

Song of Solomon 1:6-8

I. Song 1:6 Spiritual Crisis

(Song 1:6) “Do not stare at me because I am dark, For the sun has tanned me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; They made me caretaker of the vineyards, But I have not taken care of my own vineyard.”

- a. The maiden describes her “mother’s sons” that were angry with her and made her a caretaker of the vineyards. Throughout the Song, the mother represents the Church. Believers are born of God through the agency of the Church by the Holy Spirit. The Church, its leaders, and the New Jerusalem are referred to as a “mother.” God is our Father and the Church is spoken of as our mother. Jesus is also spoken of being the Descendant of a woman and as the man-child of Redeemed Israel.

(Galatians 4:19, 26) “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you...But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.”

(1 Thessalonians 2:6-7) “nor did we seek honor from people, either from you or from others, though we could have asserted our authority as apostles of Christ. But we proved to be gentle among you. As a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children”

(Genesis 3:15) “And I will make enemies Of you and the woman, And of your offspring and her Descendant; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise Him on the heel.”

(Revelation 12:5) “And she gave birth to a Son, a male, who is going to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her Child was caught up to God and to His throne.”

- b. The angry sons represent spiritual leaders in the church that have become dull and offended in their hearts. The youthful zeal of the maiden, which is often dismissed as legalism, has stirred up conviction in their hearts. Young, untempered believers often make dull, but mature leaders angry. Wisdom and humility will aid the passionate in their call to wholeheartedness and often prevent this conflict.

(Psalm 69:8-9) “I have become estranged from my brothers, And a stranger to my mother’s sons. For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the taunts of those who taunt You have fallen on me.”

- i. The angry sons retaliate by taking advantage of the maiden’s fervency. They task her with many responsibilities, which are represented by the vineyards before she has matured. She burns out spiritually under a religious yoke rooted in the fear of man and a desire to be noticed by others. Taking on responsibilities outside of God’s grace and vision is a recipe for burnout. *When we find our identity in what we do for God instead of our identity in Christ, we lose vision.*
- c. The maiden was the caretaker of the vineyards, but neglected her own vineyard. The heart of the maiden is represented here as a vineyard and, in other places of the Song, as a garden. *To tend*

our heart's vineyard is to nurture our communion with God and to walk in obedience to His voice. Like a vineyard, cultivating our heart connection with the Lord is a daily discipline that must be taken seriously. To neglect our own vineyard is to abandon the call to pursue Jesus with undivided love and devotion.

- d. The maiden expresses four negative elements of her spiritual crisis.

(Song 1:6) “Do not stare at me[shame] because I am dark, For the sun has tanned me. My mother’s sons were angry with me[rejection]; They made me caretaker of the vineyards[burnout], But I have not taken care of my own vineyard[dullness].”

- i. She feels **shame** from others staring at her darkness.
- ii. She feels **rejection** by her mother’s sons.
- iii. She has experienced **burnout** by working other vineyards.
- iv. She feels spiritual **dullness** from neglecting her own vineyard.

II. Song 1:7 A Cry for Intimacy

(Song 1:7) “Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock, Where do you have it lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself Beside the flocks of your companions?”

- a. In the middle of her crisis, the maiden remembers the kisses of His Word and her encounters with Jesus in his chamber. She knows that she is lovely to God even in her weakness and cries out to Him in confidence. “Where do you pasture your flock?” is her desperate request for counsel from the Shepherd.
 - i. She knows that her love for Jesus is real, “Tell me, you whom my soul loves.” She knows that her weak love has fallen short, but does not deny that it is genuine. Like Peter “Lord, You know that I love You.” (**John 21:15-17**), the maiden confesses her real love for Jesus in the midst of feeling distant from Him.
- b. She is feeling the pain of serving Jesus at a distance.

(Song 1:7) “...For why should I be like one who veils herself Beside the flocks of your companions?”

