

Session 8 The Ravished Heart of God (Song 4:1-16)

Young Man

4 :1 You are beautiful, my darling, beautiful beyond words.
Your eyes are like doves behind your veil.
Your hair falls in waves, like a flock of goats winding down the slopes of Gilead.
2 Your teeth are as white as sheep, recently shorn and freshly washed.
Your smile is flawless, each tooth matched with its twin.
3 Your lips are like scarlet ribbon; your mouth is inviting.
Your cheeks are like rosy pomegranates behind your veil.
4 Your neck is as beautiful as the tower of David,
jewelled with the shields of a thousand heroes.
5 Your breasts are like two fawns, twin fawns of a gazelle grazing among the lilies.
6 Before the dawn breezes blow and the night shadows flee,
I will hurry to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.
7 You are altogether beautiful, my darling, beautiful in every way.
8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon.
Come down[b] from Mount Amana, from the peaks of Senir and Hermon,
where the lions have their dens and leopards live among the hills.
9 You have captured my heart, my treasure, my bride.
You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes, with a single jewel of your necklace.
10 Your love delights me, my treasure, my bride.
Your love is better than wine, your perfume more fragrant than spices.
11 Your lips are as sweet as nectar, my bride. Honey and milk are under your tongue.
Your clothes are scented like the cedars of Lebanon.
12 You are my private garden, my treasure, my bride, a secluded spring, a hidden fountain.
13 Your thighs shelter a paradise of pomegranates with rare spices, henna with nard,
14 nard and saffron, fragrant calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense,
myrrh, and aloes, and every other lovely spice.
15 You are a garden fountain, a well of fresh water streaming down from Lebanon's
mountains.

Young Woman

16 Awake, north wind! Rise up, south wind!
Blow on my garden and spread its fragrance all around.
Come into your garden, my love; taste its finest fruits.

I. THE CHERISHED HEART OF GOD: EQUIPPED TO LOVE JESUS (4:1-8)

A. In Song 4:1-5, Solomon gave eight characteristics of the Shulamite maiden that spoke of her physical beauty. These characteristics can be seen as symbolic of

spiritual characteristics. In her season of discipline (3:1-2) the King described her beauty (4:1-5), even while her obedience was immature. He saw her sincere desire to obey before it was fully manifested in her character. This motivated her to commit to obey Him by rising up to go to the mountains with Him (4:6).

Behold, you are fair [beautiful], My love...you have dove's eyes...your hair is like a flock of goats...Your teeth are like shorn sheep...Your lips are like...scarlet, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples...are like a piece of pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David... Your breasts are like fawns...I will go my way to the mountain... (Song 4:1-6)

B. The King spoke to her in agricultural language that was familiar in her day. The Scripture gives insight into the meaning of the symbols.

In interpreting this passage spiritually, we see the Lord affirming eight "budding virtues" in the Bride's life. Each godly virtue starts out in "seed form" as a sincere desire to obey.

C. In Song 4:1-5, we see the cherishing heart of Jesus our Bridegroom King. Jesus washes and cherishes His Church. God's cherishing heart for His people is one of the prominent spiritual themes in the Song. The Lord's affirmation in our life breaks the power of accusation.

26...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church...

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. (Eph. 5:26-29)

D. The Lord transforms His people by cherishing them. He removes the stain of shame from our heart. One way that He cherishes His people is by affirming the budding virtues in their lives.

With tender love, Jesus corrects, rebukes, and calls us to greater zeal and repentance (Rev. 3:19) as He invites us to deeper fellowship (Rev. 3:20) and partnership with Him (Rev. 3:21). This is the same spirit in which His people are to correct, rebuke, and call others to repentance.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent...

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...To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne. (Rev. 3:19-21)

E. The Laodicean church was self-satisfied, spiritually passive, and proud. They had taken their relationship with Jesus for granted. Yet Jesus pursued them, knocking on the door and lifting His voice to beckon them to return by offering to have dinner with them and share His resources.

F. The devil assaults us with accusation to influence us to give up in despair.

The devil wants us to feel like hopeless hypocrites. He knows that accusation and the fear of being rejected by God will hinder our motivation to love. Being preoccupied with condemnation, failure, and shame hinders us from walking with the Lord effectively.

...for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (Rev. 12:10)

G. The Lord makes His people feel beautiful and loved in the grace of God, even while they are growing. When we feel cherished, we become confident in our love for Jesus.

H. The whole truth about our life includes so much more than the wrong we have done. Our obedience begins when we sincerely set our heart to obey Him, not after we gain full victory in an area of our life. We can confidently feel His pleasure at every step of the growth process.

I. Jesus does not define our life by our struggles. He sees more than our outward actions. He defines us by what we set our heart on and by our longing to love Him. The Lord relates to us on the basis of grace. This includes relating to us according to what we long to be, not according to what we fail to do. He sees our heart more clearly than we do.

...judge nothing...until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. 1 Cor. 4:5

J. He sees the seeds of character in us and calls forth things that do not yet exist in fullness as though they did. He sees the fullness of our love even when it is in seed form as a budding virtue.

