

Session 11 The Bride's Vindication & Partnership with Jesus (Song 6:11-8:4)

For those who are new with us today, I want to say that the Song of Solomon is an eight-chapter love song that can be interpreted in two different ways, both of which are biblical. The first way is as natural love song extolling the beauty of married love. It is a romantic poem between King Solomon and his bride. It was meant to be a poem about the beauty of married love, but it can also be interpreted a second way, through New Testament principles, as King Jesus loving His Bride.

The language of this love song, this eight-chapter love song, is the agricultural language of that day. We spiritually interpret some of the symbols by understanding their plain meaning in the agricultural sense of that day and we find places in the Bible where those symbols are used and defined in a clear way. So we use the biblical use of those terms, and we use the plain sense of how they were used in an agricultural society, and that is how we derive an estimation as to what the details mean spiritually.

As long as our interpretation honors New Testament principles, we are on safe ground, even if we understand one of the features differently. As long as it honors and magnifies principles taught in the New Testament that we would love and obey Jesus and honor Him accordingly, we are on safe ground interpreting this book.

I. OVERVIEW OF SONG 6:11-8:4

- A. By understanding her value to the King (6:4-10), the Bride learned to see the value that others have to the King. She saw they are also His garden and inheritance. She committed to serve the immature ones in God's garden (6:11) and was overcome by love for the Church (6:12).

I want to give an overview of the passage that we are looking at tonight. In the last session, we finished with Song of Solomon 6:4-10, and it is one of the most remarkable passages in this love song describing the value of the Bride to the King. He magnified how valuable and beautiful she was to Him in the spirit. That is Song of Solomon 6:4-10, which we looked at in our last session.

The Bride now has learned to see the value that others have to the King because she has seen the value she has to the King. She realizes that if He sees her this way, then that is how He sees others. Therefore that is how she should see others. So when we understand the way the Lord looks at us, there is a very practical application: that is how He looks at other believers, even believers who bother you and trouble you, even immature believers who are acting in pride and living in compromise. The Lord still loves them in a way that is beyond anything we can understand. So the Bride has learned to see the value that others have to the King as well. It is a great first moment when we understand our value to Him, but it takes a while before we figure out that is how He sees the other believers who are different from us and even the believers who are troubling us; the Lord loves them.

She saw that they also were His garden. She is not the only one who is His garden; they are as well, and they are His inheritance. Therefore she is committed to serving them, even the immature ones. Then, in the place of serving, we will see in Song of Solomon 6:12, she was overcome with love for them. In the midst of touching them and walking in the Spirit, she is overcome with love for those whom she would not naturally have loved.

- B. After a season of partnering with the King in serving others (6:11-12), the Bride was persecuted as she received different responses from the King's people (6:13). The Bride was vindicated by the daughters (7:1-5), then by the King who released great grace in and through her (7:6-9). Next, we see a description of the Bride's mature partnership with the King (7:10-8:4).

I am continuing the overview of this passage because we will not stop to consider many of the verses due to this session being short. So I will give you the overview and then give you the notes.

After a season of partnering with the King in serving others—because in Song of Solomon 6:11-12 she is serving others—she finds she is persecuted. There are those among the people of God who do not appreciate what she is doing. They do not appreciate the way she lives before God, so they sarcastically put her down.

Then, right after that, the Bride is vindicated by the daughters of Jerusalem. Right after this, she is vindicated by the King. So this is the pattern of Scripture: she serves, then she is resisted or persecuted, then the Lord has those who vindicate and honor her and stand with her among the Body, and then the Lord Himself vindicates and honors and stands with those who are seeking to obey Him, even though they might not be doing everything in full maturity.

- C. The primary calling for each ministry is to know God and to make Him known, working together with others to *build the Church* and engage in the *Great Commission* to make disciples.

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

¹⁹***Go...make disciples of all the nations...²⁰teaching them to observe all things... (Mt. 28:19-20)***

We cannot repeat the basics enough, but this is exactly what this passage is about—the basics, that the primary calling for every ministry and for every individual believer is to work together with other believers to build the Church and engage in the Great Commission and make disciples—so whatever specific assignment God gives you in context to this, everybody is to build the Church, engage in the Great Commission, and make disciples. You may do that in the context of building a prayer room and doing outreach, where you are still building the Church and you are making disciples and engaging in the Great Commission.

II. THE BRIDE'S COMMITMENT TO SERVE THE CHURCH AND MAKE DISCIPLES (6:11)

- A. The Bride committed herself to minister to those who were less spiritually mature (6:11). In other words, she set her heart to serve the Church and make disciples of younger believers.

¹¹***I went down to the garden of nuts [walnut grove] to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates had bloomed. (Song 6:11)***

Let's look now at Song of Solomon 6:11. She says, "I went down to the garden of nuts"—the walnut grove—"to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates had bloomed." In the verse before, the King had just revealed how He feels so deeply about her and the destiny and dignity she has in His kingdom. She is deeply encouraged and moved and excited, so the first thing she does with that encouragement is launch out again, in agricultural language, to go serve others in the garden of the Lord.

The garden is the local church, and the garden is the Body of Christ, even worldwide. She says that she went down to the garden of nuts. This is the walnut grove, and she went to see the growth that is growing in the valley. She went down to see whether the vine had budded or the pomegranates had bloomed. So she went down to the valley in the midst of the garden, and she wanted to see these budding vines.

