

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

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

*This is session nine, Song of Solomon 5, and we will be going through the whole chapter. Just a quick review for those who are new with us to get you up-to-date with what is going on. Because the eight-chapter book of Song of Solomon is an eight-chapter love song, you can interpret it as a natural love story, which is how it was meant originally by Solomon. You can also interpret it with a spiritual interpretation, using New Testament truths to understand, highlight, and focus on truths. It is an eight-chapter love song, and the maiden—the Bride—is maturing throughout the eight chapters. There is a progression in her maturity and love for Jesus. We are at the turning point of the book right now.*

- 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.

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

*In the last session the Bride had prayed for the north winds of adversity and the south winds of blessing to come to the garden of her heart, because she wanted the spices of God’s presence to flow from her, that she would be His garden and not just her own garden. Up until that point in time she viewed her life—the garden of her life—as her own. The Lord was blessing her life, but from this point on she says, “My garden, it is yours. I am your garden. I am wholly yours. I am your inheritance.”*

*In Song of Solomon 4:16 she prays, “Blow, north winds of adversity, and blow, south winds of blessing. Blow on my garden, that the spice of His presence would flow out. Let my Beloved come to His garden. It used to be mine, but now it is His.”*

*The answer to this prayer from Song of Solomon 4:16 comes right here in Song of Solomon 5. Immediately after she prays for the north winds, He says, “Okay, I will come, and I will test you with the north winds.”*

- 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.

*Verse 16 is the turning point in the song. I have said this a number of times, but it is so important that you get this if you want to interpret the song spiritually. I believe, in a really helpful way, that there are two sections to the Song. Number one, Song of Solomon 1-4, is God’s people as a Bride receiving her inheritance in God, the Bride receiving her inheritance in God.*

*Number two, the next four chapters is the Bridegroom receiving His inheritance in His people. Again most of us, and naturally so, we think of our inheritance in Him. That is so important. A million years from now we will still be focused on that truth. We will never outgrow that, but it is not the entire truth. There is another dimension to the truth; He has an inheritance in us.*

- 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.

<sup>10</sup> *... that I may know Him...and the fellowship of His sufferings... (Phil. 3:10)*

*What happens in Song of Solomon 5—just to kind of give you a snapshot of it before we look at it—is that the King reveals Himself, in the New Testament language we would say as “the Jesus of Gethsemane.” Paul prayed, “Oh, that I would know the fellowship of His sufferings! Oh, that I would join in with Jesus and know the intimacy of sacrificially bringing my all to the relationship, even when it cost me and hurts me, to do it for love.” So in that general sense, I am calling this “the Jesus of Gethsemane.” He went to the cross for love. He gave His all for love, costly, painful. Now we do not go to the cross in the sense He did because He did it for us, but He says that in response to His sacrificial love, we are to bear the cross, that is, to walk out love in our everyday life.*

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.

*Number one, there are several wrong ways that God’s people may approach the subject of suffering. Some people think all suffering is good, and so they thank God for it. We do not thank God for the suffering. We thank God that He has a solution, an answer, and a plan in the suffering.*

*A lot of suffering is the attack of the devil, and we are supposed to rebuke and resist it, not thank God for it. When the devil knocks on your door and offers you a snake to destroy your family, do not say, “Thank You, God. Come on in, snake.” Rather say, “In the name of Jesus, I rebuke you and command you to go.”*

2. The New Testament mainly refers to suffering as persecution for Jesus’ sake.

*Number two, most of the suffering in the New Testament is persecution. There is a suffering that is costly obedience, meaning obedience based in love that costs us a lot, and we willingly choose that lifestyle for the sake of love. That is what is going on here.*

- 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).

