

Session 9 The Ultimate Two-Fold Test Of Maturity (Song 5:2-16)

For answers to fill-in-the-blanks spaces and for *additional study material pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org

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

- A. The Bride prayed for both the north winds of adversity and the south winds of blessing to come to the garden of her heart so that the spices of grace or God’s presence might flow from her to others. The answer to her prayer for the *north winds* came in the 2-fold test of Song 5:3-7.

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

- B. Verse 16 is the turning point in the Song. The Song of Solomon has two main sections.

1. Song 1-4 is focused on God’s people as the Bride receiving *her inheritance* in God.
2. Song 5-8 is focused on God as the Bridegroom receiving *His inheritance* in His people.

- C. Jesus has an inheritance in His people (Eph. 1:18). This is the time when the garden of her heart becomes His garden. She sees her life as *His* instead of her own.

- D. The King revealed Himself to the Bride as the “Jesus of Gethsemane” (5:2). Then He asked her to open her heart *to Him* to experience new dimensions of intimacy in the fellowship of His sufferings.

¹⁰... that I may know Him...and the fellowship of His sufferings... (Phil. 3:10)

1. There are several wrong ways in which God’s people approach suffering. Some receive all the suffering that comes, even when it is an attack of the enemy that should be resisted.
2. Persecution for Jesus’ sake is the main suffering that is described in the New Testament.

- E. She responded in obedience (5:3-5), which was followed by a two-fold test. First, the King tested her by withdrawing the sense of His presence from her (5:6). Next, He allowed the spiritual authorities to mistreat her and take her ministry away (5:7). She responded with love for Him (5:8).

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

- A. The King revealed Himself as one who suffered in Gethsemane in the dark night where His hair was covered with the dew. His hair being wet points to the Lord enduring the dark night of Gethsemane.

²I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my Beloved! He knocks, saying, “Open for Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one; for My head is covered with dew, My locks [hair] with the drops of the night.” (Song 5:2)

- B. ***Open for Me***: The King knocked on the door of her heart (5:2) in answer to her prayer for the north winds (4:16). The knock is His invitation to bring her forward in new dimensions of the Spirit.

²⁰I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)

- C. ***I sleep***: She sleeps or rests with confidence in the King’s leadership. Her heart is awake to spiritual things as she walks in obedience. We are to be spiritually awake (1 Thes. 5:6; cf. Rom. 13:11).
- D. The King empowered her to open to Him by calling her four names that describe different facets of her love and devotion to Him. His affirmation strengthens her resolve to obey Him fully.

²***He knocks, saying, “Open for Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one...” (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 our struggle. He sees us through His eyes of sympathy and mercy.
2. ***My love***: He reminds her of His tender love for her. Grace-motivation is to be motivated by love and gratitude instead of fear and judgment. *Affection-based obedience* is the strongest type of obedience because it flows from experiencing Jesus’ affection. It is the most consistent obedience because a lovesick person will endure anything for love.
3. ***My dove***: A dove speaks of her singleness of mind and loyal love without compromise.
4. ***My perfect one***: He knows that she has set her heart to obey Him perfectly. Perfect refers to being mature. She has mature obedience before this test (5:2) and after it (6:9).

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

- A. The Bride instantly arose in obedience to the King (5:5). His affirmation after this testing makes it clear that she responded in obedience (6:4-5). Her heart yearned with love for Him (5: 4).

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

- B. Her responsive love to the King is seen throughout this passage. He called her *My perfect one* (5:2) because of her obedience in arising to open her heart to Him (5:5) as her heart yearned (5:4) and leapt (5:6), in being lovesick (5:8), and in magnifying His great beauty (5:10-16). Some interpret verse 3 as compromise by assuming that refusing to put her garments on and to defile her feet meant that she wanted to stay in bed because of the inconvenience of rising up.
- C. ***Taken off my robe***: She responded in obedience by refusing to put on her own robe of righteousness and by washing her feet in His grace and refusing to dirty them again (5:3). She refused to wear her own garments. She is not complaining about the inconvenience of arising, but opens her heart to Him in responsive love. We are clothed with the robe of His righteousness (Isa. 61:10) since our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). She took off her garments and put on His righteousness. Joshua the high priest exchanged his filthy clothing for the garments of salvation (Zech. 3:3-5)
- D. ***I have washed my feet***: Jesus told Peter that he was clean and needed only his feet to be cleansed (Jn. 13:6-14). This spoke of his need for daily spiritual cleansing. She refuses to defile her feet again through compromise (5:3).

- E. ***His hand by the latch of the door:*** The hand of God releases grace on the latch or lock of her heart to help her unlock her heart. The lock on her heart speaks of her thoughts and emotions that affect her decisions. God’s hand resting on His people speaks of His grace (Acts 11:21-23).

⁴My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door...⁵I arose to open for my Beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. (Song 5:4-5)

²¹The hand of the Lord was with them...²³he... had seen the grace of God. (Acts 11:21-23)

- F. ***Her hands and fingers drip with myrrh:*** This speaks of grace to help her embrace the difficulty of the coming two-fold test. Myrrh flowed like liquid on the lock of her heart. Myrrh was a fragrant burial spice. It speaks of death to self and the commitment to embrace the cross. Her fingers dripping with myrrh speak of the activity of her faith working in practical ways.

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). This affected her ability to experience intimacy with God. She walked in full obedience in Song 5:6.

⁶I opened for my Beloved, but my Beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when He spoke. I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer. (Song 5:6)

- B. ***I sought Him:*** She sought Him fervently by calling out to Him, but she could not find Him. This season of temporary *divine silence* was part of His training to cause her love to mature.