Now remember these vines and this garden spiritually speaks of the Lord where the garden of the Lord—the Body of Christ—is. He is the vine, and we are part of the branches. It is these budding vines, which have not born fruit yet, and she went down to get involved with them, to see how they are doing. In the midst of this, she involves herself deeply with them. The Bride committed herself to minister to those who were less spiritually mature than she was.

*Now that sounds noble—less spiritually mature than she—but here is what that means in real life. They are not always very responsive. She gives them the same lesson over and over, but they are not as mature as she, so they do not respond as quickly or as deeply. They are not as grateful as she is, they are not as humble as she is, and they are not as balanced as she is. In other words, they could really trouble her **if** she did not have God's perspective of them.*

Everybody wants to be involved in ministry. That is, everybody that I know does. The problem comes when we actually get involved in ministry, because the people are not as grateful, they are not so humble, they are not as responsive, and we can feel like, "What is this about?"

The Lord would say, "Those are the budding vines that I want you to be involved with."

"Well, Lord, they are not responsive, they are not grateful, and they are not humble. I mean they are actually criticizing me after I serve them."

He would say, "Remember the verses before, verse 4-10, how I see you and how you move Me? Lay hold of that and you will stay steady in your patience with these young, tender vines."

- B. **Budded:** The Bride set her heart to serve the immature ones whose fruitfulness was just beginning to bud and come forth. She sees God's vineyard without much mature fruit. She valued the budding virtues in others just as the Lord once valued budding virtues in her (4:1-5). Her enthusiasm for others flowed from knowing His enthusiasm for her while she was immature.

So she valued the budding virtues in others. She saw the beginning of their commitment, and the reason she valued their budding virtues was because—you will remember back in Song of Solomon 4 the Lord once valued her budding virtues, and she remembered it—the Lord was kind to her when her commitment was just beginning to emerge. The Lord said, "Your commitment is real, and it touches Me."

Now it is in a different situation, and she has to see the value of the budding commitment of those whom she is serving. Enthusiasm for others flowed from knowing His enthusiasm for her when she was immature back in Song of Solomon 4. That is one thing that helps me when I am with those who are not responding and they are not being humble and they are being selfish and proud and troublesome. The Lord says, as it were, "Well, so were you and I was enthusiastic about you."

"Oh, yeah."

"So be enthusiastic about them. Do not push them away."

- C. **Went down:** The Bride went down to God's garden to nurture the plants that were merely budding. The Bride said, "Yes!" to making disciples. We can "go down" to serve in our neighborhood.
- D. **Garden and vine:** A vine, vineyard, and garden speak of God's people (Isa. 5; Jn. 15; 1 Cor. 3:9). Verdure speaks of the fresh greenness of flourishing vegetation. The Bride went down to see the growth in God's garden in the midst of the valley of this fallen world.

⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field [garden]... (1 Cor. 3:9)

The garden and the vine speak of God's people, in the New Testament language. Paul said, "We are God's fellow workers; you are God's garden. You are God's field." Some translations say God's "garden."

- E. The Bride's heart to serve the young speaks of more than serving to find a place to be recognized and feel better about ourselves. This is a call to give ourselves to others because we see them as the Lord's inheritance, not as an opportunity for us to open doors or promote our ministry status.

The Bride's heart was genuinely to serve these young vines, these young, budding plants. Now her heart to serve them genuinely speaks of more than serving to find a place to be recognized and to feel good about ourselves. What I mean by that is I have seen a lot of folks over the years who want to serve, but they want to serve basically to get recognized. If those young, budding vines do not recognize them, and leaders do not either, then they are disinterested. They feel burned out and disappointed because they are more in it to establish a place for themselves in ministry than actually to minister to the young, budding vines.

Now I have stumbled in that myself. I get that. I have had to repent of that a number of times over the years. If you are looking for ministry as a place for recognition, I want to promise you something—because we all have that by nature—you will get burnt out, disappointed, and you will be tempted with bitterness.

If we switch over, and we see those young, budding vines as the Lord's inheritance, and we see how He feels about them, then regardless whether we are recognized, whether doors open, whether we are honored, whether any money comes our way, or any recognition comes our way, we can stay faithful because we are actually serving them for the Lord.

Now everybody says that, but when the doors do not open and the recognition does not come, if all kinds of negative attitudes begin to emerge, that is the alarm system of the Lord saying, "Alarm, alarm! You are serving for the wrong reasons! You are serving for the wrong reasons!"

"Well, they are not responding rightly."

He says to us, "Well, neither did you when you were starting out, and I stayed with you, so stay with them."

III. LOVE FOR GOD'S CHURCH OVERCAME HER (6:12)

- A. The Bride was overcome with love for the King's people (6:12). Spiritually speaking, the Bride loves the Church. While in the valley working with the budding vineyard, her soul became like the chariots of her noble people, depicting the zeal that she felt for others in the Church.

¹²***Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people. (Song 7:12)***

In the midst of serving she is overcome with love for God's people, for the King's people. She says in verse 12, as she is down there in the valley, in the garden serving the budding vines, she says, "Before I was even aware"—I am in the midst of the hot sun, pulling weeds, immature people, seemingly not much happening. I cannot measure the growth very clearly. It does not seem like I am gaining any ground. Suddenly—"before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people." So in the valley as she is working with the budding vineyard, her soul became like the chariots of nobility. This is depicting her zeal for the people she is serving.