*She is tested in two ways. I call it the ultimate twofold test. First, she is tested by the Lord withdrawing a sense of His presence from her. He does not ever draw His presence from her in the real sense, but she cannot feel Him like she used to. The Lord is not angry with her at all. It is not because she is disobedient. What He is really saying to her is, “Will you serve Me no matter what is happening? Will you still love Me? Or do you only love Me if you feel good in the relationship, if you feel My presence? Will you love Me no matter what?” That is what the Lord is drawing out of her.*

*Second, He allowed the spiritual authorities to take her ministry away. These are the two things she wanted back in the first chapter of Song of Solomon. First, I want You to draw me, I want to be near Your presence, I want to touch You and connect with You. Second, I want to run together with other people after You. I want to be effective in ministry. That was her twofold vision at the very beginning of the Song. She wants to enjoy His presence, and she wants a ministry that is partnering with Him to touch others. Both of these are temporarily lifted.*

*The north wind comes, and He says, “Will you still love Me when you are not getting things the way that you thought they would come?” This is a dimension that every believer who is going to go on into mature love will*

face probably a couple of times over the course of some decades. It is not an everyday test, but there are seasons where the Lord says, “This is what we are talking about.”

## **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.

***<sup>2</sup>I 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)***

*Let’s begin a closer look at the chapter itself. I just gave you a snapshot of where it is going; now let’s look at it. She said, “I was asleep, but my heart was awake. Suddenly here is the voice of my Beloved! It is His voice again. He knocks, and He says, ‘Open up for Me.’”*

*He gives her this fantastic fourfold affirmation. You are My sister. You are the one I love. You are My dove. You are My perfect one. He says, “I see that you have prayed, ‘Let the north winds come! Let the south winds come!’” You are “perfect” means you are mature in love. He says that He sees that in her.*

*Then He shows a different part of Himself than she has never seen before. His head is covered with the dew of the night, with the drops of the night. He is in the dark night. “My hair is covered with the drops of the night.” He is in the dark, lonely night. Again in the New Testament language, this is the Jesus of Gethsemane where He sweats drops of blood in the lonely, dark night.*

*She is looking at Him, thinking, “I have seen You on the mountaintop. I have come to peace about going with You on the mountains.”—That is the last couple of chapters—“But I have never seen You with Your head and Your hair wet with the dew of the night because of being in the dark, lonely night alone. I do not know this part of You.”*

*He say, “Open up to Me. I want you to know Me in deeper ways than you know now. Not just at the table, not just on the mountaintop, not just in the city, but I want you to know Me even in the darkness of that lonely night.”*

- 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.

***<sup>20</sup>I 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).

*She said, “I sleep, but my heart was awake.” What she is saying here in the New Testament language is that she is resting with confidence in the King’s leadership. She says, “I sleep.” Of course in the natural love story, in the love poem, it has a different application, speaking just of their relationship together. In this spiritual application, this is like when Jesus slept in the storm with full confidence.*

*She slept, but her heart was awake. She says, “My heart was awake. I am spiritually awake, but I am resting. I am asleep with confidence. I have no fear. I am not afraid of the north winds anymore. I am not afraid of the south winds. I want them both to come. I want the fullness of Your fragrance to come out of my life.”*

- 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.

<sup>2</sup>**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).

*He empowers her to open up to Him. In other words, He calls her to move forward in this new dimension of intimacy of the fellowship of suffering by calling her four different names. These names are affirming her and her love, strengthening her resolve not to draw back. He is saying in essence, “I love you, and I know you love Me. We are here together. It is real.” He says, “Open for Me,”—in other words, embrace Me in this new way. Do not draw back from Me. Do not run from Me. “Open up to me,” and she does.*

*He calls her, “My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one.” When He says, “My sister,” this signifies His identification with her humanity. It reminds us that Jesus is not just our God, but He is also a fellow human being. With sympathy He understands our struggle, our plight. He has mercy and tenderness. He does not look at our struggle with the north wind coming with a new dimension of costly obedience and say, “Hey, get with it! I mean, I am Jesus! I am God!” No, He says, “Oh I understand! I walked in that lonely night. O My sister, My fellow human.” He is our Brother. We are brothers and sisters in that human bond that we have with Him.*

*Then He says, “My love.” He reminds her of His tender love. And He says, “My dove.” He says, “I see your loyal love. I see the loyalty that you have for Me in the very prayer that you just prayed (in Song of Solomon 4:16) asking for the north wind.”*

*Then He says in number four, “You are My perfect one,” or you are My mature one. He calls her, “My perfect one” before this test and right afterwards in Song of Solomon 6:9. He is saying, “You are perfect in love on both sides of the test.” In my opinion it is important to see that she was perfect in love, that she was operating as His dove, the one that He loves, in order to interpret this chapter correctly.*

