

Session 9 The Ultimate Twofold Test of Maturity (Song 5:2-16)

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I. REVIEW: THE BRIDE’S CRY FOR THE INCREASE OF GOD’S PRESENCE IN HER LIFE

- A. The Bride prayed for both the north winds of adversity and the south winds of blessing to come to the garden of her heart so that the spices of grace—God’s presence—might flow from her to others. The answer to her prayer for the *north winds* came in the twofold test of Song 5:3-7.
- ¹⁶Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let My Beloved come to His garden and eat its pleasant fruits. (Song 4:16)***
- B. Verse 16 is the turning point in the Song. The Song of Solomon has two main sections.
1. Song 1-4 is focused on God’s people as the Bride receiving *her inheritance* in God.
 2. Song 5-8 is focused on God as the Bridegroom receiving *His inheritance* in His people.
- C. The Lord has an inheritance in His people (Eph. 1:18). The garden of the Bride’s heart becomes *His* garden, as she sees her life as *His* rather than her own.
- D. The King revealed Himself to the Bride as the Jesus of Gethsemane (5:2), and asked her to open her heart *to Him* to experience new dimensions of intimacy in the fellowship of His sufferings.
- ¹⁰... that I may know Him...and the fellowship of His sufferings... (Phil. 3:10)***
1. Although we are to share in the fellowship of His sufferings, there are several wrong ways in which God’s people approach suffering. Some receive all the suffering that comes, even when it is an attack of the enemy that should be resisted.
 2. The New Testament mainly refers to suffering as persecution for Jesus’ sake.
- E. The Bride responded in obedience (5:3-5), which was followed by a twofold test. First the King tested her by withdrawing the sense of His presence (5:6); then He allowed the spiritual authorities to mistreat her and take her ministry away (5:7).

II. THE CALL TO GREATER INTIMACY: THE FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING (5:2)

- A. The King described Himself as the one who suffered in a dark lonely night, with His hair covered with dew. This description points to Jesus enduring the dark, lonely night of Gethsemane.
- ²I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my Beloved! He knocks, saying, “Open for Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one; for My head is covered with dew, My locks [hair] with the drops of the night.” (Song 5:2)***
- B. ***Open for Me***: The King knocked on the door of her heart (5:2) in answer to her prayer for the north winds (4:16). His knock is an invitation to bring her forward in new dimensions of the Spirit.
- ²⁰I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)***

- C. ***I sleep***: She rests with confidence in the King’s leadership. Her heart is awake to spiritual things as she walks in obedience. We are to be spiritually awake (1 Thes. 5:6; cf. Rom. 13:11).
- D. The King empowered her to open to Him by calling her by four names that describe different facets of her love and devotion to Him. His affirmation strengthens her resolve to obey Him fully.
- ²***He knocks, saying, “Open for Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one...” (Song 5:2)***
1. ***My sister***: This signifies His identification with her humanity. He endured indescribable suffering to be like His brethren in all things (Heb. 2:11-17). Jesus understands us and has great sympathy for us in our struggle; He sees us through eyes of sympathy and mercy.
 2. ***My love***: He reminds her of His tender love for her. Experiencing His affection inspires the most consistent obedience, because a person moved by love will endure anything for love.
 3. ***My dove***: The dove speaks of her singleness of mind and loyal love without compromise.
 4. ***My perfect one***: The King saw that her heart was set to obey Him perfectly. Being perfect implies maturity. She has mature obedience before this test (5:2) and after it (6:9).

III. THE BRIDE RESPONDS TO JESUS IN FULL OBEDIENCE (5:3-5)

- A. The Bride responded by instantly rising up in obedience to the King (5:3-5).
- ³***I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?*** ⁴***My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for Him.*** ⁵***I arose to open for my Beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh...on the handles of the lock.*** (Song 5:3-5)
- B. Her responsive love to the King is seen throughout this passage. He called her *My perfect one* (5:2) because of her obedience in arising to open her heart to Him (5:5) with her heart yearning with love for Him (5:4) and leaping when He spoke (5:6), in being lovesick (5:8), and in magnifying His great beauty (5:10-16).
1. His affirmation after this testing makes it clear that she responded in obedience (6:4-5).
 2. Some interpret verse 3 as compromise, assuming that her refusal to put her garments on and defile her feet meant that she wanted to stay in bed because of the inconvenience of rising.
- C. ***Taken off my robe***: She responded in obedience, refusing to put on her own robe of righteousness (5:3). She refused to wear her own garments. In the language of the New Testament, she took off her garments and put on His righteousness. Our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). He clothed us with His righteousness (Isa. 61:10). Joshua the high priest exchanged his filthy clothing for garments of salvation (Zech. 3:3-5).
- D. ***I have washed my feet***: She washed her feet “in His grace” and refusing to dirty them again (5:3). She refused to defile her feet again with compromise. Jesus told Peter that he was clean and only needed to have his feet cleansed (Jn. 13:6-14). This spoke of his need for daily spiritual cleansing.