- B. **Chariot:** Her soul moved like a swift chariot. In the ancient world, a chariot was the fastest way to travel with luggage. The best chariots belonged to the noble ones—royal families. Her soul was made like a king's chariot that moved swiftly. She found strong desire to serve God's people. Instead of being put off by the immaturity, pride, and lack of discernment of these "budding vines," she was surprised by the tender compassion and zeal that she felt for them.

⁷***...just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. ⁸So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you...our own lives, because you had become dear to us.***
(1 Thes. 2:7-8)

Her chariot—her soul—moved quickly towards them like a chariot. It is as though she is saying, “I was a little tentative at first. I went down to check them out. But I found that as I was serving, with my eyes on the Lord, with my eyes not on them so much but on the Lord and seeing how the Lord felt about them and felt about me serving them, I felt my soul move towards them in a powerful way.”

She says, “My soul was like a chariot of the noble ones.” Now the best chariots in the ancient world belonged to the nobility, to the royal family. They were the chariots that were fast and powerful. In other words, “My heart is moving towards them powerfully, even though I only went down to see them and to be involved a little bit. It grabbed a hold of my heart.” She found strong desires to serve God’s people. Instead of being put off by their immaturity, instead of being put off by their pride, their lack of discernment, their lack of commitment, their lack of gratitude, their lack of humility, she felt compassion for them.

Again the most natural response to being in ministry that I have witnessed over forty years is that people minister typically five or ten years and then many end up burnt out and bitter. They are angry; they are disappointed. They say, “This is because of how the Body of Christ treats me.” Here is the reason that they are burnt out: they were doing it for all the wrong reasons. That is why the payback did not equal what they expected, and that is where the burnout and the bitterness come from.

*I have found that when I have that response—and I have had that response sometimes—I shift my soul, the alignment of my soul, and I say, “I want to do it for the right reasons.” When that happens, my soul then moves towards the people, even in the place of service where maybe I am not appreciated or even understood. My soul moves towards them like the chariot of a nobleman, the fastest, most efficient, powerful chariots of that day. Something happens in my heart if I am doing it **with** the Lord and **unto** the Lord. When we get disconnected from Him, the work of ministry—whether it is full time or whether it is part time, whatever way that you do ministry—ministry is burdensome if you are not connected with the right paradigm, the right perspective.*

C. **Before I was aware:** This new, sudden movement of her heart for others surprised her.

D. Jesus loves the whole Church—He desires that every believer be helped to maturity (Col. 1:28). He wants His people to value the whole Church, not only the small part under their authority. The Lord is bringing the Church to unity (Jn. 17:21) and raising up shepherds who care about His larger purposes in the whole Church or for *all* the churches (2 Cor. 11:28).

²⁸ **...teaching every man...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. 1:28)**

²⁸ **What comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:28)**

The bigger truth here is that Jesus loves the whole Church. What I mean by the whole Church is He wants every man to be presented to Him in Christ. He values even the churches down the road that are not like you, that disagree with you. Even the believers that do not like us, He wants us to love them. See, it is really easy to love the denomination or the stream of the Body of Christ that we are a part of or is like ours. It is easy to love the people who value what we value in our ministry, but the Lord says, “Wait, I want you to love the whole Church because I do.”

“Lord, look at the way they do things.”

He would say, “Yes, but look at My blood that has been shed for them. They are a part of My family forever.” This affects the way that we view all of those little ones or the big ones, whatever, in the valley, in the garden, in the vineyard of the Lord.

IV. THE TWO RESPONSES OF THE CHURCH TO THE BRIDE (6:13)

- A. After a season of partnering with the King in serving others (6:11-12), she received two responses from the King's people. Some fully embraced her (6:13a), while others responded with sarcasm (6:13b). A spiritual application—the Bride's lifestyle of dedication is embraced by part of the Church (6:13a), while another part of the Church persecutes and rejects her (6:13b).

¹³**Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you! What would you see in the Shulamite—as it were, the dance of the two camps? (Song 6:13)**

She gets two responses after she is serving with this heart that is moved like a chariot, deeply moved for the people she is serving. Beloved, that is a gift when that happens! That is not always the case. A matter of fact, I have found many times it is not the case. I mean people start off well, but by the five- and ten-year mark, their soul is not moving towards the people they are serving. They feel a little burn out, they feel misunderstood, they feel a little worn out, and negative things begin to happen on the inside of them.

What happens next is that two responses come from the Church or from the King's people. She has been serving now, partnering with the Lord. In verse 13, the first group says, "Return, O Shulamite; return! We want to look upon you." That is, we want more. We want to receive more from you. That is powerful. Some of the King's people fully embrace her.

Then others respond with sarcasm at the end of the verse. It is another company, and—I assume the other company is the watchmen from the previous chapter, Solomon of Song 5—they respond sarcastically, "What would you see in the Shulamite?" They tell these daughters of Jerusalem, "Why do you even pay attention to her? She is not a big deal! As a matter of fact, we wounded her and took her ministry away back in Song of Solomon 5:7. Why are you even paying attention to her, daughters of Jerusalem? What is the big deal about her?"

I find so often that when people are dedicated to the Lord, there are two responses to them. There are people in the Body of Christ who do not like their dedication and others who do like their dedication. There usually are a good number on each side.