### 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).

<sup>3</sup>***I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?*** <sup>4</sup>***My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for Him.*** <sup>5</sup>***I arose to open for my Beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh...on the handles of the lock. (Song 5:3-5)***

*The Bride instantly arose in obedience to the King. She says in verse 3, “I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them again?” She is not resisting Him. You will see that in a moment. Some people see verse 3 as resistance; this is one of the main verses that people take two different positions on.*

*In verse 4, she is saying, “But my Beloved put His hand by the door of my heart, by the lock on the door of my heart. And my heart yearned for Him. I longed for Him. I loved Him. I arose to open for Him.” She instantly responds to Him in love. “My hands were dripping with the myrrh and on the handles of the lock of the door.” In the natural love story she opens a door, but in the spiritual interpretation, it is the door of her heart she is opening, and that myrrh is dripping on the door of her heart.*

*We know myrrh speaks of that fellowship of suffering or that costly obedience throughout the book. Notice in verse 5, she rose to open immediately for her Beloved, which was the very thing He longed for. Her heart is yearning for Him. She is not drawing back in fear or in compromise.*

- 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.

*Her responsive love to the King is seen throughout this whole passage. I want you to catch this, because the whole storyline changes whether you see her as obedient right now or you see her as disobedient and being disciplined again. I do not think she is going through a season of disobedience and discipline. I think that is the wrong interpretation, though I appreciate the many who have that view. It is very opposite of what is happening.*

*He called her, My perfect one—My mature one—because of her obedience and rising to open her heart to Him. It says in verse 5 that she opened her heart to Him, just as her heart yearned for Him in verse 4. So she opened her heart to Him.*

*She yearned for Him, and her heart leaped up in verse 6. We will see in a few moments in verse 8 that she is lovesick. In verses 10-16, she magnifies His great beauty. So she is absolutely connected to Him and just overwhelmed with His glory and His beauty. She is not drawing back in fear, not in the slightest.*

- 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).

*She says, “I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again?” She is responding in obedience by refusing to put on her own robe of righteousness. She is saying, in effect, “I have done it my way before. I am not doing it that way again. My feet are clean. I am not going to go back and make them dirty again. That is not going to happen.” She refuses to relate to Him on the basis of her own garments. Our righteousness, the Scripture says, is like a filthy rag, so we are clothed now in the robe of Jesus’ righteousness. Here she says, “I have taken off my garments.” That is, I have put on Your garments. That is what is happening here.*

- D. **I have washed my feet:** She washed her feet “in His grace” and refused 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).

<sup>4</sup>*My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door...<sup>5</sup>I 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)*

<sup>21</sup>*And the hand of the Lord was with them [at Antioch]...<sup>22</sup>They sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. <sup>23</sup>When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad... (Acts 11:21-23)*

*His hand is by the latch or the lock of the door of her heart. His hand is touching her heart. The hand of God in Scripture often releases grace. It speaks of grace and releases grace. For example, in Acts 11, when the hand of the Lord was on the city of Antioch, they witnessed the grace of God resting on them. The hand of God speaks of the presence of the grace of God. The release of grace on the lock of her heart helped her open it. His hand is there on the door, helping her.*

- 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.

*Her hands and fingers were dripping with myrrh. This speaks of grace to help her embrace the difficulty because the hands and the fingers speak of the activity of her faith. These verses speak of the myrrh on her hands and the lock of her heart, and His hand is touching her, helping her to embrace the difficulty of this coming twofold test that is going to begin immediately in verse 6-7.*

#### **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).

***I 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)

*The first test we find in verse 6. "I opened for my Beloved, but He turned away and was gone." My heart leaped when He spoke. I leaped when He spoke. I did not draw back when He spoke. I rose up when He spoke. She is feeling, "It is so different because I sought Him, but I cannot find Him. I called Him, and He gave me no answer." In this test He withdraws the sense of His manifest presence from her heart or diminishes it in one sense. There is not an exact way that He does it every time in this sort of testing, but it is the principle that we are pointing to.*