- E. ***His hand by the latch of the door***: The hand of God released grace on the latch, or lock, of the door of her heart. The lock on our heart speaks of the thoughts and emotions that affect our decisions. God’s hand resting on His people speaks of His grace (Acts 11:21-23).
⁴My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door...⁵I arose to open for my Beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. (Song 5:4-5)
²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them [at Antioch]...²²They sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. ²³When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad... (Acts 11:21-23)
- F. ***Her hands and fingers drip with myrrh***: Myrrh was a fragrant burial spice that was often used in the ancient world. Her fingers dripped with myrrh, representing an active faith at work in practical ways. This speaks of dying to our selfish ambition to embrace the cross in our life. This speaks of grace to help her embrace the difficulty of the coming twofold test.

IV. FIRST TEST: THE KING WITHDREW HIS MANIFEST PRESENCE FROM HER (5:6)

- A. In this test, the Lord withdrew the sense of His manifest presence from her heart (5:6).
⁶I opened for my Beloved, but my Beloved had turned away and was gone...I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer. (Song 5:6)
- B. ***I sought Him***: Though she sought Him fervently by calling out to Him, she could not find Him. In this season of temporary *divine silence* the Lord was training her and causing her love to mature.
- C. The Lord temporarily hid Himself from the Bride on two occasions in the Song (3:1-2; 5:6). In Song 3:1-2, His manifest presence lifted from her related to her disobedience, but in Song 5:6 it relates to her mature obedience. Some Bible teachers in the Middle Ages referred to this as *the dark night of the soul*; it is not a biblical term, but a term some used to refer to the experience of God temporarily withholding His manifest presence from those who walk in obedience.
- D. Jesus promised never to leave us (Heb. 13:5), but He sometimes withdraws the discernible feelings of His manifest presence to test us and to bringing our love to greater maturity.
⁵For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)
- E. Job, the most righteous man on earth, was tested resulting deep intimacy with God (Job 1:8; 42:5).
⁸The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” (Job 1:8)
⁵“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. (Job 42:5)
- F. David walked in obedience as a young man (1 Sam. 18-19) and then suddenly entered a season of persecution and great discouragement (1 Sam. 20-31). Similarly, Joseph, in a place of faith and obedience, was cast into a pit on two occasions as God prepared him for leadership (Gen. 37-50).
These men were not being disciplined for compromised but tested because of their high calling.
¹⁷He sent a man before them—Joseph... ¹⁸They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons. ¹⁹until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. (Ps. 105:17–19)

V. SECOND TEST: THE BRIDE LOST HER PLACE OF MINISTRY (5:7)

- A. The Bride's ministry was taken away (5:7). This test involved having her ministry rejected by her spiritual leaders who struck and wounded her.

⁷*The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me. (Song 5:7)*

- B. **The watchmen:** The watchmen and keepers of the walls guarded the walls of the city to protect God's people; they speak of those who are the spiritual authorities in our lives.
- C. **Took my veil away:** The leaders took away her veil, signifying the removal of her spiritual covering and, therefore, her place of function in the Body (1 Cor. 11:10).

VI. THE BRIDE'S RESPONSE: SHE IS LOVESICK, NOT OFFENDED (5:8)

- A. The Bride responded to the King with love and to others with humility (5:8). In essence, the King was asking her, "Will you be Mine even if I withhold the things you deeply desire? Are you Mine when you cannot feel My Presence? Will you still love and trust Me when your circumstances bring about disappointment?" Her response was, "I love and trust You. I am not offended."

⁸*O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved...tell Him that I am lovesick! (Song 5:8)*

- B. She was sick with love for the King, rather than being offended by Him (Mt. 11:6). The watchmen wounded her but it did not result in wounding her relationship with the King.

⁶*Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me [Jesus]. (Mt. 11:6)*

- C. **Lovesick for God:** This includes loving Jesus Himself more than His favor and blessing on our circumstances, ministry, finances, relationships, etc. It includes deeply desiring to encounter Jesus more than we currently do, and being sick, or pained, over anything that hinders our love for Him.

VII. THE DAUGHTERS' FIRST QUESTION: WHY DO YOU LOVE HIM SO MUCH? (5:9)

- A. The spiritually immature daughters asked the Bride questions throughout the Song. They saw that she was lovesick for the King in the midst of her troubles, rather than being offended or depressed.

⁹*What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O fairest [most beautiful] among women?
What is your Beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us? (Song 5:9)*

- B. **What is your Beloved:** In essence, the daughters of Jerusalem asked the Bride, "Why do you love Him so much that you charge us to go find Him? He has abandoned you. He took His presence from you (5:6) and let the elders wound you as they took your ministry from you (5:7)." They wanted to know why she was so loyal to Him and what she knew about Him that they didn't.