At least one spiritual application to this principle is that the Bride's lifestyle of dedication is embraced by part of the Church, while another part persecutes her. That happened in Jesus' day. We think of the scribes and Pharisees as legalistic, but at their heart, at their core, they were compromisers. That was the real deal. Jesus said to them, "You love money, and you love praise. That is your problem."

It was not just that they loved the Law and were legalistic; they were legalistic, but their bigger problem was they loved money and they loved praise. They loved ease and honor, and that is why they did not like Jesus' message. They did not like His dedication, and they did not like His message about dedication.

- B. **That we may look upon you:** The first response was one of respect and admiration. Earlier, the daughters of Jerusalem wanted to seek the Lord with the Bride (6:1). Here they urgently express this desire to learn from her by crying out to her four times *to return* to them. They wanted her to return to them from her labors in the garden in the valley seen in Song 6:11-12.

The first group says, "Return, O Shulamite, that we may look upon you." The first response was one of respect and admiration towards her and of desire to receive from her more. They wanted her to return from the valley and the garden and the vineyard where she was laboring. They said, "Hey, come back home! Get back home from your ministry trip. Come and minister to us. We want to receive from you. We want your message. We like it when you are here."

- C. **What would you see in the Shulamite:** The second response was sarcastic, presumably from the jealous watchman who had recently struck and wounded her in Song 5:7. Here they sarcastically challenge the daughters' respect for the Bride by asking, "What do you see in the Shulamite?" or "Why do you want her to return?" They undermine the desire to look to her for spiritual input.

The other group says, "What do you even see in the Shulamite?" It is sarcastic. The second response was sarcasm or sarcastic, presumably from the jealous watchmen who had struck her and taken her ministry away. In essence they censored her, and they put her on probation. They did not like her. The Lord liked her, but some of the elders did not like her.

- D. **The dance of two camps:** This can speak of the conflict between the daughters and the watchman related to how they viewed the Bride. The KJV translates this as "*the dance of two armies,*" the NAS as the "*dance of the two companies,*" and the NIV as "*the camp of Mahanaim.*" Mahanaim was a city associated with the conflict between two brothers, Jacob and Esau (Gen. 32).

Let's look, then, at the end of Song of Solomon 6:13, just to end the verse. One camp says, "Return, Shulamite! We want to look at you, and we want to receive from you."

The other camp says, "What is the big deal about her?"

Then this little phrase, "It is the dance of two camps." That is the description of what is going on. There is this dance of two camps going on. This can speak of the conflict between the daughters of Jerusalem and the watchmen related to how they viewed the Bride. Now again, this is a poem. It is the daughters of Jerusalem and the watchmen, who are both part of the people of God. The Bride figuratively speaks of those who are pressing in hard after God.

In the age to come the whole Body of Christ—everybody—is the Bride. This is a love song depicting different figures, a different time frame. Now I have had people read this love song who say, "Well, these people are like the daughters of Jerusalem, and those people are clearly the watchmen, and I am the Bride."

I respond, "No! Don't even do all that! Do not figure out who is who."

The idea is that the Bride depicts the one who is receiving from the Lord His heart and who is wanting to be radically committed. Our goal is to see everyone be that way, but between now and the Lord's return there will be always different responses, even radically different responses, to the grace of God, even within the camp of the Lord. Two camps—extreme polarized views—and many different responses in between the polarized ones.

The real reason this matters is not so that people get a persecution complex; that is not the point. The point is, when there is resistance, do not be troubled, do not be offended, do not be discouraged, and do not quit. Being resisted is part of the divine pattern of growing in love. That is the pattern I am pointing it out. I am not pointing it out to say if you have somebody who thinks you are off, then you are amazing, and you must be so remarkable because someone did not like you. Everybody has somebody who does not like him, so do not get a complex about it, but do not give up either. It is how it really is.

- E. **The dance:** This speaks of interaction between two camps or companies in the Church related to the Bride's zeal for God. Jesus brought division between those zealous for God and those who were not (Mt. 10:34-36). The Lord will unify the Church as He confronts compromise in it. There are always two extreme positions in the body of Christ—those who pursue Jesus with fervency and those who do not. Wholeheartedness is at the core of some divisions.

- ³⁴***Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.***
³⁵***For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law... (Mt. 10:34-35)***

The dance between the two camps speaks of the interaction of the two companies in the polarized, extreme sense—those radically committed and those doing just the least they must to respond to God and still be in the family of God. There is a lot of conflict between those who are doing the least amount of response as possible and those who are seeking to give the greatest response to God possible. There is often collision between them. Again there are many different measures of response. There is not any one group that is one or the other. This poem is just depicting the conflict that happens.

In Matthew 10, Jesus said, “Do not think I came to bring peace. I did not come to bring peace. I came to bring a sword.” Well, He did come to bring peace; the angels cried out at His birth, “Peace and goodwill to men” because of Him. He did come to bring peace; He is the Prince of Peace. What He was saying here is, “I am not only bringing peace; there will be conflict before there will be perfect unity.” And, there will be perfect unity before it is over. I believe the Lord is coming back for a Church that will be unified across the world, where the whole Body of Christ is honoring and valuing the other parts of the Body of Christ that are not exactly like them.

He says that in the process of the unfolding of His kingdom there will be conflicts. There will be many tensions, so do not lose heart and give up. Do not just give in to despair. Often wholeheartedness is at the core of many divisions. The quest for wholeheartedness or the quest not to be wholehearted. There are a lot of doctrines out there around the grace of God validating compromise and fighting about it. There are others that are validating wholeheartedness. Some of them approach it the wrong way, some of them approach it the right way, and some of them are half and half. There are all kinds of different approaches, and there is conflict in the midst of it. The Lord says, “Do not grow weary. Stay steady. Keep your eyes on Me.”

