

SESSION 6: Her Journey Begins With Spiritual Crisis (1:5-11)

SONG 1:5-11

- 5. I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.***
- 6. Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept.***
- 7. Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?***
- 8. If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds' tents.***
- 9. I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.***
- 10. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold.***
- 11. We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver.***

I. OVERVIEW OF SONG 1:5-11

We have studied the theme of the song, which reveals the Bride's resolutions, commitments and confessions. The testimony of her actual journey now begins (1:5). The "paradox of grace" is her first experience. She sees the reality of her sinful desires, but she also sees that she is lovely to God in her God-given passion for Jesus and in her position in the grace of God. Her first revelation of Jesus is "the counseling Shepherd" who compassionately teaches her the way forward in her weakness.

II. AN ILLUSTRATION FROM PETER'S LIFE

- A.** Let us first consider an illustration of failure in Peter's life in order to draw analogies from his struggle.
- B.** During the Last Supper, Jesus warned Peter that Satan was going to test him in such a way that Peter would deny the Lord. He explains that Peter would stumble, but that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31-34).

- C. Several hours later in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus gave Peter a significant 2-fold description of how the redeemed heart operates. Peter did not understand these things about his heart. We will use this 2-fold description throughout this session.

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt. 26:41)

1. Peter had weak flesh, but he also possessed a willing spirit. Peter stumbles because of his weak flesh yet longs for Jesus because of his willing spirit.
2. The NIV translated the phrase "the flesh is weak" as your body is weak. Jesus was referring to the principle of sin operating in us. Peter was physically tired because it was late at night however, Jesus was speaking of more than fatigue. Most Bible translations use the phrase "the flesh is weak."
3. There is a greater capacity for sin in our hearts than we comprehend. No one fully grasps the depth of the wickedness of the human heart. We have many unperceived areas of sin that lie undetected below the surface like hidden fault lines related to an earthquake. The grace of God has helped us in ways that we do not fully understand.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

4. Paul, as a mature apostle, grasped a greater measure of his sinfulness.

Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Tim. 1:15)

5. Knowledge of our weak flesh is an important aspect of the truth about who we are, although it is not the whole truth of who we are. Our flesh is weaker than we know. We are sometimes surprised when we commit a sin. At such times, we are overwhelmed with grief. We think that because we are surprised by our sin then surely God must also be surprised. Such misunderstanding often results in fear of being rejected by God.
6. What is God thinking when we discover the weakness of our own flesh? It is important that we perceive what God is thinking about us in our weakness.

- D. Peter decided to go fishing after his sin of denying Jesus three times.

***Peter said to them, "I am going fishing"...that night they caught nothing.
(John 21:3)***

1. The important question is "why did Peter go fishing"? Peter was not fishing because the apostolic team needed money. They had enough money in their collection, so much that Judas could steal it undetected. They fished all night, revealing that Peter was not simply fishing for recreation. Peter was giving up on what God had called him to do.
 - a. In the crisis of discovering our sinful flesh, we often reason within ourselves that it is too painful to reach for the highest things in God if we believe that we will constantly fail in them. It seems easier to settle for living with a second class relationship with Jesus rather than to face the pain of failure.
 - b. I believe Peter was resigning from his leadership role in God's purpose. Peter felt he would rather resign than fail over and over. He didn't feel qualified to be an apostle because his heart was so wounded by his failure in denying Jesus 3 times. Peter felt that he had disappointed the Lord's heart. He could not face the Lord because of his failure. When this occurs we want to run from Him instead of to Him.
 - c. I believe that Peter intended to return to the fishing business, an occupation that he had been successful at before Jesus had called him to apostolic leadership. Peter was changing his occupations by returning to the business of be a fisherman. He was saying, "I can be faithful to God as a fisherman. Failing as a fisherman is not as bad as failing as an apostle. His failure as an apostle would be too great and he couldn't face God under such failure.
2. Some of us feel that we cannot face the future, because we may fail again. Such people become accustomed to a second rate relationship with the Lord. Settling for a second rate relationship with Jesus is not because they don't love the Lord any longer, it is because they have so much shame. They cannot face relating to God like with shame. This is the crisis that Peter was going through.

3. We also sometimes decide to “GO FISHING.” We give up on our vision to be extravagant lovers of God which is the highest calling in our relationship with the Lord. We painfully make the decision to settle down and have a second-class relationship with the Lord. To reach for these high things and fail seems too painful. To fall short causes so much pain, because we imagine the Lord is grieved, angry, and exasperated with us. We think God is upset with us. We are filled with shame and condemnation.

E. The Lord asks Peter the same question 3 times.

Jesus said... "Simon... do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."...
He said to him again a second time, "Simon...do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."...
He said to him the third time, "Simon...do you love Me?" Peter...said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." (Jn.21:15-17)

1. In Jn. 21:15, Jesus repeatedly asks a question that pierces Simon Peter's heart. He says, “Simon, do you love Me?” Peter says, “Lord, You know I love You.” The Lord asked him the question a second and third time. He was calling Peter back into the same quality of relationship with Him that Peter had before he denied Jesus. The Lord was revealing to Peter how much Peter loved Jesus and how much affection He had for him even in his weakness.
2. When God asks us a question, it is not because God needs information. Why was God asking Peter this question? He wants Peter to discover information about himself. The Lord already knows that Peter loves Him. But He wants Peter to have confidence in his sincere love for Jesus.
 - a. This is similar to the question that the Lord asked Adam, after he sinned in the Garden of Eden.