- C. **Other beloveds:** The daughters had "other beloveds" that were more important to them than Jesus. Other loves in the lives of believers include people, ministry, money, leisure, pleasure, power, prominence, and comfort. Many sincere believers love these things more than Jesus.

VIII. THE MAJESTIC SPLendor OF THE KING (5:10-16)

- A. The Bride answered the daughters' question by proclaiming the King's beauty (5:10-16) in one of the greatest statements of Jesus' beauty in the Scripture. The Bride's answer revealed her spirit of obedience and love for the King. She used metaphors of the human body and agricultural images to convey ten attributes of the King's personality, each having two descriptions.

¹⁰*My beloved is white [radiant, NIV; dazzling, NAS]...and chief among ten thousand. ¹¹*His head is like the finest gold; His locks are wavy... ¹²*His eyes are like doves... ¹³*His cheeks are like a bed of spices ...His lips are lilies... ¹⁴*His hands are rods of gold...His body is carved ivory... ¹⁵*His legs are pillars of marble...His countenance is like Lebanon... ¹⁶*His mouth is most sweet, Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my friend... (Song 5:10-16)*******

- B. The Bride began with a general statement of the King's beauty (5:10), went on to develop ten attributes of His personality (5:11-15), and ended with a summary statement (5:16).

1. *He is radiant and chief*: The Lord is incomparably superior to all others (5:10)
2. *His head*: The Lord's sovereign leadership over all
3. *His locks*: The Lord's dedication to God and His Church
4. *His eyes*: The Lord's infinite knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and discernment
5. *His cheeks*: The Lord's diverse emotional makeup
6. *His lips*: God's Word
7. *His hands*: The Lord's divine activity
8. *His body*: The Lord's tender compassion
9. *His legs*: The Lord's walk and the administration of His purposes
10. *His countenance*: God's impartation to His people
11. *His mouth*: The Lord's intimate relationship with His people who draw near to Him
12. *He is altogether lovely*: The Lord's outstanding beauty (5:16)

- C. As we become familiar with these truths, we are able to speak them *to Jesus* to express our love for Him, *to the devil* when he lies to us about the nature of God, *to ourselves* in time of temptation and discouragement, and *to others* when they are in need of encouragement to trust and love Jesus.

- D. She starts with a general statement about Jesus' beauty (5:10). His beauty is fascinating—the NIV translates “white” as “radiant” and the NAS translates it as “dazzling.” He is ruddy (red), a reference to His humanity; He understands our difficulty, having endured suffering as a man (Heb. 2:11-17). He is “chief among ten thousand,” denoting His incomparable superiority.

¹⁰*My Beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand. (Song 5:10)*

- E. *Altogether lovely*: In summary she states that the King is altogether lovely and that the One she loves is her friend. Not only is He radiant in majesty, He also humbled Himself to be our friend.

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

IX. THE DAUGHTERS' SECOND QUESTION: WHERE IS HE? (6:1)

- A. The conversation that began between the Bride and the daughters in Song 5:8 continues here. When the daughters saw how much insight the Bride had about the King (5:10-16), they realized that she knew much more about Him than they did, and so they asked her a second question: where is your Beloved that we may seek Him like you do? They wanted to know Him like she did.
¹Where has your Beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your Beloved turned aside, that we may seek Him with you? (Song 6:1)
- B. ***Where:*** The Bride's answer in Song 5:10-16 caused the daughters to change their question from *what is He?* (5:9) to *where can we find Him?* The Bride had once asked the daughters to help her find the King (5:8); now it is reversed as the daughters ask *her* to help them find the King (6:1).
- C. The Bride's testing resulted in the lives of others being dramatically changed. We never know who is watching us as we love and trust Jesus in our difficulties, or how our loving obedience may inspire them to find grace and blessing in Him. The Holy Spirit is raising up lovesick worshipers who know Jesus in a way that will deeply impact others and bring His blessing upon their lives.

X. JESUS PRAISES HER AFTER THE SEASON OF TESTING (6:4-5)

- A. The King broke the silence that began in Song 5:6 and responded to the Bride with extravagant love by revealing what He thought about her during her struggle (6:4-10). Her twofold test is over.
⁴O My love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! ⁵Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me. (Song 6:4-5)
1. ***Tirzah:*** He declared that she was as beautiful as Tirzah, which became the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.
 2. ***Jerusalem:*** He declared that she was as lovely as Jerusalem, the capital of Israel spiritually and politically.
 3. ***Awesome as an army with banners:*** In the ancient world, when a victorious army returned from battle, they displayed their banners in a military procession. Here in the Song, the Bride has defeated her greatest enemies—those found in her heart.
- B. Jesus is “conquered” by His Bride's extravagant love. Our eyes of devotion touch His heart. All the armies of hell cannot conquer Jesus, but the eyes of His Bride overcome, or “conquer,” Him when she is true to Him in times of testing. Do you know the way you move His heart?
⁵Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me. (Song 6:5)

XI. 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?