

Song of Solomon 3:1-5

I. Song 3:1-5 God's loving discipline stirs up spiritual hunger

(Song 3:1-5) "On my bed night after night I sought him Whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him. 2 'I must arise now and go around in the city; In the streets and in the public squares I must seek him whom my soul loves.' I sought him but did not find him. 3 The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, And I said, 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?' 4 Hardly had I left[passed] them When I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go Until I had brought him to my mother's house, And into the room of her who conceived me." 5 "Swear to me, you daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the does of the field, That you will not disturb or awaken my love Until she pleases."

- a. Review: The maiden's painful rejection of the Lord
 - i. Jesus is revealed as Lord of the Nations as He leaps over the mountains(obstacles; governments). He bids her to arise and come away with Him. He asks to see her and hear her anticipating her rejection of His command. Out of fear and immaturity, the maiden tells Him to turn away and leap on the mountains without her. She sees foxes (compromise) and shadows (imperfection) in her heart and is convinced that she is not ready to run with the Lord in ministry (Song 1:4). Instead, she chooses to stay hidden behind the wall that originally protected her from outside forces. Now, it will grow from a wall of protection to a mountain of Bether(separation).

II. Song 3:1 God withdraws the pleasures of His manifest presence from the maiden

(Song 3:1) "On my bed night after night I sought him Whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him."

- a. The maiden sought the Lord, but did not find Him. This is a new experience for her that she does not understand. In Song 1 & 2, she found the Lord immediately each time that she sought Him. Now, His presence is nowhere to be found.
 - i. In reality, the Lord has not left her. His Spirit resides within the house where she is staying. The picture of Him leaving represents a season of discipline. In seasons of disobedience, the Lord will withdraw His manifest presence from us to draw us out of sin and compromise. He corrects the areas of our lives that He disapproves us in order to remove everything in our lives that hinders wholehearted love (rose of Sharon) and pure obedience/holiness (lily of the valleys).

(Hebrews 12:10) "He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."

- ii. God can be displeased with our decisions or certain areas of our lives without being displeased with us as a person. *Some mistake His correction for His rejection.* In reality, His correction is proof of His love for us and is truly His patience and jealousy over our hearts. Jesus rebuked and disciplined the Laodicean Church out of His love for them. As those same believers walked in repentance and obedience, He invites them to sit on His throne with Him.

(Proverbs 3:12) “For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, Just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.”

(Revelation 3:19, 21) “Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent... 21 The one who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne...”

- iii. God has a tender patience with believers who do not repent for a season. Patience with our struggles must not be confused with the Lord’s approval of our behavior. Out of His zeal for our hearts to be wholly His, the Lord will discipline us even to the point of giving us over to our own sin until we repent. It is a horrible thing to “get away with sin”(Rom. 1:24). When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin and disobedience, *we are not loved or enjoyed less by God, but we do suffer loss* in our relationship with Him. We lessen the joy of salvation, the spirit of revelation, joyful fellowship, and eternal rewards.

(Psalm 51:10-12) “Create in me a clean heart, God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence... 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...”

(Romans 2:4) “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and restraint and patience[longsuffering], not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”

- b. **“Night after night”** There are multiple nights that we experience in our spiritual journey toward wholehearted love and obedience.
 - i. **The night watch** symbolizes inconvenience. It is not convenient to get up when we are supposed to be sleeping or resting. The neighbor in Luke 11 visited his friend for bread in the middle of the night. It was inconvenient and rude. In the same way, the maiden is finding herself rejecting the comfort of sleeping on her bed as she longs for Jesus.
 - ii. **The night pain** is that of difficult circumstances. David fled from Saul’s wrath and Joseph lived in a dungeon for a season. Just as they did not abandon their resolved to seek God and obey His voice, the maiden is experiencing the pain of separation and spiritual hunger for God.
 - iii. **The night temptations** are seasons where we struggle to choose God and the kisses of His Word over sinful pleasure and the wine of this world. Even in the midst of our struggles, we must continue to push delete, start over, and seek God again each day. *It is better to keep record of our times with the Lord than to keep track of our last failure or victory.*

- iv. **The night of the soul** was a phrase in the Middle Ages popularized by St. John of the Cross to symbolize temporary seasons of testing when the Lord's presence is not easily recognized, even in obedience. We will visit this in Song 5.
- c. **"I sought Him whom my soul loves"** The maiden is not hypocritical in declaring her love for Jesus even in the midst of her compromise. We continue to call Jesus the one we love even though we have not found victory in every area of our lives. The mountains of faith and obedience can seem out of reach and too large to climb. While in the valley between obstacles, we are still lovers of God and are still, therefore, successful.
- d. **"On my bed"** The maiden is now in a season of restlessness. In Song 1:16, she declared "our bed is luxuriant". Now, she says that she seeks Him night after night "on my bed". The green couch where she encountered His presence is now lonely and void of pleasure. Their partnership has been disrupted. She was not supposed to be on the bed in this season, but on the mountains with the Lord. She is beginning to realize that *the luxury is in His presence, not in her comfort*.
 - i. Before, she was seeking God through prayer and the meditation of His Word; feasting on the raisin cakes and apples (Song 2:3-5). She is trying to seek Him in the same ways, but is not "finding Him" (experiencing His manifest presence). The house of wine is now a cell of loneliness. This is because He has required a new level of obedience than before. She must now arise and seek Him earnestly in obedience. *Prayer, worship, and fasting is not a replacement for obedience.*

(1 Samuel 15:22) "Does the Lord have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than a sacrifice, And to pay attention is better than the fat of rams."

