

Session 7 God’s Loving Discipline and Safe Leadership (Song 3)

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

I. REVIEW OF SONG 2:8-17

- A. The Bride received new insight into the King as the “Lord of all” who conquered the mountains. She saw Him like a gazelle that could easily leap over all obstacles. Then He called her out of the comfort zone to join Him on the mountains of risk (2:10). This poetically refers to embracing difficult areas of obedience and ministry assignments that challenge our sense of comfort.

⁸*Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains...⁹My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
¹⁰My Beloved spoke, and said to me: “Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away...” (Song 2:8-10)*

- B. The Bride refused the King’s command to arise to join Him on the mountains. She told Him to *turn* and go to the mountains without her (2:17). She struggled because of fear. Her fear was an expression of her spiritual immaturity, not of her rebellion towards God.

¹⁷*Until the day breaks...turn, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle... (Song 2:17)*

- C. In Song 3:1, we see the King’s response to the Bride’s compromise (2:17). He lovingly disciplined her by withdrawing His manifest presence from her heart. He was not angry with her, but jealously desired her to share His values as a mature Bride who enjoys deeper partnership with Him.

¹*By night on my bed I sought the One I love; I sought Him, but I did not find Him. (Song 3:1)*

II. GOD’S DISCIPLINE IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS REJECTION OF US

- A. In God’s jealousy for us, He requires that we walk in the light as He gives more and more to us. As we respond to obey more light, it results in our experiencing a deeper relationship with Jesus.

²⁴*He said to them, “Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. (Mk. 4:24)*

⁵*Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?”
⁶He gives more grace...⁷submit to God. Resist the devil...⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands...and purify your hearts... (Jas. 4:5-8)*

- B. One key message in the Song is that God enjoys His relationship with us, even in our weakness. His love and enjoyment of His people does not mean that He *approves* of all that we do.

- C. Some mistake God’s correction for His rejection. God hates the sin, yet delights in the one He disciplines. The Lord can disapprove of an area in our life without being displeased with us *as a person* or despising the relationship with us. He corrects us to remove what hinders love in us.

¹²*Whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)*

⁶*...for whom the LORD loves He chastens...¹⁰He [disciplines us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (Heb. 12:6, 10)*

- D. Jesus loves His people even as He rebukes them and calls them to repent. Then He invites these very people to rule with Him (Rev. 3:21).

¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent...²¹To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... (Rev. 3:19, 21)

- E. God feels the pain of those whom He disciplines and still considers them His dearly beloved.

⁷I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. (Jer. 12:7)

⁹In all their affliction He was afflicted...in His love...He redeemed them... (Isa. 63:9)

- F. If we neglect to confront sin thoroughly in our life, *we are not loved less by God*, but we do suffer loss in several ways—it minimizes our ability to experience the joy of our salvation, to receive more understanding, to enjoy godly fellowship, and to receive eternal rewards.

¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved... (1 Cor. 3:15)

III. GOD’S MANIFEST PRESENCE IS WITHDRAWN (3:1-2)

- A. The Bride sought God, but did not find Him (3:1-2). This was a very new experience for her.

¹By night on my bed I sought the One I love; I sought Him, but I did not find Him.

²“I will rise now,” I said, “and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek the One I love.” I sought Him, but I did not find Him. (Song 3:1-2)

- B. ***By night I sought Him***: She continued to seek God with perseverance through the night.

- C. ***I did not find Him***: She sought the Lord, but could not find Him after she refused Him (2:17). He sometimes withdraws a measure of His manifest presence from our heart if we neglect to respond, so that He might get our attention. She continued to seek God through prayer and meditation on the Word (2:3-5). She is now learning that prayer is no substitute for full obedience. The Father loves us too much to allow us to come up short of being mature in love.

- D. ***The One I love***: Her heart was set on loving the King, even in her struggles. She is not a hopeless hypocrite. We can continue to call Jesus *the One I love* even before we have the full victory in every area in our life. Our love for Jesus is still real during our struggle to arise to the mountain.

- E. ***On my bed***: She had been called to leave her bed to arise and go to the mountains with the Lord.

- F. ***I will rise now***: The Bride added obedience to her prayer by arising as commanded in Song 2:10. The pain of losing a measure of His manifest presence on her heart moved her to arise off her bed.

- G. ***The city***: She arose to go about the city among the streets and squares—where people interact. Getting involved with new people in a new city may require risk and result in more pressure, etc.

IV. THE BRIDE FOUND THE KING (3:3-4)

- A. After the Bride arose to the city (church), then she requested help from the watchmen or shepherds (leadership). Immediately after that, she found the King (3:3-4).

³*The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, "Have you seen the one I love?"*

⁴*Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the One I love. I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him to the house of my mother... (Song 3:3-4)*

- B. *I found the One I love*: The Lord will respond to any who draw near to Him (Jas 4:8). It is His desire to draw near to us. Yet He wants us to value the relationship enough to draw near to Him.