*Some of you have known this experience. I certainly have experienced this, and I am sure many of you have. You are seeking the Lord with all of your heart. Yes, there is immaturity, but you have committed to obey all the areas. Still you do not sense His presence touching your heart. You know He is with you, but there is this divine silence. Lord, what is wrong, what is wrong? The answer is, "There is nothing wrong, I am drawing you out in love actually. I am actually using this in a temporary way. Will you actually love Me whether you feel it or not? Are you in it just for the feelings? Am I just a means to your ends?"*

*We say that, "Yes, You are a means to our ends. You are the ultimate means, but You are not only a means to our end. You **are the end as well**. You are the gold, not just the means to a happy life. We are not just using You to get blessed spiritually forever; we actually are being consumed by You. You are the gold, not just our blessing forever in Your salvation," though that salvation is glorious and to be rejoiced in and never minimized.*

- 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.

*I sought Him. This temporary season of divine silence was a part of His training to cause her love to mature more. Divine silence is a topic you do not hear many messages on. I have not heard many, and I do not want to hear that many, to be honest. God is silent at times in the lives of His most honored and used saints through history. There were times of silence, and they were tested in the silence. It says about Joseph in Psalm 105:17-19 that the Word of God tested him when he was in prison. He did not hear anything, but the Word of God tested him.*

God says to us, “Do you believe what I told you in days past?”

“Yes, I do, but Lord, I want You to retell me.”

He says, “No, I want you to believe what I told you, to believe what My written Word says, and to believe what I have spoken to you in a personal way in days gone by.”

*This is a season of temporary divine silence. Not total divine silence, but it’s that feeling that He is not saying anything. I have heard that many times over the years. Sometimes it is the Song of Solomon 3 discipline where the Lord is saying, “We are not in agreement. I am trying to get your attention.” Sometimes it is the Song of Solomon 5 testing, bringing forth maturity, which is a very different reality.*

- 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.

*The Lord hid Himself from the Bride on two occasions in the Song, in Song of Solomon chapters 3 and 5, as I just said. In Song of Solomon 3 it was because of disobedience. She drew back in fear, but it was still disobedience. Here He hides because of her mature obedience. She is the perfect one. She is the one who said yes to the north winds. She is the one who said “Yes, I will meet You at the mountain of myrrh. I will go all the way no matter what the cost.”*

He is saying, “Okay, let’s see.” That is not a cynical “let’s see,” but a “let your heart be exercised in this, let your heart connect with Me through the rigors of this new season, and your love will be stronger than ever.”

*Some Bible teachers in the Middle Ages called this **the dark night of the soul**. It is not a biblical term, but it is a term that was used for some centuries because of this experience that some of the saints that had the deepest walk with God would testify to—that there was a temporary withholding of the manifest presence of God when they were in the deepest maturity of obedience of their life. So they coined this phrase to talk about it and fellowship around it. The phrase is in different writings.*

- 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.

<sup>5</sup>***For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)***

*Well, let’s be clear, Jesus never leaves us. The New Testament is very, very clear about that. He never leaves us. He sometimes withdraws the discernible feeling to test us, but not just to test us. His testing is not a cynical distant, “Hey, I am testing you! Get with it.” It is not that. It is a testing designed to help us work a new muscle*

*under pressure so that our love comes to maturity. It is in times like this that we have a tenacious hold on Him, and we refuse to let go. There are new dimensions of love that grow and mature in us in seasons like this.*

*It is really clear that He never leaves us, so that is not what I am talking about—Him leaving in the true sense of the word. It is that feeling that “it does not feel like it did last year” type thing. I am more obedient than I was, I am more committed, I am more focused, and I am more locked in to the relationship. Why does He feel distant?*

*The devil comes and says, “Because God has forsaken you.”*

*The Scripture would come and say, “No, the Lord is drawing you forth deeper still, deeper still. Do not be offended. Do not be offended! You said you were in it, no matter what. Well, this is one of those ‘no matter what’ seasons. Go deep. Go deep, and do not go backwards.”*

E. Job, the most righteous man on earth, was tested resulting deep intimacy with God (Job 1:8; 42:5).

**<sup>8</sup>The 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)**

**<sup>5</sup>“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. (Job 42:5)**

*I could imagine what Job felt. The most righteous man on earth is what the Bible says about him. Nobody more obedient, and yet it was as though the face of God turned away from him, though it did not in reality. God was there, staring the whole time, thinking, “Job, come on, come on.” God said, “I know who you are, and I know how you love Me.” I mean the Lord had so much confidence in Job.*