V. THE BRIDE IS VINDICATED BY SINCERE BELIEVERS (7:1-5)

- A. This passage answers the sarcastic question, “*Who is the Shulamite?*” The Bride is vindicated first by sincere believers (7:1-5) and then by the King (7:6-9). The Spirit raises up other sincere believers who will stand with and vindicate those who pursue the Lord in a wholehearted way.

¹How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels...²Your navel is a rounded goblet...Your waist is a heap of wheat set about with lilies. ³Your two breasts are like two fawns...⁴Your neck is like an ivory tower, your eyes like the pools in Heshbon...Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon...⁵Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple; a King is held captive by your tresses [hair]. (Song 7:1-5)

So now in the midst of the conflict, the question in the air is, “Who is the Shulamite that we should pay attention to her? Who is she?” In Song of Solomon 7:1-5, sincere believers—the daughters of Jerusalem who are sincere, but they are still immature—they vindicate her. In verses 1-5, they talk about how glorious she is. They were saying that if you want to know the answer to “what about the Shulamite,” they will tell you that she is beautiful.

- B. The daughters highlighted ten characteristics of the Bride (7:1-5). See the additional material on the website.

It gives ten different features about her. The daughters highlighted ten characteristics of the Bride. Now again they are using agricultural terms and describing her physical features, as originally it was a love song between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife.

For the spiritual application, we take the agricultural terms in their plain meaning, and we take the symbolic meaning of what the Bible says when some of these terms are used as symbolism in the Bible, and we match them to make sense of it. I am not going to go through these ten characteristics. I have a bit more on the additional notes on the website if you want to study more about them.

- C. **Feet:** Her feet in sandals symbolize evangelism (Isa. 52:7; Eph. 6:15).
- D. **Thighs:** Her thighs or legs can speak of the strength behind her walk in God.
- E. **Navel:** The navel speaks of the nourishment a child receives in their mother's womb. This can refer to our formative years in the Lord as the time in which our inner life in God is developed.
- F. **Waist:** The daughters see the Bride as prepared for the coming harvest.
- G. **Breasts:** Breasts speak of the ability to nurture others.
- H. **Neck:** In Scripture, the neck speaks of the will that can be stiff-necked (resistant) or submissive. The Bride's will is like an ivory tower, rare and costly, which also protects.
- I. **Eyes:** Eyes speak of our ability to receive understanding (Eph. 1:18).
- J. **Nose:** The nose can speak of discernment.
- K. **Head:** a thought life filled with royal thoughts—being crowned like Mount Carmel (Isa. 35:2).

⁵Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple; a King is held captive by your tresses [hair]. (Song 7:5)

The one verse I do want to read is verse 5. It says, "Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel. The hair of your head is like purple." It is not a Bible verse about purple hair; that is not what this is about. The King is held captive by your tresses or by your hair. The daughters of Jerusalem are saying that the King is held captive by who you are. They have said, "We are for you, and we want to receive from you. We vindicate, we endorse, and stand with you" Now they are saying, "We know the King is held captive by your love for Him. No matter what the others are saying, the Lord loves you." That is what they are saying to her.

Of the ten characteristics this is the one I like the most. The other ones are valuable, as spiritual features, reading them through the spiritual interpretation with New Testament values. The head speaks of the thought life. It says, "The hair of your head is like purple. And your head crowns you like Mount Carmel." This speaks of a thought life filled with royal thoughts, being crowned like Mount Carmel, high and lofty thoughts, royal thoughts. You can put either one of those you want in there: high and lofty or heavenly thoughts like Mount Carmel.

- L. **Hair:** In Scripture, hair spoke of one's dedication to God. Her hair was like purple, symbolizing royalty. Her dedication was like the resolution of a king (NAS says "The King").
- M. **Held captive:** This speaks of the heart of God being *held captive* by His Bride's dedication. His love is so powerful that it binds Him to weak people who love Him. It is His glory to be captivated by love for His people. His unique ability is to love those so much lower than He.

Song 7:5 says that the King is held captive. This speaks of the heart of God being held captive by the Bride's dedication. What a statement! There are a number of these kinds of statements in this love song. The King is held captive by your thought life and by your dedication. The King is moved by the way you think, and He is moved by the choices you make.

Now, we look at our thought life, and we look at our choices, and we might think, "Oh my!" The Lord knows that we are still in weakness, in the days of our flesh, but your thoughts are not only bad thoughts. Yes, you have bad thoughts. I have bad thoughts, whether they are proud or angry or all kinds of negative thoughts one can have. Bitterness. I think anger is probably the most prevailing bad thought. Some might think immorality is the most common negative thought, but I think anger is probably the most prevailing negative thought in the human race, anger that touches on bitterness or the beginning of bitterness, those kinds of things.

Well, the Lord not only sees the negative, He also sees that even in the midst of your struggle you are saying to Him, "But I love You, and I want to obey You. I am reading the Word, and I am trying to find strength and how to lay hold of it by the Holy Spirit that I can obey You."