The LORD God called to Adam... "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9)

- b. God knew exactly where Adam was. He was not saying, “Which tree are you hiding behind?” He was asking the question so that Adam would know where Adam was. God means for Adam to understand morally and spiritually where he is, not which tree he is hiding behind. God wanted Adam to discover the truth about himself.

3. I imagine Jesus said something like, “Peter, I know how you feel.” I know that you love Me.” Peter probably began to weep. Jesus might have added, “Peter, do you remember when we were in the garden 8 days ago? I told you something very important about your heart. You didn’t believe Me when I said that your flesh was weak. I want to remind you of something else that I told you that night that you also have a willing spirit.”
 4. I imagine Jesus saying, “You DO have a willing spirit, Peter! When I look at you, I don’t only see weak flesh; I also see a sincere desire in you to love Me. I see a cry in your heart for Me that you don’t fully see.”
 5. I imagine Jesus saying, “Peter, I saw your willing spirit when I first called you and I still see it in you right now even in your despair and failure.”
- F. The Lord sees our willing spirits more than we see it
- G. The Lord is breaking shame off of Peter’s heart.
1. Peter sinned 3 times and the Lord asked him the same question 3 times in Jn. 21.
 2. In John 21:17, The Lord asks the third time, “Peter, do you love Me?” I see the Lord saying, “Peter let Me explain your heart to you “You **do** love Me, you have a willing spirit. Peter answers the third time saying, “Lord, YOU KNOW ALL THINGS, You know that I love You.” Notice a key phrase that Peter added the third time “You know all things...”
 3. In other words, Peter was saying, “Jesus, You know my heart and You keep insisting that I love You, Yes! You know I love You, Yes! I have a willing spirit!” Lord, You know that I have weak flesh, but You **also** know that I have a willing spirit. You don’t just see my sinful struggles, You see my sincere heart.”
 4. The shame is broken off of Peter’s life and he is restored back to his confidence in God, which in this case, includes being restored to his ministry again. His confidence is being restored to live in extravagant love for God again.

- H. God puts a ‘yes’ in the spirit of everyone that is sincerely born-again

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1 John 3:9)

1. A born again believer can never comfortably live in sin, once this ‘yes’ has been put in us. We can not easily deny that ‘yes.’ We can still do acts of sin, but we cannot live a life of total disregard to God without great anguish.
2. Born again believers, seeking to disregard the Lord, are the most miserable people on earth. They have too much of God to enjoy sin and too much of sin to enjoy God. They are in a difficult place because the Holy Spirit is living within them saying, “You belong to God” hindering their ability to continue to live in sin the way they use to.

III. THE PARADOX OF GRACE: “DARK, BUT LOVELY”

I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me (Song 1:5-6).

- A. Her 2-fold confession of faith

“I am dark but lovely” (1:5a)

1. Her first spiritual crisis and her first confession of faith are described here. God reveals to her the sinfulness of her heart but at the same time that she is lovely in His sight. Another way to describe her condition is that she possessed weak flesh but a willing spirit (Matt 26:41).
 - a. Dark of heart (sinful desires). Our weak flesh is dark to God
 - b. Lovely to God (sincere intentions to obey Jesus). Our willing spirit is lovely to God.
2. This passage is not describing a person who is rebellious against God but a sincere believer with weakness in their life.

- B. Her confession of faith in this struggle reveals a very important truth that enables her to grow in holy passion. A person can not grow consistently without this confession. Of course, we don't have to use this language. To consistently grow spiritually requires that we know that we are lovely to God while we are in the process of discovering the darkness of our own heart.
- C. The Bride's journey begins with this principle that we have just considered in Peter's life. Her journey begins with a spiritual crisis common to every fervent believer. It is a great paradox to a young believer to discover their sin, but at the same time to discover God's love for them and their beauty in God and to God. This speaks of a major crisis in our lives, when we love the Lord, and yet we sin grievously.
- D. The real issue at hand is one of understanding divine affections and imparted beauty in the midst of our spiritual weakness. The journey to holy passion starts with this 2-fold revelation.
 - 1. How is she going to relate to God when she discovers her own sinfulness? What we do in this crisis is a very important part about our spiritual life.
 - 2. Many people fail this early test in that they run from Him instead of to Him, because they misunderstand the personality of God. They make the same mistake that Peter initially made. They resign, they give up and they fall into a mindset of shame. In other words, a stronghold of shame. A life of shame leads to a life of sin. If you feel dirty then you will live as one who is unclean. The Lord does **not** want us to resign ourselves to a second class status.
- E. King David's view of Saul and Jonathan at their death gives us some insight into how God views us in our spiritual struggle (II Samuel. 1: 19-27). David sang a prophetic song after Saul has died. Saul was a wicked king, who God killed in judgment. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, David points out Saul's good attributes. He defined Saul as a man who slew the Lords enemies. David viewed Saul from God's perspective. God sees the positive in our spirit even in the midst of seeing the negative. He sees the good of what this sinful king did.