- C. The Lord temporarily hid Himself from the Bride on two occasions in the Song (3:1-2 and 5:6). In Song 3:1-2, His manifest presence lifted from her related to her disobedience, but now it is related to her mature obedience (5:6). Some Bible teachers in the Middle Ages called this *the dark night of the soul* referring to God temporarily withholding His manifest presence for those who were walking in obedience. This is not a biblical term.

- D. Jesus promised never to leave us (Heb. 13:5). He sometimes withdraws the discernable feelings of His manifest presence to test us and to bring our love to maturity as she prayed in Song 4:16.

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

- E. Job was the most righteousness man on earth when he was afflicted by a severe test (Job 1:8). The result of Job’s testing was a *face-to-face* intimacy with God and multiplied blessing (Job 42:5, 10).

⁸The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” (Job 1:8)

⁵I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You...¹⁰The LORD restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends...twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:5, 10)

- 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). While in a place of faith and obedience, Joseph was cast into a pit on two occasions as God was preparing him for leadership (Gen. 37-50).

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

- A. The leaders took away the Bride's ministry or her place of function in the body (5:7). This test related to having her ministry rejected by the leaders. The watchmen or leaders strike and wound her, taking her veil (spiritual covering) so she can no longer function in ministry in the Body.

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

- B. **The watchmen:** the watchmen and keepers of the walls speak of the spiritual authorities who guard the walls of the city to protect God's people.
- C. **Took my veil away:** the leaders taking away her veil speaks of removing her spiritual covering and therefore her place of function in the body (1 Cor. 11:10).

VI. THE BRIDE'S RESPONSE: SHE IS LOVESICK INSTEAD OF 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 you are disappointed by circumstances?" She responded, "I am Yours, at the deepest level of love."

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

- B. **Lovesick:** She was sick with love for the King instead of being offended at Him (Mt. 11:6). Our confession is that, "I am in it for love because He is so worthy and beautiful (5:8-10).

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

- C. To be lovesick for God includes loving Jesus 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.

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

- A. The spiritually immature daughters asked the Bride questions throughout the Song. They see that she is lovesick for the King in the midst of her troubles, instead of being offended and depressed.

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

- B. **What is your Beloved:** In essence, the daughters of Jerusalem asked the Bride, "Why do you love Him so much that you charge us to go find Him? He has abandoned you. He took His presence away 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. What did she know about Him that they don't know?

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

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

- A. The Bride answered the daughters' question by proclaiming the King's beauty (5:10-16). This is 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 together with agricultural images to convey ten attributes of the King's personality. Each attribute has two descriptions.

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

- B. The Bride started with a general statement of the King's beauty (5:10), then developed ten attributes (5:11-15) and ended with a summary statement (5:16).

1. *His head:* the Lord's sovereign leadership over all
2. *His locks:* the Lord's dedication to God and His Church
3. *His eyes:* the Lord's infinite knowledge, wisdom, understanding, discernment
4. *His cheeks:* the Lord's diverse emotional makeup
5. *His lips:* God's word
6. *His hands:* the Lord's divine activity
7. *His body:* the Lord's tender compassion
8. *His legs:* the Lord's walk and administration of His purposes
9. *His countenance:* God's impartation to His people
10. *His mouth:* Intimacy with God
11. *He is altogether lovely:* His comprehensive beauty
12. *He is my Beloved and my Friend*

- C. As we become familiar with these truths, we will be able to speak them to Jesus to express our love; to the devil when he accuses God to us; to ourselves in time of temptation and discouragement; to others who are need of encouragement to trust and love Jesus.

- D. She starts with a general statement about Jesus' beauty (5:10). In her difficulty, she refers to Jesus as her *Beloved* or as *the One she loves*. NIV translates "white" as "radiant." His beauty is fascinating. He is ruddy or red. This is a reference to His humanity. He understands our difficulty because He endured suffering as a Man (Heb. 2:11-17). He is "chief" denoting His incomparable superiority.

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

- E. ***Altogether lovely:*** Her summary statement is that the King is altogether lovely. The One she loves is her friend. He is not only radiant in His majesty, but He humbled Himself to be our friend.

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

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

- A. The conversation that began between the Bride and the daughters in Song 5:8 continues here. After the daughters saw the Bride's insight into the King (5:10-16), they concluded she knew so much more about Him than they did. They asked a second question, "Where is your Beloved that we may seek Him like you do?" That is, we want to know Him like you do and have what you have.

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

- B. **Where:** The Bride's answer in Song 5:10-16 caused the daughters to change their question from "What is He?" (5:9), to "Where can we find Him?" The Bride once asked the daughters to help her find the King (5:8), but now it is reversed as the daughters ask her to help them find the King (6:1).
- C. The Bride's testing results in the lives of others being dramatically changed. We never know who is watching us as we love and trust Jesus in our difficulties. The Holy Spirit is raising up lovesick messengers who know Jesus in a way that will deeply impact others.

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 two-fold test is now over.

⁴O My love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! ⁵Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me. (Song 6:4-5)

1. **Tirzah:** He declared that she was as beautiful as Tirzah, which became the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.
 2. **Jerusalem:** He declared that she was as lovely as Jerusalem, the capital of Israel spiritually and politically.
 3. **Awesome as an army with banners:** When an army in the ancient world returned victorious from battle, they displayed their banners in a military procession. She defeated her greatest enemies. They were those found in her heart.
- B. Jesus is "conquered" only by His Bride's extravagant love. Our eyes of devotion deeply touch His heart. All the armies in hell cannot conquer Jesus, but the eyes of His Bride "conquer" Him when they are true to Him in testing. Do you know the way you move Him and catch His eye?

⁵Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me. (Song 6:5)

XI. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (e.g., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?