⁸*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you... (Jas. 4:8)*

- C. *The watchman*: The watchmen and keepers of the walls speak of the spiritual leaders who guard the walls of God's city to protect His people. They are those who go about the city watching over it. The watchmen speak of the elders of the church who are to *watch over* believers (Heb. 13:17).

- D. *I would not let Him go*: She had a new resolution to hold on to the King with a determination that resulted from her painful season of spiritual struggle. She "never lets go of Him" throughout the remainder of the Song. Seasons of "spiritual wrestling" can birth a deep resolve in us to never allow compromise to be tolerated in our lives.

- E. *The house of my mother*: Often the most difficult places to bring Jesus can be among familiar family relationships. A prophet has no honor in his home. Bringing Jesus to her home is an expression of her obedience to "arise." Home can also represent smallness. We are to bring Jesus to the small number in our home. God is our Father; the Church can be spoken of as our mother or the agency in which people are given a witness of truth leading to their new birth. The "mother" here is a picture of the church—as those who do God's will (Mt. 12:46-50) and those used as God's vessels to bring people to the new birth. Paul spoke of the New Jerusalem as our "mother" (Gal. 4:26). Israel is pictured as a "mother" who gave birth to the redeemed (Rev. 12:5, 17).

⁴*I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him to the house of my mother... (Song 3:4)*

V. THE HOLY SPIRIT GUARDS US IN STRATEGIC SPIRITUAL SEASONS (3:5)

- A. The Spirit ordains strategic seasons in each one's spiritual life (3:5). I see the Spirit as speaking in verse 5. There are seasons when He desires to establish us in new experiences and insights.

⁵*I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up [disturb] nor awaken love until it pleases. (Song 3:5)*

- B. *Do not stir up*: The Spirit charged other believers not to disrupt or disturb the Bride in this season with their opinions and judgments. The Spirit tells those who were insensitive to His ways not to disturb the Bride in this particular season of sitting at the table to grow in the Word. In the phrase, *until it pleases*, the Hebrew can be translated as *it, he, or she*. The NASB accurately translates the phrase as "do not awaken love until *she* pleases."

VI. OVERVIEW OF SONG 3:6-11

- A. King Jesus is revealed to the Bride as a “safe Savior.” She gains insight into His safe leadership. This does not mean that we will not have difficulties. It means we are in a *safe place where our heart will mature* in obedient love for God. The safest place for our heart is in seeing Jesus as the King who enables us to walk in hundred-fold obedience and faith, even when facing the mountains. The devil lies to God’s people about Jesus not being a safe leader.
- B. The Spirit asked a question (3:6), then provided a two-part answer along with an exhortation. First, He used military language to reveal how safe we are under Jesus’ leadership (3:7-8). Second, He used a royal wedding procession as a picture of His safe leadership (3:9-10). The pinnacle of our salvation is in knowing Jesus as our Bridegroom King (3:11).

VII. THE HOLY SPIRIT ASKS A SEARCHING QUESTION (3:6)

- A. A question is asked about the identification of the One coming up out of the wilderness (3:6). The King is described as perfumed with myrrh, frankincense, and merchant’s powders.
‘Who is this coming out of the wilderness [of this fallen world] like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant’s fragrant powders?’ Behold, it is Solomon’s couch, with sixty valiant men around it... (Song 3:6-7)
- B. ***Coming out of the wilderness:*** Who is the One who leads us out of the wilderness of this world? Jesus came up victorious out of the wilderness of this fallen age. Israel’s journey through the wilderness for forty years is a picture of our struggle in this fallen world on our way to the Promised Land. In Song 8:5, the Bride comes up out of the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved.
- C. ***Solomon’s couch:*** King Solomon is a type of King Jesus in this Song. Solomon’s couch or palanquin (3:9) was a chariot used in his royal wedding processions. It was carried on the shoulders of the royal guard. His couch is where his bride sat near him to keep her safe.
- D. ***Like pillars of smoke:*** Solomon’s couch went to and from Shunem (the bride’s city) through the wilderness to bring her to his palace in Jerusalem. The town’s people saw a cloud of dust as the royal procession approached. The pillars of smoke poetically spoke of God’s glory. John saw smoke from God’s glory (Rev. 15:8). Speaking poetically, Jesus is pictured here as “coming up from the wilderness of this age” in the glory of God pointing to His resurrection and ascension.
⁸The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God... (Rev. 15:8)
- E. ***Who is this:*** In the spiritual interpretation, it may be the Holy Spirit as an “unnamed person,” representing Jesus, who on three occasions asks, “*who is this?*” (3:6; 6:10; 8:5). It is probable that the Spirit is asking the question in Song 6:10 and 8:5. Thus, it seems that it is also Him speaking in here in 3:6. The question points to Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.
- F. ***Perfumed with myrrh:*** Myrrh speaks of death. In the ancient world, myrrh was a costly, fragrant burial spice. The Father saw Jesus as “perfumed with myrrh” when He embraced death for us.
⁸All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia... (Ps. 45:8)