III. Song 3:2-3 The maiden chooses obedience

(Song 3:2-3) "I must arise now and go around in the city; In the streets and in the public squares I must seek him whom my soul loves.' I sought him but did not find him. 3 The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, And I said, 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'"

- a. **"I must arise now"** The maiden finally decides to obey the Lord's command to **"arise...and come along"** (Song 2:10). In the night season, the Lord produced a spiritual hunger that has now caused her to forsake comfort and convenience. Before, she was waiting for the cool of the day when the shadows flee. Now, she leaves the comfort of her house in the middle of the night to seek after Him. She adds obedience to her prayer as she realizes prayer without obedience will not change her situation. *God calls us into new levels of obedience and exposes outward actions (hands) and inward motivations (hearts) out of His jealousy for our heart's affections*. When we go through night seasons where we cannot feel His presence, we must arise trust that He will come close to us if we come close to Him, that is, to diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6) in areas He is calling us to.

(James 4:8) "Come close to God and He will come close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

(Psalm 24:3-4) “Who may ascend onto the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 One who has clean hands and a pure heart...”

- b. **“in the city; In the streets and in the public squares”** The maiden has now entered the area of risk that once terrified her. She remembers that Jesus feeds his flock by the tents of the shepherds. She goes back into the city (the church, the flock) to find the one she loves. She follows the streets (ways, plans, trail of the flock) in context of life in the body and engages with the watchmen (overseers, spiritual leaders, shepherds) in the public squares (bible studies, church services, pastures). Before, the Holy Spirit guarded her from being awakened before she pleases. Now, she has stirred herself up to seek Him at any cost by obeying everything He once told her to do.

(Song 1:8) “If you yourself do not know, Most beautiful among women, Go out on the trail of the flock, And pasture your young goats By the tents of the shepherds.”

IV. Song 3:4-5 A Prayer for deliverance from compromise

(Song 3:4-5) “4 Hardly had I left[passed] them When I found him whom my soul loves; I held on to him and would not let him go Until I had brought him to my mother’s house, And into the room of her who conceived me.” 5 “Swear to me, you daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the does of the field, That you will not disturb or awaken my love Until she pleases.”

- a. She found Jesus only when she arose to seek Him in obedience. The Lord is bound by His own affection for us to respond to our diligent hunger. He wants us to prevail and will not refuse us long. **Spiritual Hunger:** *If there is something in God’s will or in the Word that you cannot live without, it will be yours in due season. If you can live without it, you will not have it.*
- b. **“Hardly had I left them”** As soon as she left(passed) the watchmen, she found Him. Sometimes, all it takes is for us to go beyond where our spiritual leaders are leading us and find our own oil of intimacy.
- c. **“I held on to him and would not let him go”** The maiden has now resolved that she will never disobey His voice again. She is convinced that life in His presence is worth the cost of pain and fear and far better than life without Him in comfort. She will now obey Him even in the most difficult places. She has an unquenchable resolution to do the will of God.
- d. **“My mother’s house”** The maiden is bringing Jesus home to the church and her family. Often, this is the most difficult place for us to obey God. Will we approach our hometown, our home church, our own family with the gospel of Jesus? We can even bring Him **“into the room of her”** with small 2-3 person bible studies and empty prayer meetings. We do not need large platforms or ministry trips overseas to begin the work of doing the will of God. She is willing to look small and insignificant even to the church and her own family members.

- e. God speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem again to not awaken love until she pleases. He has moved her to the next season of their journey together. We must take gentle care (gazelles/does) to not ascribe our own views or advice to people when they are in seasons of small obedience. It is easy to show contempt for small things and recruit believers into what seems like “greater significance” from our point of view.

(Zechariah 4:10) “For who has shown contempt for the day of small things? But these seven will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—they are the eyes of the Lord roaming throughout the earth.”

(Luke 16:10) “The one who is faithful in a very little thing is also faithful in much; and the one who is unrighteous in a very little thing is also unrighteous in much.”

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What was one point of tonight’s session that was profound to you? How will you live differently as a result?
- 2) Have you ever experienced a night season where you didn’t feel the presence of God? How did the Lord lead you to Himself again?
- 3) What small things might the Lord be calling you to arise to? What mountains?