- F. God is committed to revealing the weakness of our flesh to us. God strategically plans ways to reveal to us how weak we are. God does not make us sin.
1. At the end of the SONG, she is leaning on her beloved Jesus, coming up out of the wilderness (8:5).
 2. God's goal for our life is to have a leaning and loving heart at the end of our earthly journey. Nobody will be strutting in pride at the end of his or her spiritual journey. Every time God reveals your sin, it is a judgment against Satan. Satan's victory is sin in your life.
- G. There are 4 reasons why we are beautiful and lovely to God in the midst of our spiritual immaturity.
1. **The finished work of the Cross.** She saw her loveliness comprised in possessing the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). We are lovely in His sight because of His work, not because of what we did. He wrapped us in the robes of righteousness as a gift.
 2. **He has given us a willing spirit at the new birth.** The work of the Holy Spirit to produce a "Yes!" in our spirit appears as beautiful to God. Many underestimate how powerful this is to Jesus. The movement of our heart to God is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is called a willing spirit. When David sinned with Bathsheba he prayed, "restore unto me a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:7).
 3. **The nature of God's personality** - The passions and pleasures of God's heart determines how God feels toward us. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. It is because of the heart of the Beholder, that we are beautiful to God. Our beauty is related to God's emotional make up. If He were an angry God, then we would not be beautiful by virtue of a willing spirit. It is the nature of what is in God's heart that constitutes us beautiful.
 4. **Her destiny before God as His Son's future bride.** The absolute certainty of finality of our destiny as an adorned, embraced and enthroned Bride with Jesus is a substantial reality of our beauty

- H. Three stages of victory:
1. Sincerity of heart yet constant spiritual failure in a particular area.
 - a. At first even in our sincerity, we are regularly defeated (Rom. 7:15-25). However, a first fruit of the new birth is a sincere desire to obey Jesus. This is a beginning evidence of God's grace. It is a vital component of our spiritual victory. The fact that we have sincerity of heart to obey is a real beginning of substantial victory. Sincere intentions to obey must be distinguished from the actual attainment of mature obedience.
 - b. God rejoices and delights in our sincere intentions to obey Jesus. God measures and defines our life by such intentions.
 - c. We often mistakenly measure and define our life by our spiritual attainment. This often results in condemnation.
 2. Spiritual victory yet constant spiritual struggle in a particular area. We can be victorious on regular basis yet we still are continually at war with the flesh in a particular part of our life (Rom. 8:2-13; Gal. 5:16-17).
 3. Spiritual victory without the constant struggle in a previous area of sin. What we all long for is to substantially subdue the flesh in the way (Rom. 6:14-23).
- I. SUMMARY - Some think victory is only when they have subdued the flesh entirely. The very presence of sincere desires to obey Jesus is the beginning of victory.
- J. She speaks to those that are less mature. Throughout the book she teaches the daughters of Jerusalem the spiritual principle of holy passion.

“O daughter of Jerusalem” (1:5b)

- K. The dark tents of Kedar speak of the darkness of the flesh.

“Like the tents of Kedar” (1:5c).

1. The dark tents of Kedar were grayish black tents. She is using language understood by the common person. These tents were common in the geographic area outside of Jerusalem.
2. They were made out of the dark skins of wild goats.

- L. Solomon’s curtains were in the holy place in the temple. She is using language understood by the common person.

“Like the curtains of Solomon” (1:5d)

1. Solomon’s curtains were bright white curtains in the holy place in the temple. In this passage, they speak of the inward work of grace and of God’s glory in her life.

“...your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

2. These curtains were not seen in the outer court, but were hidden from the common person. The beauty of these curtains were hidden from the common eye since they were in the holy place. Only a priest was able to see Solomon’s curtains.

- M. She is saying, “I’m dark of heart like the tents of Kedar but lovely to God like the curtains of Solomon.” The contrast that describes her is seen in the difference between the dark curtains of Kedar and the glorious curtains of Solomon.

1. Outwardly, people see her as the dark tents of Kedar.
2. Inwardly, God sees that she is lovely like the white curtains of Solomon.

N. She becomes self-conscious because of her sin

“Do not look upon me because I am dark.” (1:6a)

1. She cries, “do not look upon me”. She is ashamed that others can see her sin. She is aware that other people can see these spiritual failures in her life.
2. She tells why she is ashamed, “because I am dark”. She is ashamed because of the discovery of her inward corruption. She is overwhelmed by her consciousness of failure. She wants them to stop looking at her. This speaks of her feeling judged. She feels shame from others.
3. When our sin is exposed to our hearts, it is evidence that we are growing in the light.

“For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” (John 3:20)

O. She understands that she was born into the natural world with a sinful heart and tendencies. Her natural inheritance in Adam has made her dark of heart.

“Because the sun has tanned me.” (1:6c)—

1. She is speaking of living under the influence of “the sun”. The sun speaks of the natural realm. Solomon wrote about the sun earlier in the book of Ecclesiastes. In the writings of Solomon, “life under the sun,” spoke about life without God in the natural realm.
2. She cries, “the sun has tanned me”. She is speaking of the impact of being born under the sun or born in natural weakness of sin. Natural life has impacted her and darkened her, as it has every other person born in Adam. We were all born in sin!

P. SUMMARY—She tells the daughters, “I know I’m lovely to God even though there are dark areas in my life. I’m like the dark tents of Kedar, but I know that the cry in my spirit is glorious work of God like the white curtains in the temple of Solomon. Don’t look at me, I’m overwhelmed with the dark part right now.” My only excuse is, the sun, I’ve been born into the natural world, it has impacted me and scared me and marked me.”