*The Lord says, "That moves Me, that moves Me." I mean here you are on a Friday night. You could be anywhere in the world, and you are in a Bible study, in a Bible school class, on a Friday night. Do you know how much of the earth is **not** at a Bible school class on a Friday night? Not only that, but we take a ten-minute break and study session two. Well tonight, session one we are talking about the Shulamite, and session two we are going to talk about the Harlot of Babylon, so we have got a real contrast here tonight! Here is the point, the very fact you are in this room—I do not mean it is in **this** room— but that you are in a Bible study on a Friday night. And a lot of you from Korea, you flew a long way. Whether you are from the East coast, West coast or from Korea or those from Brazil—hundreds of you here tonight—you paid a lot of money to come sit in a prayer room to hear Bible teachings.*

So you say that you still have bad thoughts. The Lord would say, "Yes, but you have good thoughts, too! Look at your decision, look at the thought process you went through to be here." Again it is not about being here. There are about a million places you could be in the Body of Christ. The Lord is moved by that. It is not inconsequential to Him; that is not nothing to Him. He is held captive by the dedication of His people. Even in our weakness, it moves Him.

Here in Song of Solomon 7, in the sense of this spiritual love song between Jesus and the Bride, she is at a significant maturity level now. In each chapter her maturity is growing, if you follow the storyline of the eight chapters. I call it the progression of holy passion. She is getting more mature, chapter by chapter, as she responds to more and more truth.

His love is so powerful that it binds Him to weak people who love Him. His love is so glorious that He takes my weak devotion, and it moves Him. That is how powerful He is. It is His glory to be captivated by His people. That is not God's weakness. It does not diminish His glory that He is held captive, in that love language. Again I am using poetic language. It is not a diminishing of God's glory. Rather, it is His glory that He would be so loving He would let people like us capture His heart. That is His glory.

The glory of God is not only about how powerful He is or how smart He is. That is His glory undoubtedly, but the greater glory of God is that One so powerful and who so smart is moved so deeply by us. That is His glory! That is remarkable! What kind of God is He that, in the language of Scripture, He could be held captive by the dedication of His people?

VI. THE BRIDE IS VINDICATED BY THE KING (7:6-9A)

- A. The King vindicated the Bride by releasing a great measure of grace in and through her (7:6-9a). The King gave her a threefold commissioning to ministry—to nurture others, to release the presence of the Spirit, and to maintain her intimacy with the King (7:8-9a).

⁶How fair [beautiful] and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights! ⁷This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters. ⁸I said, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches." Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, ⁹and the roof of your mouth like the best wine. (Song 7:6-9)

It is not only the daughters of Jerusalem who are vindicating the Bride while the watchmen are saying, "Why are you even paying attention?" The daughters of Jerusalem spoke up first, and now the King is speaking up. You might ask how do we know that? Well, I have a bit of this explained on the additional notes on the website of how you can follow the story line through the change of the voice and the person—first person, third person—if you pay attention to the details.

So now the King speaks up, and He is going to release a greater measure of grace. He is not only moved by her, but He is going to send a greater measure of grace. Now the grace is free, and we receive the fullness of grace available to us the day we are born again, but we experience it in our mind and emotions in greater measures as we mature in the Lord. We do not earn the grace that we experience a greater measure of, but our mind and emotions are touched by the grace of God more and more as we mature. That is what I mean by a greater measure.

The King gives her a threefold commissioning to ministry. He commissions her to nurture others, He commissions her to release the presence of the Spirit—again using the symbolic language of this love poem—and He commissions her to maintain her intimacy with Him. We are going to move on, but I wanted to highlight that the King speaks up in the storyline of this poem.

- B. **How pleasant:** The King's heart is held captive by the Bride (7:5) as He says, "How beautiful and pleasant you are with your delights!" (7:6). Jesus delights in the love of His people.
- C. **Take hold:** The King promised to *take hold* of His people or to release a great manifestation of His presence through them. The King *laid hold* of His Bride and commissioned her in three ways—to nurture others, to release the Spirit, and to maintain her intimacy with the King (7:8-9).

⁸Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, ⁹and the roof of your mouth like the best wine. (Song 7:8-9)

- D. **Breasts like clusters:** The King commissioned her to nurture others in the power of the Spirit. Her breasts were to nurture the babes like a vine or with the dimension of the Spirit's activity.
- E. **Breath like apples:** He called her to let the fragrance of her breath refresh others like apples. Her breath speaks of her inner life. Apples speak of refreshing (2:3).
- F. **Mouth like wine:** He commissioned her to let her mouth be like the best wine to God. The *mouth* through the Song speaks *the intimacy* of the kisses of the mouth (1:2, 4:3, 5:16).
- G. **Like the best wine:** The *wine* speaks of the influences of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Our love is the "best wine" or that which brings the greatest joy to the King's heart (4:10).

¹⁰How fair is your love...how much better than wine is your love. (Song 4:10)

VII. BRIDE'S MATURE PARTNERSHIP WITH JESUS (7:9b-8:4)

- A. The Bride described four aspects of walking out her mature partnership with the King (7:9-8:4). She walked it out by her instant obedience (7:9b-10), her intercession for more power (7:11-13), her boldness and humility in public ministry (8:1-2), and her unbroken union with Him (8:3-4).

Here the Bride now describes four aspects of walking out mature partnership with the King. You can read that more clearly just when you have more time. There are four descriptions of what mature partnership looks like.

- B. **The wine goes down smoothly:** The Bride expressed her enthusiasm to obey the King saying, "The wine goes down smoothly." In the poetic language of love, this refers to her living in instantaneous agreement with the Spirit's leadership. The wine of the Spirit will go down smoothly because she receives it without resistance or without choking on it (Eph. 5:18).