God, who...calls those things which do not exist as though they did. (Rom. 4:17)

K. While Israel was being attacked by a mighty Midianite army, Gideon hid in the winepress in fear. An angel appeared to him and called him a mighty man of valour. The Lord saw in Gideon what he could not see in himself—seeds of faith and courage that he was not yet operating in. The Lord named Gideon according to what he would become in the future, and he went on to become one of Israel's great military leaders.

12And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valour!" (Judg. 6:12)

L. Jesus called Peter a rock, one who was reliable and stable (Mt. 16:18). He knew Peter would one day deny Him, but He also saw the seeds of stability in Peter and so named him the rock.

M. We see the Lord's "editing process" in Abraham's life, saying that he never wavered in his faith.

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief. (Rom. 4:20)

N. David's failures are recorded in the Scripture, yet God's testimony of his life was that David did all of God's will and fulfilled God's purpose (Acts 13:22, 36).

He raised up David...concerning whom He testified and said, "I have found David...a man after My heart, who will do all My will..." (Acts 13:22, NAS)

II. WE ARE BEAUTIFUL TO GOD EVEN IN OUR WEAKNESS (4:1-5)

A. After the Bride's season of discipline (3:1-2), the King declared that she was beautiful to Him. The Holy Spirit gives a trumpet blast to our heart, "Behold! You are beautiful, and I love you."

1 Behold, you are fair [beautiful], **My love! Behold, you are fair!** (Song 4:1)

B. The King highlighted eight character traits that the Lord wants to develop in His Bride (4:1-5).

1. **Dove's eyes:** Eyes of single-minded devotion and loyalty to the Lord
2. **Hair like goats:** Dedication to God (hair may point to submission or to a Nazirite dedication)
3. **Teeth like shorn sheep:** Chewing the meat of the Word
4. **Lips like scarlet:** Godly speech that calls forth God's redemptive (scarlet) purposes in others
5. **Kisses of the mouth:** Intimacy with God in receiving the kisses of His Word
6. **Veiled temples** (cheeks/countenance): Emotions empowered by the grace of God
7. **Neck like David's tower:** Setting our will to obey God without any stiff-necked resistance
8. **Breasts like fawns:** The power to edify and nurture others with the milk of the Word

III. THE BRIDE'S FEARLESS COMMITMENT (4:6-8)

A. The Bride responded to the King's affirmations of her beauty (4:1-5) by setting her heart to obey Him and going to the mountain with Him (4:6). She walked this out fully in Song 5-8.

Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. (Song 4:6)

1. The King called her to rise up to go to the mountains with Him in Song 2:10. She refused Him, telling Him to turn and go to the mountains without her (2:17).

He comes leaping upon the mountains...¹⁰My Beloved spoke..."Rise up...and come away..." Until the day breaks...turn, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle... upon the mountains... (Song 2:8-17)

2. In Song 3:2 she agreed to arise to go to the city, but not the mountains. Here, she commits to obey by going to the mountains (4:6).

2 “I will rise now...and go about the city...I will seek the One I love.” (Song 3:2)

B. **Myrrh:** A costly and fragrant spice used for burial, myrrh speaks of Jesus' death. He ascended the mountain of myrrh when He went to the cross. We are also to take up our cross to deny ourselves as we ascend the mountain of myrrh to obey God's will (Lk. 9:26).

C. **Frankincense:** Incense throughout Scripture speaks of prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8). We ascend the hill of frankincense—engage in prayer—to receive strength to ascend the mountain of myrrh.

D. **I will go:** The maiden makes a firm decision to leave the comfort zone to go up the mountain—to walk in all God's will without fear. How beautiful to Jesus are the words, “I will go!”

E. **My way:** Each of us has a “tailor-made path” that the Lord has specifically chosen for each of us to walk. “Our way” to the mountain involves difficulties unique to God's calling on each life.

F. The King called the Bride to come with Him from the mountains of Lebanon (4:8). With her new commitment to go to the mountain (4:6), she now carried her heart as a loyal Bride. Over the next four chapters of the Song we see the development and expression of her maturity in love.

Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse [Bride], with Me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana...from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. (Song 4:8)

G. **Lions and leopards:** She must war against lions and leopards, animals that devour humans. Satan is likened to a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). This verse speaks of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-12).

IV. THE RAVISHED HEART OF GOD (4:9-5:1)

A. God's heart is ravished for His people (4:9). This verse touches one of the most significant truths in the Song, that God has deep desire for His people. We gain understanding of the ravished heart of God from the definition of “ravished”: being filled with emotions of joy or delight because of one who is unusually attractive (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; You have ravished My heart. (Song 4:9)

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

B. God loves us in the same way that God loves God. The measure of the Father's affection and love for Jesus is the measure of Jesus' love for us. This is the ultimate statement of our worth.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you.” (Jn. 15:9)

V. THE CHRISTIAN PARADIGM OF GOD

A. The Christian paradigm of God is founded on the revelation of God's tenderness and deep emotions of love. The idea of God as a tender Father and a passionate Bridegroom was a new thought in religious history in Jesus' generation

B. Jewish tradition emphasised God's holiness, the sense of His being totally separate from sin. They did not think of a holy God as sharing human experience; they thought him incapable of sharing our experience. They saw God as being "above" sharing the human dilemma by the very definition of being God.