IV. HER SPIRITUAL CRISIS: REJECTION AND SHAME

My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyards I have not kept. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companions? (SONG 1:6-7e).

- A. She describes 5 different pressures related to her spiritual crisis in 1:6-7.
1. Other believers reject her.
 2. She feels shame from sin.
 3. She is overworked.
 4. She is distracted from her first love toward Jesus
 5. She is serving Jesus at a distance.

- B. Her negative experiences in the Body of Christ began with rejection in 1:6c.

“My mother’s sons were angry with me.” (1:6c)

1. She describes being rejected by her “mother’s sons”. Throughout the book the mother speaks of the Church since she was born of God through the agency of the church. The apostle Paul as well as other New Testament writers, when referring to the church use the symbolism of a mother. Paul spoke of the New Jerusalem (the church in eternity in the heavenly city) as our “Mother”(Gal. 4:26).

Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Gal. 4:26)

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, (Gal. 4:19)

As apostles of Christ...we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children (1 Thes. 2:6-7).

- a. God is the author of our natural and spiritual birth. However, the agency He uses for our natural birth is a woman, our physical mother.
- b. The agency He uses for our spiritual birth is a member of the Body of Christ (i.e., the church as a spiritual mother). We are born through the church by the Spirit because it is through the body of Christ that we come to the saving knowledge of Jesus. Those who do God's will are His mother and brother (Mt. 12:46-50).
- c. God is our father and the church is spoken of as our mother.
- d. In the virgin birth, Jesus is born of the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15). Jesus coming from the seed of the woman is the foundation of the church.
- e. The people of God are represented as a “mother” that births the man-child.

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. (Rev 12:5)

2. The use of the “mother” in the SONG.
- a. Her mother is described as the agency in God that was used to birth her in the Holy Spirit.

I had brought Him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. (Song 3:4)

I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she who bore you brought you forth. (Song 8:5)

- b. Her mother is described as the one who crowns Jesus. We make Him our king on the wedding day by responding to Him in voluntary love.

“...see King Solomon with the crown with which His mother crowned him on the day of his wedding...” (Song 3:11)

- c. Her mother is described as the one who taught her the things of God.

The house of my mother, she who used to instruct me...(Song 8:2)

3. She describes the beginning of her first crisis as being rejected by some that acted as “sons who were angry with me”. She experiences the common crisis of being rejected and misunderstood (1:6c). Mother’s sons are the other members of the Body of Christ.
4. The angry sons speak of older yet carnal believers who were angry at her youthful zeal. The zeal of young believers sometimes makes other believers angry.

5. She was going full speed for Jesus and found that some were angry with her. She was probably disliked for two reasons.
 - a. First, carnal believers don't like fervent young believers. Zealous people for God bring conviction to dull believers. Some will seek to dismiss such zeal as legalism.
 - b. Second, her pride and untempered zeal probably offend them. The self-absorbed way in which she is speaking about her spiritual love needs seasoning. People who are newly fervent with Jesus have a tendency to be self-absorbed and prideful in expressing their devotion to Jesus to others. This angers carnal believers. Newly zealous believers often exalt themselves and condemn others who do not express devotion to Jesus in the exact same way. They unconsciously see themselves as a model and standard of what is God's highest.
 - c. My youthful example of untempered zeal offended many. I met the Lord in 1971 at age 15 and for the next 5-7 years I acted in some sincere yet spiritually proud ways. I can remember believing that if someone really loved God, then they must preach in public places like the apostles did. I preached a number of times on the streets, on college campuses and in restaurants like Denny's. To further prove that I was not ashamed of the gospel, I carried a large 12-inch long and 6 inch thick Catholic family Bible to school etc. I also wore a 9-inch wooden cross around my neck to obey the command to carry my cross.
 - d. I made these issues actions that defined true commitment. I'd be unhappy with pastors who wouldn't preach in the restaurants and wear a big cross because I interpreted it as the fear of man. I offended many people. I saw myself as a deeply committed young man, and those who refused my actions or admonitions I categorized as backslidden leaders. In my pride, I saw myself as the example of deep commitment.

- C. The angry sons mistreated her by overworking her. She was vulnerable because she was so zealous thus willing to do anything to please her beloved Jesus. She complains that the angry sons took advantage of her fervency and over worked her

“They made me the keeper of the vineyards.” (1:6d)—

1. The angry sons gave her many responsibilities. They made her responsible for other vineyards. She is being overworked and therefore she burns out
 2. Leaders that lack discernment in passion for Jesus tend to overwork those who are red hot for God. They reason that if she is willing then let us pressure her to keep all the vineyard.” She says, “anything for God”.
 3. Her first responsibilities include her own personal walk with God and the responsibilities God gave her instead of the responsibilities religious leaders put on her.
 4. Embracing responsibilities out of God’s grace is the place of burn out. Burn out doesn’t come from hard work as much as from a religious yoke. A religious yoke consists of caring for vineyards (responsibilities) that carnal men give us that are out of the will of God. A believer newly awakened to fervency is susceptible to false yokes.
 5. One of the main traps that fervent yet immature believers are vulnerable to is defining their identity in their ministry function, instead of in Jesus.
- D. She has done all the work she was asked to do. She kept all the other vineyards but her own vineyard she neglected.

