

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

For additional study material pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org

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).
- 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) and 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).
- 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)*

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. (6:11)*
- 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.
- 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, or garden speaks 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.
⁹*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field [garden]... (1 Cor. 3:9)*
- 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.

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. (7:12)*

- 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. ⁸*So, 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)**

- 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)*

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? (6:13)*

- 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.

- 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.

- 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)
- 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)***

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

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

- A. The King vindicated the Bride by releasing a great measure of grace in and through her (7:6-9). 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. (7:6-9)
- 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. (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. (4:10)

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

- 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).
- 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)
- 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."
- 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).
¹⁰I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me. (7:10)
- 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.
- J. The Bride's partnership is expressed in prayer for effectiveness in working together (7:11-12).
¹¹Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages. ¹²Let 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. (7:11-12)
- 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).
³⁵Behold...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.*”
²⁰They 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.
¹²Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded.... (7:12).

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.
¹¹Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages. ¹²Let us get up early to the vineyards...there I will give You my love. (7:11-12).
- 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.
¹⁰ I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Cor. 15:10)
- 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. (7:12-13)

IX. 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?