- G. ***Perfumed with frankincense***: Frankincense speaks of Jesus’ intercession (Heb. 7:25). As the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies with a censer of frankincense (incense), so Jesus entered the Holy of Holies in heaven with His censer filled with intercession. The golden bowls of incense at the altar in heaven speak of our prayers (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-5).
- H. ***With merchant’s fragrant powders***: The merchant’s powders speak of Jesus’ commitment to us. A merchant’s hands were scented as a result of handling (buying and selling) the perfumed powders in the marketplace. He is like a merchant who sold everything to purchase beautiful pearls (His Bride). Jesus is the perfumed merchant who sold everything to purchase us in His love. His incarnation and death (3:6) prove that He loves us and is committed to our welfare.
- ⁴⁵*The kingdom...is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Mt. 13:45-46)*

VIII. THE HOLY SPIRIT’S MINISTRY OF PROTECTION (3:7-8)

- A. The protection and security that we have in God’s grace is described in military terms (3:7-8).
- ⁷*Behold, it is Solomon’s couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel.*
⁸*They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night. (Song 3:7-8)*
- B. ***Solomon’s couch***: King Solomon’s couch speaks of the “gospel couch” or the wedding chariot. The gospel was prepared by Jesus coming up victoriously out of the wilderness of a fallen world. Jesus rests on His couch in triumph over all His enemies (Ps. 110:1-3; Eph. 1:20-22).
- C. ***Sixty valiant men around it***: Solomon had sixty valiant men surrounding his couch to guard or protect his bride from the enemy on her journey through the wilderness to his palace in Jerusalem. This speaks of the Spirit’s extravagant protection of the Church. Only a king could afford the security of sixty highly skilled warriors. Solomon used tabernacle language—there were sixty support pillars in Moses’ tabernacle.
- D. In the “gospel couch” we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, with access to His authority. The “gospel couch” provides all that we need for our hearts to be safe in our journey through the wilderness to His “palace” in the New Jerusalem.
- ⁶*Raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ... (Eph. 2:6)*
- E. ***Experts in war***: They were seasoned, skilled warriors in contrast to being novices. The Spirit is an expert in war, knowing every scheme of Satan. He uses many agencies in the grace of God. For example, He may give us a prophetic dream, open or shut doors, stir someone to pray for us, send an angel, release the gifts of the Spirit through us, or give us insights into the Word, and to reveal God’s affection or the power of Jesus’ cross. The Bride has no need to be afraid of the enemy’s ambush. The Holy is able to keep us from falling into sin and backsliding.
- ¹³*God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)*

IX. JESUS' SALVATION PROVIDES US GREAT SAFETY (3:9-10)

- A. The Bride's safety is described poetically as a royal wedding procession (3:9-10). Solomon's gospel couch (3:7) is now described as a palanquin (3:9). He made a palanquin or portable chair enclosed by curtains and carried by soldiers. Jesus provided an "eternal palanquin" for us.
⁹Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the king made himself a palanquin: ¹⁰He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by [for] the daughters of Jerusalem. (Song 3:9-10)
- B. **Made himself:** Solomon designed and built a chariot to carry his queen. Jesus Himself made the gospel palanquin in which we rest. He became a man and bore our sin to redeem us.
- C. **Wood of Lebanon:** The cedars of Lebanon were used in building Solomon's temple, which housed God's glory. The wood in the tabernacle spoke of humanity, and the gold that covered the wood referred to Deity. The wood of Lebanon was the most beautiful, fragrant, expensive, and strongest wood. The gospel was "made" by Jesus—the strongest and most glorious Man.
- D. **Silver and gold:** Silver speaks of redemption, and gold speaks of divine character.
- E. **Its interior paved with love:** The inner lining or tapestry of the gospel chariot is paved or woven with God's love. The gospel was motivated by God's love. All that Jesus does is paved in love.
- F. **Daughters of Jerusalem:** The "gospel couch" is paved with love *for* the daughters of Jerusalem (instead of *by* them). The KJV translates this as *for* the daughters.

X. EXHORTED TO SEE THE KING AS CROWNED ON HIS WEDDING DAY (3:11)

- A. The Daughters of Jerusalem were called to see the crowned King on His wedding day (3:11). We are to meditate on Jesus' beauty as the King crowned with all authority on His wedding day.
¹¹Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart (Song 3:11).
- B. **Crowned at His wedding:** Jesus has many crowns. A wedding crown is different from the crown a king gained by conquering a nation. The day of His wedding is described in Revelation 19:6-8.
- C. **His mother crowned him:** The Church can be spoken of as our mother or the agency by which people are lead to their new birth. In one sense, the Church "crowns" Jesus as King by responding in love to His kingship. When we love Jesus, we crown Him as our personal King. The wedding crown speaks of the accumulated response of the redeemed through history. Jesus has gladness about His wedding (Isa. 62:5)

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?