⁹The wine goes down smoothly for my Beloved, moving gently the lips of sleepers. I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me. (7:9b-10)

The very first verse this next section is Song of Solomon 7:9 but it begins in the middle of verse 9. The King was speaking before, but now the Bride is speaking. So, at first the daughters of Jerusalem were speaking in verse 1-5, then the King in verse 6-9a, then in the second half of verse 9 the Bride speaks and gives her response to these affirmations and these validations of her sincerity and her walk with the Lord.

She says, "The wine goes down smoothly for my Beloved, moving gently the lips of sleepers. I am my Beloved's, and His desire is for me." So this is clearly the Bride speaking here. When she says, "The wine goes down smoothly," the Bride is expressing her enthusiasm to obey the King. In the poetic language of love, this refers to her instantaneous agreement with His leadership. Often in the picture language of Old and New Testament, the wine, the vine, and those terms associated with that speak of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

What she is saying here is, "I am not wrestling with Him. I am not choking on the Holy Spirit's leadership. It is not difficult. It is not bad-tasting medicine that I have to take."

Some think about God's commands, "After all, it is God, so I better obey because I am going to get in trouble if I do not."

She is saying, "No, the wine goes down smoothly. I quickly receive the Holy Spirit's leadership. I love the Holy Spirit's leadership! I do not grieve Him, I do not quench Him, and I do not push Him away. I do not choke and cough over the medicine I am taking." The good leadership of God is what is being said here in the poetic language of this love song. She says, "I am my Beloved's. I belong to my Beloved, and His desire is for me."

- C. **My Beloved:** She referred to the King as "my Beloved," indicating that she obeyed the Spirit out of love for God. When obedience is difficult, we confess, "The wine goes down smoothly because You are my Beloved and because I love You, Jesus."

So when she says, "The wine goes down smoothly for my Beloved," she is indicating she obeys the Holy Spirit because the King is her Beloved. She obeys out of love. I find sometimes—this is not the verse I use all the time but I have used it over the years—when obedience is difficult, when the Holy Spirit is challenging me to something and I am resisting in my flesh, sometimes I will stop and confess, "Lord, the wine goes down smoothly because You are the One I love. I love You. Yes, I will do what You say." It is mostly about humbling myself and mostly about serving in hard ways, or giving in ways I do not want to; that is mostly where it really presses in, in a personal way. I think, "I do not want to do it. I do not want to be nice. I do not want to humble myself. I do not want to admit my error. I do not want to pour myself out." Then I pause—though not always, by

any means—and say, “The wine goes down smoothly for my Beloved. That is my confession, that is who I am, and that is what I will do.” I love this verse because I am my Beloved's, I belong to Him, and He is mine.

- D. **Lips of sleepers:** The Spirit desires to awaken believers who are spiritually asleep (Eph. 5:14) and will minister through her to revive them.
- E. **Moving:** The proof that the Spirit has awakened the sleepers is that their speech comes under His leadership. He will move them so they will speak in purity and righteousness, with boldness.
- F. **Gently:** The Spirit gently woos us to speak on His behalf by giving us subtle or faint impressions. He calls us to voluntary love for Him, as He gently moves us without violating our free will.
- G. Her obedience is empowered by seeing herself as belonging to and desired by the King (7:10).

¹⁰ **I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me. (7:10)**

Her obedience is empowered by seeing herself as belonging to and desired by the King. This has got to be one of the most dynamic statements in the Bible, reading it from a redemptive perspective. I am my Beloved's. I belong to Him, and His desire is for me. You belong to the God of Genesis 1, and He wants you. He says, “Yes, I take you, I own you, I, you are Mine, you are My inheritance, and My desire is towards you.” This is one of the most prominent themes in the Song of Solomon.

- H. **His desire is for me:** The most prominent theme in the Song is the King's desire for His people. She grew strong by seeing His affection for and enjoyment of her (1 Jn. 4:19).
- I. **I am my Beloved's:** She saw herself as belonging to the King or being under His leadership. She had insight into the King's ownership of her (1 Cor. 6:20). She served God without concern for what happened to her. Her focus was on Him. What He desires is what she values most.

She says, “I am my Beloved's.” This is a powerful insight, when somebody sees that they actually belong to Him. Now everybody knows the term, the fact, but there is a time in each believer's life where it dawns on us and touches us that we really do belong to Him, really. He has the wisdom and the right to assign us to humble ourselves and serve Him and not get what we want from it, but to get what He wants from it. Ugh, I do not always like that, Lord! But her focus was on Him. What He desires is what she values most when she says, “I belong to Him; I am my Beloved's.”

- J. The Bride's partnership is expressed in prayer for effectiveness in working together (7:11-12).

¹¹ **Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages.** ¹² **Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open, and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give You my love. (Song 7:11-12)**

Then she expresses her partnership here in Song of Solomon 7:11. She says, “I am Yours, Lord. I am all the way Yours. Yes, I have been resisted by some. I have been written off sarcastically by others. You love me, and I am going with You.” So she really re-commits herself to the service of other people. She says, “Come, my Beloved,”—in other words, that is a prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus”—“come and release Your presence with me.”