*The Lord went to the devil and said, “I promise you”—well He did not say, I promise you but—“test him and he will not back down on Me. I know this man. Test him like you want; just do not kill him. He will not back down on Me. I know the man. I know this man’s heart.” That is the kind of thing we are talking about.*

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 compromise, but tested because of their high calling.*

**<sup>17</sup>He sent a man before them—Joseph... <sup>18</sup>They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons.**

**<sup>19</sup>until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. (Ps. 105:17–19)**

*Look at the life of King David. As a young man, he is seeking God and he has the favor of God. Suddenly, seemingly in one moment, persecution hits, favor lifts, and he has bouts of deep depression in those six, seven, eight years of wandering in the wilderness. It’s like, “I do not know what happened, God. It went from favor to darkness seemingly. What happened?”*

*The Lord says, “I am making you into a king. It is not because I abandoned you. It is because I have chosen you. The devil is a liar; it is exactly the opposite of what he is saying to you.”*

*We see Joseph. He gets these dramatic dreams of his glorious destiny that he would have, and God’s favor would be on him. Suddenly he is in a prison. How can a man under the favor of God with prophetic promises end up in a prison?*

*People say they want to be a Joseph. I say, “Well, read the whole story.” What they want is to be on the throne of Pharaoh, the wealthiest man in the earth. That is what Joseph was, next to Pharaoh. So they want to be the*

*wealthiest most powerful man in the earth, but they do not really want Joseph's lifestyle or life history. They don't want Joseph's journey; they want Joseph's the end of the story.*

*Psalm 105:17-19 tells us that Joseph was tested by the Word. He was in prison and he was thinking, "What happened, God? You are not talking to me. What happened?" God gave him a few dreams for others, but not about his own life. It is this divine silence.*

*"Joseph, what does My Word say?" In New Testament language, that is what God would say. "Joseph, I promised you."*

*"Lord, that was years ago! I mean come on, that was years ago. I need another word now!"*

*God says, "I never lie. I gave you My Word."*

*"Lord, that was a long time ago. I have been a slave, and I'm in prison now."*

*Then suddenly Joseph became the most powerful man in the world and was the man God used to bring the salvation of the nation of Israel, saving them from destruction. The silence and the difficulty were not because each was abandoned. It was because they were highly called and chosen by God's favor.*

*It is easy to see just the glory part of the story of God's calling and not the whole process. Well, Song of Solomon 5 is the part of the process where He says, "Okay, you love Me no matter what?"*

*"O anything, Lord! I am Yours until the end."*

*He says, "I take that seriously. Okay, let's do it then. Let Me lift a few things from you. Are you in it for Me, and not just for Me to bless you?"*

*"Yes."*

*"Will you run to Me when things are not going your way or will you back away from Me like so many of the others?"*

*"Lord, I love You. I love You!"*

*He says, "Okay, let's do this. Let Me help you work a new muscle in your spiritual life and enter a new dimension of your relationship with Me."*

## **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.

***<sup>7</sup>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)***

*Next is the second test. The first test was the lifting of the sense of His presence and that silence, that divine silence. Again, it is temporary and is a relative silence, though it feels complete in the moment sometimes.*

*This time the leaders took away the Bride's ministry or the place of her function in the Body. It is the spiritual leaders, it is the watchmen, those she trusted back in Song of Solomon 3 who helped her then. Now they are mistreating her, and they take away her place of function. She says, "Wait, I want to be used of God. You are*

*the authority structure, and nobody will let me do anything. I am being boycotted. I am being censored. I am being set aside. How could this be?"*

- 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.

*The watchmen who went about the city, the ones with whom she was friendly back in Song of Solomon 3, who were the leaders of the city of God so to speak, the spiritual leaders, she says of them, "They struck me." That is, they did not care for me. They struck me; they wounded me. They did not train me; they wounded me. They did not help empower and disciple me; they wounded me. The keepers of the wall, that is these watchmen again, they took my veil; they took my spiritual covering away from me.*

- 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).