They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyards I have not kept. (1:6d)

1. The vineyard here speaks of her own heart. Throughout the entire song her garden is her own heart before the Lord, her own vineyard. The weeds of sin, shame and weariness have choked the life out of in her garden. She has lost the cry for the kisses of His mouth that were so strong initially.
2. Taking care of her own vineyard means nurturing her personal communion with God and doing His will. She is saying, “I’ve served in many areas of ministry but my own love for God has been diminished”.

- E. Next, she makes two statements here about herself. She expresses her shame over her sin. Then she complains about serving at a distance from Jesus. She feels like the veiled woman, the one who couldn't show her face in public as the prostitute. This was not a veil of honor, it was a shameful veil.

“For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of Your companions (1:6e)

1. First, she cries out ***“why should I be as one who veils herself?”*** In the ancient world, a veiled woman was a prostitute. One who wore a veil during the day, so that no one could see her face. It speaks of the sin and the shame that the young Bride experienced in her immaturity. She had sin in her life and felt like a veiled woman before God. There was scandal in her life.
2. Second, ***she complains “why should I be...by the flocks of Your companions?”*** She is saying, “I don't want to serve You so far down the road, I want to serve right next to You.” She is describing herself as serving by the flocks of His companions! She lost the sweetness in her communion with God. In other words, She is saying, “Why should I live at a distance from You, Lord?”

V. HER DESPERATE CRY TO HAVE MORE OF JESUS

Tell me, O You whom I love, where You feed Your flock, Where You make it rest at noon (SONG 1:7).

- A. In the midst of this crisis, she cries out with a desperate prayer. She remembers that she originally only wanted the kisses of His mouth”. She wants to get back to where she was when Jesus first touched her and romanced her heart.

“Tell me, O You whom I love, Where You feed Your flock...”(1:7a)

1. The context of this desperate cry for intimacy is experiencing the grace she described in 1:2-4. Some of the saints around her are angry with her. She is tired and burned out. Things are not going as she expected in 1:2-4. She has become disillusioned with the body of Christ.
2. Her vineyard (heart) is no longer kept, but she loves Him. She cries out, ***“O You whom I love”***. She sees herself as a lover of God. She knows that she is failing, yet she is still a lover of God and not a hopeless hypocrite, as the enemy attempts to continually accuses before her heart.

- B. We see her desperate hunger for God in the midst of her sin and weakness.

“Tell me, where do You feed Your flock,” (1:7b)

1. This “prayer of despair” is her first prayer after 1:2-4. It is very similar to the theme prayers of 1:2-4, when she said, “Draw me and let me run”.
2. “Where do YOU feed YOUR flock”. The key word is “You”. She says it 3 times in 1:7. Jesus wants to hear this heart prayer. “I want to know where You are, You’re the one I love. Where do You feed your people?” She is desperate to touch “Him” and not just to fill her life with religious activity.
3. Regardless what it costs her, she wants the fire of intimacy with God to consume her again. She wants Him to feed her again. When many people experience this first crisis they don’t understand that God wants to hear this cry from them.
4. She cries out to recover her “first love”. She is asking, “where will You touch my heart like You use to?”

- C. She longs to be satisfied again with Jesus. Where do You satisfy the cry of my spirit? I want You to satisfy me, and cause me to rest at noon. What she is saying is this: “I have been fed by all the others, but I want You to feed me.

“Where You make it rest at noon” (1:7b)

1. Noon speaks of the heat of the day. God wants us to rest in the midst of the heat of the day by seeking intimacy with Him.
2. Sheep will only lie down at noon when the sheep has eaten and is full.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures...(Ps. 23:2)

3. More of the church is becoming insatiably hungry for Jesus. Many people whose gardens are not kept feel like a veiled woman before God, serving at a distance. They lose the courage or the confidence to cry out the prayers of intimacy again.

- D. SUMMARY - She felt misunderstood and rejected by people and shame before God. This is a great spiritual crisis for a new believer who is on fire for God. She remembers her great love for Jesus, yet finds herself tired and serving at a distance from Him. So she has described this shameful and hopeless feeling like Peter felt when he gave up. A lot of believers give up right at this point.

- E. She describes 5 different pressures related to her spiritual crisis in vs.6-7. Rejection and shame are the 2 main pressures that feel in these early days of her spiritual journey.
1. Her mother's sons were angry with her - other believers reject her.
 2. She feels like a woman with a shameful veil - she feels shame from sin.
 3. They made her keep the other vineyards - she is overworked.
 4. Her own vineyard (which speaks of her heart) was not kept - she is distracted from her first love toward Jesus
 5. She feels like one by the flocks of His companions – she is serving Jesus at a distance.

VI. JESUS' GLORIOUS ANSWER

If you do not know, O fairest of women, Follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds' tents. (SONG 1:8).

- A. Jesus as the “counseling Shepherd” is seen. The first revelation of Jesus in the SONG is as a “Shepherd” who gives practical counsel in how to progress in holy passion in the midst of her weakness.