Now she says “Let us” four times: let us go to the field, let us go to the village, let us go to the vineyards, let us see if the vines—the young immature ones—are growing and budding. She says, “Let us see if the great blossoms are opening, and if the pomegranates are blooming.” That is, let's see if the young ones are responding, let's re-commit ourselves, let's fully engage, let's spend our time and our money and our energy in making disciples of the young ones, let's pour ourselves into those who might not respond well or might not be grateful or might not be humble or might not follow through.

"I want to go down," she says, "to the fields, to the villages, to the vineyards." Look at the very end of verse 12. This is a key phrase. She says, "There"—in the midst of the rigors of the work—"I will give You my love." I will speak more on that in a moment.

- K. **Come:** The Bride committed to go to fields of the harvest and prayed that the King would come with her in the sense of releasing His presence through her labors (7:11-12). Spiritually speaking, going to the fields can speak of going to the fields of harvest (Jn. 4:35).

³⁵***Behold...look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (Jn. 4:35)***

- L. **Budding vine:** The budding vines, the grape blossoms, and the blooming pomegranates speak of different people and ministries that need diligent labor in ministry to grow (4:12, 13; 6:11).
- M. **Let us go:** Four times she prayed, "let us" (7:11-12) indicating that she worked in partnership with the King. She changed her language from "I went down" (Song 6:11) to "let us go."

²⁰***They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. (Mk. 16:20)***

- N. **Early:** Getting up early speaks of her faithfulness and diligence in the assignment that the Lord gave her. The Bride followed through in her ministry and service with diligence as seen in *getting up early* to attend to the work long before the others. This is the attitude of one with a stewardship from God. Those who see their work as merely a job seek to come in late and leave early.

¹²***Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded.... (Song 7:12).***

She says, "Let us get up early and go to the vineyards." Getting up early speaks of her faithfulness and diligence in her assignment. She got up early before the others. You know when the assignment is a stewardship from God, you come early and you leave late. You are not looking for shortcuts. But when the work of the kingdom is just a job, you try to come late, you try to leave early, and you try to skip out on as much as you can. Not this one! She says, "I will come early. I will work longer. It is in my heart. It is a part of who I am. It is You whom I am serving, not just the people." Though serving people is a valid and good thing.

VIII. THERE I WILL GIVE YOU MY LOVE (7:12)

- A. The Bride had known sessions of uninterrupted intimacy with Jesus in the midst of ministry.

¹¹***Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages.*** ¹²***Let us get up early to the vineyards...there I will give You my love. (Song 7:11-12).***

Again, she says—let's read it again in verse 11—"Come, my Beloved, let's go to the fields, let's go to the villages, and let us get up early." Here is the phrase, "There I will give You my love." It is there, in ministry, that I will give You my love, she said.

The Lord really touched my own life once some years ago on this verse; it rocked me. I did not like it, to be honest. I was struggling because I had so much going on in ministry—the labor of it and the hours—and the return did not seem worth the effort. There was a lot of criticism from outside and inside, the money was not right, and the people were not responding. I was spending a lot of time praying and teaching. I said, "I do not want to keep doing this. I would rather just be alone with You."

The Lord spoke to me so clearly. He said, "There you will give Me your love. That is what I want. In the midst of the rigors I want you to love Me." It is easy to love Him under the apple tree, back in Song of Solomon 2 at the banqueting table, but He says, "I want you to love Me in the rigors of the field, of the valley, of the

vineyards where the young ones are not responding well, where the watchmen are striking you. That is where I want you not to give up, not to give in. That is where I want your love.” Now He wants our love in the early days, of course, but beloved, when we give Him love in Song of Solomon 7, that is mature love.

B. **There:** She learned to love Him in the place of selfless labor, disappointments, and mistreatment. It is easy to become bitter, disappointed, burned out, or preoccupied with how we are being treated while serving others in the field. We can drift away from our intimacy with Jesus in the midst of the rigors and disappointments of ministry. It is much easier to give Jesus our love at the banqueting table under the shade tree (2:3-4) without the pressures of serving others.

C. Paul labored in ministry more than all the other apostles and suffered great difficulties.

¹⁰I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Cor. 15:10)

Paul the apostle said he labored more than all the others. That is, he had more rigors, he had more pressures, and it was there in the midst of the vineyards and the labor he loved Him. Now what happens to a lot of folks—I mean it is easy; it has happened to me a few times—in the midst of the fields and the villages and the vineyards is where we can get bitter. That is where we can get disappointed. That is where we can get preoccupied with how people are treating us.

The Lord would say, “Do not be preoccupied with how they are treating you. Be preoccupied with Me. I did not say that there the people will love you. I said that there you will love Me.” If our mindset is not right, we can drift away from our intimacy with God **because we are there to get loved by people**. The Lord put us there that **we could show an even deeper love for Him** by not yielding to the preoccupation and the bitterness, to the “I am not treated well...I do not get what I want...it is not worth it...the burnout.” The Lord would say, “Why don't you realign yourself and love Me there, and you will find I will refresh you and renew you.” Amen and amen! Let's stand.

D. The Bride wanted the King to enjoy the fruit of her labor in partnership with Him (7:13). The beautiful fragrance of the mandrake flowed as they labored together in the harvest. The impact of her ministry was pleasant fruit. There is joy in knowing that the fruit of our ministry is pleasant to the King. Jesus spoke of drawing out of our treasury that which is old and new (Mt. 13:52).

¹²There I will give you my love. ¹³The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for You, my Beloved. (Song 7:12-13)