*When it says they took my veil away, this speaks of removing her spiritual covering. Now she cannot function in the Body, so she is really in a difficult jam because she no longer has the two things she cried out for back in Song of Solomon 1:4. First, she wanted to know His presence. Draw me after you, I want to be close to You, I want to experience and interact with Your presence. Second, she wanted to run together with other people in ministry after Him. I want to run after You with others making an impact, being used of God in a meaningful way. Both of these are now being lifted in this season.*

## **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."

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

*The Bride responded to the King with love. The very next verse she said to the daughters of Jerusalem, in verse 8, "If you find my Beloved, tell Him I am lovesick." She is not backing up in fear. She is not in compromise. She is not questioning. She is saying, "I love Him."*

*Not only does she respond to the King with love, but she responds to the others with humility. The daughters of Jerusalem throughout the Song are those who are less spiritually experienced and connected as she is. She is far more mature than they are, and she is going to younger ones asking, "Help me find Him." It is the opposite of offense and anger here. She is tender, she is humble, and she is going to the younger ones asking for help.*

*In essence the King was asking her, "Will you be Mine even if I withhold the things you deeply want? Will you be Mine if I do not give you the things you want in the timing you want them? Are you Mine when you cannot feel My presence? Will you love Me when you are disappointed by circumstances?"*

- 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.

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

*She was sick with love for the King, instead of being offended at Him. I think Matthew 11:6 is a very important principle from the lips of Jesus. Jesus was talking to the disciples of John the Baptist and they were asking, "Are You the Messiah? John sent us." Jesus healed people, blind eyes opened, the lame were walking—in other*

words He was fulfilling the Messianic prophecies right in front of them. They said, “John sent us to ask if You are the One.”

Jesus is, you know, raising up the paralytics, opening the blind eyes. He says to them, “What do you think?”

They say, “Wow! You are fulfilling all the prophecies of the Messiah. You are the One! We will go back and tell John.”

Jesus says, “Well, stop before you go back to tell John. I have one more little proverb for you. Blessed is he that is not offended at Me.”

“Why would I be offended at you? I mean you are raising the dead, opening blind eyes, why would I be offended?”

Jesus said, “Just remember that.”

Why would I be offended? Here is why. They are going to be tested because Jesus, having all the power, is not going to deliver John from prison, but John is going to be martyred. They are going to say afterwards, “Wait a second, if you are God, why didn’t you deliver our beloved John?”

He says, “Because I am God, and I do it My way, not your way. That is why I did not deliver him.”

Blessed are you if you are not offended. We are offended not only by what He does, but we also are offended by what He does not do or the timing that He takes to do it. Jesus says, “Blessed if you do not get offended at My leadership.”

- 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.

**<sup>9</sup>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)**

The Bride had asked the daughters, “If you see my Beloved, tell Him I am lovesick. Help me find Him.”

Then the daughters in verse 9, say, “We have a question.” They have two questions, actually. They ask one now and one in a few moments. The daughters said, “What is your Beloved, more than any other beloved? Why do you want to find Him? Considering He lifted His presence from you, and He allowed the elders to wound you, why do you want Him so much?”

- 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.

They are very perplexed. In essence the daughters are saying, “Why do you love Him so much that you charge us to go find Him? He took His presence from you. He let the elders wound you.” They wanted to know why she was still so loyal to Him. They are saying, “We do not know Him like you know Him. What do you know about Him we do not know?” What is your Beloved more than any other beloved is their question.

- 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.

*The daughters had many other beloveds that were more important than the Ultimate Beloved. It is very easy as sincere believers to have other beloveds that are more important than the Ultimate Beloved. I mean we love Jesus, but we are more connected to our ministry or a certain relationship than to Jesus. We are more connected to a certain way or a certain lifestyle, and we want Him to bless it, but we want those things actually more than Him, though we want Him in the equation. We do not want to lose Him, but we want them more than Him.*

*They had other beloveds that were more important. It is okay to have things that you love and people you love, but the daughters asked, “You love Him more than all the others. What is your Beloved that He is more than all the others? Why do you love Him more than pleasure and increase and friends and favor and those key relationships. Why would you take Him over them if there were ever a tension point? Why would you do that?”*

### 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.

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

*Oh, she explodes! I love Song of Solomon 5:10-16. I think it is the greatest statement of the beauty of Jesus in the Bible. It is in poetic terms. “What is my Beloved more than the others?” the Bride answers. For seven glorious verses she answered the question of the daughters of Jerusalem by proclaiming His majestic beauty. It is one of the greatest statements in the Bible.*