"The Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth...(Jn 16:13)

"...the Holy Spirit will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (Jn. 14:26)

- B. He hears her desperate prayer in 1:7 and then personally answers it in 1:8-11. A vital part of the theology of holy passion is found in the complete answer from 1:8-11.
1. First, Jesus gives her a general answer (1:8a).
 2. Then Jesus adds 3-fold specific answers as to where she can find Him (1:8b,c,and d).
 3. Then Jesus gives her 3 affirmations to back up His 3-fold answer. Jesus affirms the sincere intentions of her heart (1:9-11). Then she responds with great gratitude in v.12.

- C. He starts with a general answer that reveals how God sees her. The answer to her recovery is first found in knowing how God views her in her weakness. He reveals to her that she appears as beautiful to Him even in her immaturity.

“O, fairest among women” (1:8b)

1. “Fairest” - The word translated as “fair” is translated in most other versions of the bible as “beautiful” (NAS/NIV). I like the word beautiful.
2. First, He speaks to her heart in her crisis by calling her, “most beautiful”. This is Jesus’ first response to her prayer in 1:4 to “draw me and let us run.” He knows that she is confused. He speaks to her heart before He speaks to her mind. Jesus is helping her to remember His love (1:4e).
 - a. He speaks directly to her shame and her rejection. He says, “You might be unlovely to the angry sons but you are most beautiful to Me.”
 - b. You may despise yourself but you are still most beautiful to Me. He speaks to her shame and rejection.
 - c. He calls her beautiful even in the midst of her disorientation and failure. The Lord gives her an answer that shocks many of us. We would expect a rebuke or to be accused or shamed by the Lord. He says, “I know your garden isn't being kept, I know you are like a veiled woman, I know you're serving at a distance, however, you are most beautiful to Me.
3. He focuses on her loveliness and not her darkness of heart. Jesus has confidence in her future attainment of 6:4. “O fairest of women” is also a prophetic statement (Phil. 1:6).

- D. Jesus calls her the fairest. She is the most beautiful compared to what?” Compared to all the other women of the earth.
1. He’s not comparing her to more mature Christians. It is true we are stumbling compared to a mature apostle. However, He looks at us compared to the 6 billion people who have no interest in Jesus.
 - a. We are so accustomed to falling short however, God is accustomed to the 95% of the earth who have no interest in His son. You care intensely about His son, and you have the gift of righteousness. Thus, we are beautiful in the sight of God in a way that we can't fully see.
 - b. We judge ourselves by other Christians; however, He judges us by the gift of righteousness and how different we are from the vast majority of all the human beings through history. He is comparing her to the vast majority of the 6 billion people in the human race who have no regard for His Word.
 2. The different women He is comparing her to are all the other religions of the world. He is comparing her to all the other religions and to all the other unbelievers in the world. He is not comparing her to a mature apostle. Her great quality is the Yes in her spirit to Jesus. You are one of the rare beautiful people of the earth. If you compare yourself to a mature apostle you say, “I’m weak.” However, have you considered that no unbeliever or believer of another religion has a heart that captures the Lord like your heart does?
- E. He is the only person who perfectly sees our heart. The power of hope is in the revelation of the absolute certainty of our personal victory (Eph. 1:18).

“If you do not know” (1:8a)

- F. Jesus’ specific 3-fold answers introduce her to body life. He gives her 3 unexpected answers to her cry for greater intimacy (1:7). This is not the answer she is looking for.

Follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds’ tents. (SONG 1:8).

G. Jesus gives the beginning of His answer to the question, “Where do you feed your flock?” He gives the first part of the answer by introducing her to body life then in 2:16 He finishes the answer adding, “By the lilies”. This speaks of the place Jesus feeds His Bride in purity, trust, and innocence. The 3 answers all relate to life in the Body as they also answer 3 powerful temptations common to all.

1. Commitment to Body life (v. 8c)
2. Commitment to servant ministry (v. 8d)
3. Commitment to spiritual authority (v. 8e)

H. Commitment to Body life is His first answer.

“Follow in the footsteps of the flock” (1:8c)

1. First, He tells her to follow in the footsteps of the flock, or get involved in the fellowship in the Body. The ‘footsteps of the flock’ is the place where all the sheep are, it is where they walk with Christ. The Lord says follow in the place where the body walks.
2. The devil wants to draw us into isolation so that he can destroy us. This isolation is her reaction to shame and rejection. This is not a reference to her private life of seeking God. She has overreacted to the religious yoke put on her by her angry brothers and has drifted into isolation. There is a great temptation in those who are rejected to leave the body “to go on with Jesus” in isolation.
 - a. When we feel rejection and shame we are often tempted with isolation. Our temptation is to isolation and bitterness.
 - b. Jesus could say, “If you want Me to feed and satisfy you, then you must find Me in the body.

***My beloved has gone to his garden...to feed his flock in the gardens.
Song 6:2***

- I. Take care of your God given responsibilities is His second answer.

“Feed your little goats” (1:8d)

1. Jesus exhorts her to feed her “little goats”. In other words, to take responsibility to feed the young ones or the little flock that God sends to her. Jesus does not want her to take care of all the gardens and all the vineyards like the angry brothers urged her to do.
2. “Your” little goats are all that Jesus asks of her. In the past, she took on too much responsibility. This time, she must just feed HER little ones.
 - a. Limit yourself to only take care of the ones that Jesus entrusted to your rather, do not accept responsibility for every need that comes your way.
 - b. Don’t serve in every ministry, just do what He leads you to do. Get your eyes off the calling that God has given others. Commit yourself to do only what He asks.
 - c. The answer to the question, “Where can I find You” is answered in this verse “by feeding the little ones that Jesus put in your path.”
3. NOTE – some people ARE called to draw back for a season in order to see more of Who He is and to therefore feel more love for Him and therefore to love His people in a deeper way. Those that REALLY seek to walk out the first commandment will always walk out the second commandment.

