environment, with my Bible open and an anointed worship team, sitting before Him I have found many moments of great delight.

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).

³⁹**Mary...sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word...** ⁴¹**Jesus answered, "One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Lk. 10:39-42)**

Jesus declared the wisdom of Mary of Bethany's life. Jesus said that she choose the good thing, the needed thing. Nobody can choose it for you. Beloved, when you choose that lifestyle—I do not mean that is all you do all day, everyday, and that is the only thing you do—but this is a premiere part of your lifestyle where you are encountering Him. You sit before Him, you take times to develop the dialogue between your heart and His with an open Bible talking to Him, and that is the Mary of Bethany lifestyle.

- D. Jesus' banner or leadership over her life was to lead her to experience and express His love (2:4).

⁴**He 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.

He brought me to the banqueting table. His banner, His leadership, over me is love. Jesus' plan for us is to lead us to the banqueting table where we celebrate His love for us, and we celebrate our love for Him.

2. **Banner:** In the ancient world, armies marched in battalions under a flag or banner. The banner over our life is Jesus' leadership that 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, financial increase, ministry influence, etc. His banner for our life is to grow in understanding and impartation of His love.

The banner is His leadership. There is so much about the banqueting table and His banner over me. I have a bit more of it on the additional notes, that when the enemy comes against us, and the enemy says that God has

forsaken us or things are going bad, I confess His banner over Me, that His leadership over me is love. He is always leading me by love and leading me to love, always no matter what the devil says.

- E. The Bride cried out for greater encounter with God's love (2:5). She became sick with love; thus 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.

⁵ ***Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. (Song 2:5)***

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

- A. Now that she is lovesick, the Bride sees new dimensions in 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."

⁶ ***His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me. (Song 2:6)***

She says in verse 6, His left hand is under my head, His right hand embraces me.

- B. ***Left hand of God:*** This speaks of the activity of God that we cannot see with our natural eyes. It is the hand that is "under" her head and, 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.

The left hand of God speaks of the activity of God we cannot see. The left hand is under her head; she cannot perceive it or see that hand. It is out of her view. God withholds many things that can harm us, and He blesses us in many ways we do not see. I call it the left hand of God. There are so many blessings in your life today. For example, the car wreck a year ago you did not get killed in, and that is why you are sitting here today. The left hand of God is constantly intervening in things we cannot see. You have not thought about that car wreck, have you?

- 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.

The right hand of God that is in front of her is the activity of God we can see, that sweet, discernible blessing of God. So when she is filled with love, she begins to see the right and the left hand, and she begins to value both. With the paradigm of love and beauty, we have a whole new perspective of the right and the left hand of God.

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.

⁷ ***I 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)***

Then in verse 7, I see this as the Holy Spirit speaking. He says, "O daughters of Jerusalem," and I describe a little bit here what this is about; you can read it on your own. He says, "Do not disturb her. Do not disturb her."

- 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 by their opinions and judgments. The Spirit tells those who were insensitive to His ways not to disturb the Bride from 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 NAS accurately translates the phrase as “Don’t awaken love until *she* pleases.”
- D. **Gazelles or does:** The Spirit charged them by the gazelles or does of the field (2:7). A gazelle or doe has a sensitive nature and can be easily startled. Gazelles or does speaks 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.

What is going on here is that the daughters of Jerusalem do not have discernment about the operation of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. They do not know the different seasons in a person's life. There are different seasons in your life. Beloved, there are a lot of folks urging you to do stuff. The Lord might say, "It is not even the season you are in. Do not disturb her. I have her at the table feeding at My table, enjoying My presence. I am building something in her in her history in God. I do not want some well-meaning believer to go tell her what she ought to be doing now. Leave her alone," is what the Spirit is saying. "I am building a history in her. I have many things to do with her in the days to come."

Many of you are in that season, well, you are always in a season where you sit at the table, but some of you are in that season at the table more than doing other things. Beloved, stay in the season. I have a little bit more about this on the handout here, you can read later and again on the additional handout as well. Amen, Let's end with that; let's stand.

- 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.