*She says, “My Beloved is dazzling. My Beloved is chief among ten thousand. His head is finest gold. His hair is wavy. His eyes are like doves, and His cheeks or His emotions are like a bed of spice. His lips are pure like lilies. His hands—His deeds—are like the rods of gold of divine power and character. His compassion is like ivory; it is rare and expensive and glorious. His legs are like pillars of marble, stable and steady. His countenance is like Lebanon, and His mouth is most sweet. He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved; this is my Friend.”*

*Boy, they are taken back! She is not offended with Him. She is not backing away from Him at all. She is not in a time of compromise. She is passing the ultimate twofold test in her life that is going to usher her into greater depths of love with God.*

*Now in this poetic language she uses metaphors of the human body with agricultural images to convey ten different attributes of what the King is like in this spiritual interpretation. She starts with a general statement in verse 10, “My Beloved is dazzling, chief among ten thousand.” Then she gives ten attributes. She ends with a summary statement, “He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved; this is my Friend.”*

- 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)

*I go into this in greater depth in the additional notes on the website ([mikebickle.org](http://mikebickle.org))*

- 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.

*There is a lot to these ten descriptions. I have taken these ten before the Lord and said, Lord, I want to use these descriptions to know You better and worship You." I know it is in poetic language using the images of the body along with agricultural language. There even are illustrations from Solomon's temple as well. Those three come together, making these declarations of His beauty. These ten attributes are fantastic.*

*We want to become familiar with these truths so we can speak them. We want to know these truths in the figurative, poetic language of this love song, this poem. We want to speak to Jesus in love, and we want tell these things to Him.*

*We also want to tell them to the devil when he accuses Jesus' leadership. When we begin to think, "It is not going to work...Jesus is not paying attention anyway...He does not have this whole thing in control...He is not paying attention to my life..." then we say, "Devil, you are a liar! Let me tell you about Him. His head—His leadership—is fine as gold. He is altogether lovely. He is dazzling! This is who He is. He is filled with compassion. His ways are indescribably glorious. Devil, you are a liar! This is who He really is."*

*We also speak them to ourselves in a time of temptation. We are thinking about crossing a line, and we think, "Wait a second! He is altogether dazzling and radiant, not that situation. He is the truth, and that is lie. I am not going there. I am not going to do that."*

*In times of discouragement, we may think, "Maybe God just does not care anymore." So we say to our soul, "Soul, let me tell you who He is."*

*That is how David talked to himself. He said, "I said to my soul, 'Soul rise up and obey God and believe Him and praise Him.'"*

We can speak it to other people too, like how I am giving you just a little bit right now. Remember, there is whole lot more in these ten.

- 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.

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

She says, “My Beloved is radiant.” That is what the New International Version says. He is radiant. He is dazzling. I like dazzling and radiant instead of white. He is fascinating. He is chief among ten thousand. He is incomparable in superiority to all the other beloveds.

Ladies, I do not care how cool that guy is; there is another Guy who is altogether lovely. Guys, I think that girl is really cool, but there is Someone who is altogether lovely. I know she is lovely, but there is Someone who is altogether lovely. We do not have to choose between our beloveds. The only choice is that He is first. We do not draw back in our pursuit of Him in the midst of our pursuit of the other beloveds. It is not only people. It is things, and ministry, and increase, and all the things that are of the blessing of God.

- 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.

<sup>16</sup>***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.

<sup>1</sup>***Where has your Beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your Beloved turned aside, that we may seek Him with you? (Song 6:1)***

So the daughters back in Song of Solomon 5:9 had asked, “What is your Beloved?”

She answered, “What is my Beloved? He is radiant, He is dazzling, He is chief among ten thousand, His head is like fine as gold, His leadership, His ways, His compassion, His power, His wisdom, His love, all of these things He is altogether lovely.

Right after she explodes with this, they took a step back as it were, thinking, “Whoa! Man, that was intense.” Now they shift the question. Here in Song of Solomon 6 they ask, “Where is your Beloved? We want to know what you know. We want what you have. We do not have this kind of relationship with Him. We want what you have. Where is your Beloved? Where has He turned aside? We want to seek Him.”