- J. Submission to spiritual authority is His third answer. Jesus is still speaking to answer the question, “Where can I find You?”

“Beside the shepherds’ tents” (1:8e)

1. Serve the body by the tents of the true shepherds. Jesus wants us to have an open spirit to His shepherds (leaders). We must all keep an open spirit to the men and women that God places over us.
2. God uses these imperfect shepherds to temper us and to do deep things in our heart. God knows that every leader that He has ever placed over you or ever will is an imperfect leader. We find Jesus in deep ways as we relate to imperfect leaders.

3. In my experience, when I see the faults of the imperfect leaders that God has put over me then I am tempted to resist dwelling by their tents. Pressure related to imperfect leaders makes us reach for God in order to have a teachable spirit toward them
4. He answered the 3 main temptations in the life of a believer—
 - a. The first temptation is to isolation and bitterness when we feel rejected or mistreated by the angry sons and when we feel shame related to our sin. Therefore, He says, “Stay in the footsteps of the flock, stay in the church. Let Me heal your isolation. Don’t yield to isolation and bitterness.”
 - b. The second temptation she encountered was selfishness and fear. He says, “I want you to take care of the little goats that I give you.” We say, “We deserve some time off. We have worked so hard keeping the vineyards of so many others.” But the Lord says, “You can only fully find Me in the context of ministry to others.
 - c. The third temptation she wrestled with was to resist having an unteachable or closed spirit. This speaks of ministering in isolation with impatience toward imperfect leaders.

VII. HER SINCERITY IS RE-AFFIRMED BY THE LORD

I have compared you, My love, To My filly among Pharaoh’s chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver (SONG 1:9-11).

- A. In 1:9-10, He compares her to 3 things that reaffirmed the loveliness of her sincerity and willing spirit before God. Then gives her a promise in 1:11.
- B. The first thing He does is to speak to her heart to affirm her. He speaks the love language to her heart again.

“My love”(1:9a)

- C. He uses the words, “My love or My beautiful one.” Each time in this song He speaks to her with either the words “My love or My beloved.” This reveals the way that God relates to His people. For God has infinite tenderness and affection in His heart towards His weak people. His compassion and His affection for sincere believers are beyond our understanding.

- D. God sees her sincere and strong desire to follow Jesus in righteousness.

“I have compared you, My love, To My filly among Pharaoh’s chariots” (1:9b)

1. A filly is a horse. The horse is a symbol of strength and power. The context speaks of her strength in righteousness.
2. “Among Pharaoh’s chariots” speaks of the finest and strongest war horses in the world. The horses of Egypt were well known throughout the world in those days. Pharaoh had the most highly skilled and trained horses in the earth. Pharaoh chose the very best horses of all the horses of Egypt to pull his own chariot. Pharaoh’s own chariot had the best of the best horses. Pharaoh had thousands of horses in his great stables and the one that pulls his personal chariot is the best one.
3. Solomon as the wealthiest man in the world bought many of Pharaoh’s horses. He was one of the few that could afford them.
4. She was like the most skilled and trained horse that carried Pharaoh himself. He says, “You have been trained like the horse that serves Pharaoh. I have trained you to carry the King Himself.” To Jesus the maiden is as the finest horse that can be trained in terms of her intention to do righteousness.
 - a. Jesus was saying, “You are equipped in righteousness more than you understand. You have a growing hunger in your heart that is more than any unbeliever has.” The absence of strength of an unbeliever to “purpose to do righteousness” is the comparison being made.
 - b. Her strength in her intentions to obey God affirms the weaknesses that caused her vineyard to be unkept (1:7).
 - c. Jesus is saying, “you may feel like a failure but to Me you appear like a strong mare.” You are a picture of strength when compared to all the other horses in the world (i.e., the strength of an unbeliever to do righteousness).
5. The Lord is saying, “you are the most trained in righteousness and you possess the most strength of all the people of the earth to seek God. Even with all of your stumbling the “Yes!” in your spirit is seen by God as strength. He is speaking about the strength of her spirit

6. You are trained in righteousness like Pharaoh's own horses compared to all the people of the earth. Remember this is the point of view God is always looking at. You are one of the elect one that are skilled in righteousness. The number is really small, you are very unique to God. But the Lord compares us with the billions of the earth who have no regard for Christ Jesus at all. Though there are millions of people in the world that have said yes to Jesus, the percentage is still very small.
 7. In other words He is saying, "You are not offensive and repulsive to Me." She says, "If I am so trained why did I stumble?" He says, "You are in need of more training, this is true. But you must not despise the training I have given you in the past."
 8. When we face the shame of failure, we feel everything is lost, like everything is wasted from the past. However, this is not true. The training Jesus gave us in the early days is still valid and important in our character. Everything is not lost because we have stumbled in our weakness."
- E. Our emotions are attractive to Him. He has touched our emotions with His Spirit. God sees her emotions rekindled toward Jesus. God has touched the emotional dimension of her life with the early stages of sincere devotion for Jesus.

"Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments" (1:10a)

1. "Cheeks" - The cheeks speak of emotion throughout the song, they reveal anger and joy, etc. When you look at somebody's cheeks, you can tell if there is joy in their heart or if there is anger or sadness in their heart. The emotions of a person are expressed through the cheeks.
2. "Ornaments" - ornaments are created by the skillful work of an artist to beautify its object. Jesus is the artist that has worked to beautify us (Isa.61:3). Though God sees lust and anger in us, He also sees passion growing in us for Him. Ornaments are purposefully honed and beautified by a skilled artist. God is saying, "your emotions are lovely, I have skillfully worked in you a "Yes!" for My Son. That moves the very heart of God.

3. How could emotions be attractive to God when they still contain lust and anger?" God sees these things in our emotions, but that's not all that He sees. He also sees the hunger in our emotions to follow Jesus more fully. He still sees the cry in your spirit for Jesus as well. He sees all things like Peter said, "Lord You know all things and You know that I love You,
 4. The desperate prayer of 1:7 revealed the spiritual hunger that was deep in her emotion for God. God saw the very cry for Him and it was beautiful to God. Her cheeks were lovely like ornaments.
 5. The Holy Spirit skillfully worked this cry into her. Such a prayer counted to God.
 6. We cry out to be free from sin as David did in Psalm 51, when he sinned with Bathsheba. David cried out, "Restore me oh God". That prayer was beautiful to God, it was lovely as an artistic ornament in the sight of God.
- F. God sees her submission to divine authority and her resolute will to obey Jesus.

"Your neck with chains of gold" (1:10b)

1. The neck speaks symbolically of the will. The Bible speaks of people that are stiff-necked, which means a stubborn or rebellious person.
2. The neck also speaks of godly submission
3. The neck is what turns the head as it chooses which way to go, right or left. When a King triumphed over another nation, the conquering general put his foot over that defeated king's neck, which spoke of submission.

4. “Chains of gold” speak of royal authority. Only a King had chains of gold. In those days, few people could afford a chain of gold besides a King. A chain of gold was rare and expensive because it only worn by royalty.
 - a. The prince wore a chain of gold with the king’s emblem on it as he walked through the town.
 - b. Common people could never afford a chain with gold. Solomon had a chain of gold from his father David because David had so much wealth. Solomon’s children had chains of gold. It spoke that he was related to king David.
 - c. “Gold” - speaks of divine character. He knows that we stumble but He sees in us a willing spirit as a chain of gold around our neck.
 - d. “Your neck has kingly authority stamped on it, there’s a "Yes!" in your spirit to King Jesus.
- G. SUMMARY - He gives her three affirmations. She says, “Where can I find You?” In v.8, “You are lovely, you’re beautiful. Stay in the body, serve the people, and have the right spirit towards authority. But let me tell you, your mind in trained, it's not all lost, your emotions are lovely, in your neck I see a resolution in your will to say "Yes!" to God. It has the very gold of God in it.
- H. He deals with is her mind, emotions and will.
 1. The mind speaks of the Pharaoh’s horse, trained in righteousness.
 2. The emotions speak of the cheeks that are lovely with ornaments.
 3. The will speaks of the neck with chains of gold.
- I. He gives the final promise.

“We will make you ornaments of gold with studs of silver.” (1:11) —

1. “Ornaments of gold” - gold speaks of divine character. She will be Christ-like in her golden character. He will make our heart like gold as an extravagant worshipper of Jesus. This speaks of believers purified with fire (Mal. 3:1-4).
2. “Studs of silver” - Silver speaks of redemption. She will be used to bring redemption to other people. She will be equipped to deliver others.
3. “We will make you” - Divine promise to complete His work in her. He is still answering her question from v.7, “Where will You feed me?” God promises to work something special in her. He will make us into a person who fully chooses divine character (gold) and is equipped with silver to deliver others (silver).
4. He is saying, “You will be a worshipper (gold) and a deliverer (silver) when I am finished working with you, so don't give up.
 - a. “We” is a very important word. Father, Son and Holy Spirit working together. It also speaks of God working together in cooperation with the individual believer. He says, “Together we will make you an ornament of gold.” Cooperation with God's grace speaks of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the believer.

***...if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
(Romans 8:13)***

- b. Jesus promised Peter, “I will make you a fisher of men. In other words, the Lord promised Peter to make him a fisher of men. You will be made complete before Jesus is done with you.
 - c. God promises to continue to work on you, if you will not give up. **YOU ARE NOT A FAILURE IF YOU STUMBLE. YOU ARE ONLY A FAILURE IF YOU QUIT.** Because the righteous stumble and they get up again. He is saying, “Do not run from Me, run to Me, when you discover your unkept vineyard.”
- J. SUMMARY – In 1:7, she said, “Where will You feed me?” In 1:8, He said, “Most beautiful, stay in the Body. Take care of the little ones I give you. Keep a right spirit towards imperfect leaders.” Then 1:9, He says, “O’ My love, you are like a trained horse in righteousness, though you are young. The very hand of God Himself has touched your emotions. And your will (neck) is under the authority of God the King. She will be Christ-like in her character and she will be used to deliver others.