C. The Stoics, Greek philosophers who believed that God had no emotions for humans, saw the main attribute of God as apatheia, God's inability to feel anything. They reasoned that if God felt sorrow or joy, then He would be vulnerable to being hurt and thus influenced or even controlled by what He felt. They believed that anyone who affected God's emotions would be greater than God for that moment.

D. The Epicureans, other Greek philosophers, believed that the gods lived detached, in eternal bliss. They lived in the intermediate world and were not aware of events occurring on earth.

E. The Jews understood God as a holy God, separated from humans; the Stoics had an emotionless god, and the Epicureans a detached god. Into this context of religious thought came the new idea of the Christian God who subjected Himself to human emotion and suffering

Heb. 4:15. **This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.**

Heb 5:8. **Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.**

VI. JESUS' LOVE FOR HIS BRIDE (4:9-10)

A. Jesus has great love for His Bride (4:9-10c). The maiden's twofold identity as His sister and spouse/bride is emphasised seven times (4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 5:1, 2).

You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse [Bride]; You have ravished My heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace. How fair [beautiful] is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better than wine is your love... Song 4:9-10

Being called Jesus' spouse, or bride, reminds us of His desire for deep partnership with His people. Being Jesus' sister reminds us of His humanity and His partnership with His people (Mt. 12:48-50; Heb. 2:11, 17).

B. **With one look of your eyes:** Jesus' heart moves with each "look of devotion and love" that we give Him. The very movement of our heart to love Him touches Him. Our obedience begins when we set our heart to obey Him, not after we gain the full victory in a specific area.

C. **With one link of your necklace:** In Scripture, the neck can speak of the will, which can be resistant (stiff-necked) or submissive. Spiritually, each link of her necklace may represent each individual response of obedience that we give the Lord. Each decision for love that we make moves Jesus' heart. He remembers every movement of love that our heart makes towards Him.

D. **How fair is your love:** The Lord considers our love beautiful in His sight; therefore our life is defined as successful and great. Our obedience, based in love, brings great delight to Jesus.

E. **How much better than wine is your love:** The King turned around her earlier statement, when she cried out, "For Your love is better than wine" (1:2). The wine metaphor speaks of that which exhilarates the heart. Wine in the context of marriage speaks of a drink of celebration.

VII. THE BRIDE'S LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (4:10-15)

A. The King received great pleasure from her heart of love (4:10-11).

How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices! Your lips, O My spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. (Song 4:10-11)

B. **The scent of your perfumes:** This can refer to her mind being filled with God's Word. As the invisible fragrance of perfume expresses the inner quality of a plant, so our thoughts are the scent of our inner life. The "scent" of our perfumes speaks of our thoughts expressed to God in our prayers, meditation on the Word, and desire to obey Him (Ps. 141:2; Isa. 60:6; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4).

C. **Your lips drip as the honeycomb:** This speaks of her words being sweet like honey when she speaks to God in worship and prayer (2:14) and when she blesses and encourages others.

D. **The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon:** This refers to her deeds being fragrant before God. Garments speak of the Bride's acts of obedience.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honour to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.

She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear.

For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people. (Rev. 19:7-8)

E. The Bride's dedication to the King was described as a garden with a spring and a fountain. The garden of a king was private; it was enclosed with a fence to keep animals from polluting it. A sealed up spring and fountain speak of an undefiled water supply, unpolluted by animals.

A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse, a spring sealed up, a fountain sealed. Song 4:12

F. The Bride's life and ministry were described as an orchard filled with fruits, plants, trees, and spices (4:13-14). This speaks of the fruitfulness of her life.

Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. (Song 4:13-14)

G. The Spirit's ministry in the Bride's life is described as a fountain, a well, and streams. These three sources of water can refer to the different ways we experience the Spirit in our lives.

...a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. (Song 4:15)

VIII. THE BRIDE'S CRY TO EXPERIENCE AN INCREASE OF GOD'S PRESENCE 4:16

A. She now has enough confidence in God's goodness to offer this important twofold prayer. She prayed for both the north winds of adversity and the south winds of blessing, that the spices of grace might flow in her life. She knew that both played an important role in her life becoming a fragrant garden. Only God has the wisdom to know the right combination of the north and the south winds necessary in each season of our life.

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)

B. **Let my Beloved come to His garden:** The garden of her heart became His garden. She now sees her life and ministry as His garden instead of hers. Jesus has an inheritance in the Church. This is the turning point in the Song: Song 1-4 is focused on us receiving our inheritance in God; Song 5-8 is focused on God receiving His inheritance in us.

Eph 1:18b ...those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

C. The Bride now lives under the King's full ownership (5:1). Spiritually speaking, Jesus is now enjoying His inheritance as His people live under His ownership. Nine times He says "My" to depict His ownership of her life and ministry (three times in 5:1 and six in 5:2).

I have come to My garden, My sister, My spouse; I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk. Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones! (Song 5:1)

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?