- 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).

So the Bride's answer in verse 10-16 caused the daughters to change their question entirely. They went from, “What is He?” to “Where can we find Him?” Here is my point: we want to live a life with Jesus that in the most positive sense provokes people to want to have what we have.

*I want to ask you, do people see your spiritual life—whether at the IHOPU, the internship, just in the community and the workplace—do they see your relationship with the Lord and say, “I want more of what he has?” Or do they look at you as somebody who will help them, pat them on the back, and affirm them in their sin and compromise because you will do it with them. “Well, I can count on him. He will go do it with me, but I cannot count on that other guy because he has a whole other walk with God that I do not know anything about.” Which one are you? Which one do you want to be?*

- 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.

*We never know who is watching us. These young believers—the daughters of Jerusalem—were watching her, and they shifted their whole vision of what they wanted. They said, “We do not want to know why you love Him any more. Now we want to know how we can experience what you experience.” God is raising up lovesick messengers who know Jesus in the way that provokes others to know Jesus.*

*When I say that we never know who is watching us, I do not mean only unbelievers. I mean believers. Do you have a life that people around you—I do not mean that everything you do is amazing, but do you have a level of devotion or a reach for it is what I am talking about. I do not mean that you have broken through on all the areas or that you have profound wisdom in every area. That is not what I am talking about—Do you have something that is making others think, “I want to do what you do with God.”*

## **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.

***<sup>4</sup>O My love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! <sup>5</sup>Turn 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.

*Let’s look at Song of Solomon 6:4-5. We will develop this further in the next session next week. The King now breaks His silence, the silence that began back in Song of Solomon 5:6. The King now speaks first because it had been the Bride speaking, the daughters speaking, the Bride speaking, the daughters speaking; they were going back and forth.*

*Finally the King breaks His silence. He says in Song of Solomon 6:4, “O My love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah! You are as lovely as Jerusalem! You are as awesome as an army with banners!” The King says to her, “Turn your eyes away from Me because your eyes of devotion have overcome My heart.” Beloved, the Bride was not in compromise in Song of Solomon 5. Some will interpret it that way. I appreciate all different views and the different folks who are promoting them, but it is so critical that we see what is happening in her heart.*

*Awesome as an army with banners refers to when an army came back from war. If they were victorious, they would have a procession down the street—a military parade—and they would have all their banners displayed. To be awesome as an army with banners means an army that was victorious, returning victorious over the enemy. She was victorious over the greatest enemy in her life—the desires in her own heart.*

*Beloved, there are many enemies without that will attack and resist you, but the great enemies lie within us, pulling on us not to trust Him, pulling us in another direction. She conquered the greatest enemies within and was like a victorious army.*

- 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?

***<sup>5</sup>Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me. (Song 6:5)***

*He says, “Turn your eyes away from Me, for your eyes have conquered Me. Jesus is only, I say quote unquote, “conquered” by the Bride’s extravagant love. All the armies of hell cannot conquer Him. The only thing that can conquer Him is the eyes of His beloved. When we are under testing, when we are not getting what we want, but we love Him no matter what, He says, “That overwhelms Me. That conquers My heart.” He says, “Turn your eyes away”—not in the true sense of turn away—but He goes on, “Oh, your heart moves Me.”*

*Beloved, do you know how you move Him? When you go after Him, while all the others get offended, and some go to the right and the left over the years, but you stay steady, and you press in. He lifts His presence at times, the ministry does not happen, the relationship does not happen, the money does not work out, the healing did not come like it should have, and He says, “Will you still love Me?”*

*We say, “He is my Beloved! I am lovesick. He is altogether lovely! This is my Beloved.”*

*He says to you, “Oh, you are as lovely as Tirzah! You are as beautiful as Jerusalem.” I will have more about that in the next session. “You are like an army that has conquered even the enemies—your unbelief and passivity—within your own soul. Turn your eyes away from Me. You have overcome Me with that kind of devotion, and that moves Me.”*

*Beloved, do you know the way you move Him? Do you really know? This is the kind of lifestyle to which the Holy Spirit is beckoning people—I mean this way to carry our hearts before the Lord. Amen and amen. Let’s stand.*