- i. During Solomon’s day, women would veil their faces when working with strangers who they were unfamiliar with. She is serving far from Jesus beside the flocks of His companions instead of serving at His side. The feeling of unfamiliarity with her Beloved is the ultimate pain of her crisis. She once again longs for the kisses of His Word and the chamber experiences.
- c. “Tell me...Where...Where” is an echo of her cry to be “drawn away” in intimacy with Jesus. She has been fed by other leaders; she now wants to be fed by the Shepherd of her soul.

(Song 1:7) “Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock, Where do you have it lie down at noon?”

- i. A sheep lies down at noon when it’s stomach is full. This is a picture of rest and contentment with the Word of Jesus. Noon is the hottest part of the day; it represents the pressures of this world. She was tanned by the sun by working through these pressures in religious zeal, fueled by the fear of man. The Lord wants us to rest in the midst of pressure and to be satisfied by His Word.

(Psalm 23:2) “He lets me lie down in green pastures;”

(Deuteronomy 8:3) “...man shall not live on bread alone, but man shall live on everything that comes out of the mouth of the Lord.”

(Matthew 11:28-30) “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.”

- d. Jesus longs to hear this cry from all believers who have grown weary and burdened in life. “Jesus, feed my spirit again. My vineyard is overgrown and full of weeds, choking out your *zoe* life. I am a veiled woman, serving at a distance from you, hiding behind the veil of shame. I am failing and things are going wrong; others are displeased with my works. I need a fresh touch, a fresh word, from You, whom my soul loves.” When we find ourselves distant, we can have confidence that the Lord will help us recover our first love (***Rev. 2:4***).
- e. We often expect to be rebuked for our sin and weakness. Instead, the Bridegroom King speaks comfort to our hearts when addressing sin and shame. He wants break off the spirit of shame and rejection from our hearts.
 - i. The Lord replaces shame with honor and gives us a new name to express His delight in us. We can see this in His words to Israel:

(Isaiah 61:7) “Instead of your shame you will have a double portion[honor], And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion...”

(Isaiah 62:4-5) “It will no longer be said to you, ‘Forsaken,’ ... But you will be called, ‘My delight is in her,’ ... For the Lord delights in you...”

(Isaiah 54:4-8) “Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, And no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood. For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the Lord of armies; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.”

III. Song 1:8 The Shepherd's Response

(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."

- a. Jesus hears her desperate cry and responds in tenderness and affirmation. He affirms her beauty "most beautiful among women" and gives her a threefold answer to her question. He then affirms her again with three descriptions of her beauty in verse 9-10. This is the maiden's first revelation of the Bridegroom King in the Song: the Wonderful Counselor.
- b. "Most beautiful" is Jesus' description of her. *His first statement to us in the midst of compromise is to tear down our shame and rejection.* She has weeds in her vineyard and has failed in the other vineyards as well. She is tanned by the sun and veiled in shame. He shows her the beauty she has in Him. "I know you are serving me from a distance and your heart is disconnected and overgrown, yet I see your willing spirit and a 'yes' to love me."
 - i. "Among women" is a comparison to the 5-6 billion people on earth that have no interest in following Jesus. Though we are weak in love, it is sincere, unlike the many false religions that worship idols. Jesus causes the maiden to "remember His love" just as she taught the young ones in verse 4.
- c. Jesus gives His threefold answer to her cry for intimacy with Him.

(Song 1:8) "...Go out on the trail of the flock, And pasture your young goats By the tents of the shepherds."

- i. The trail of the flock refers to a commitment to life in the Body. Jesus calls us to **refuse unsanctified isolation** and directs us first to the corporate Body of Christ. Jesus sends the maiden back into fellowship with other believers. Most isolation is a response to fear, rejection, or shame, and is not motivated by seeking the Lord. He calls her not to overreact to the anger of her brothers and to stay connected to them.

(Hebrews 10:25) "not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

- ii. The young goats represent servant ministry in the Body. We are to find young believers and pour into them in all seasons of our life. Jesus calls us to **refuse unsanctified idleness**. Regardless of our current situation, we must always find a way to serve those around us. We are called to be a "joint of supply" in our connected life with the local church. We should not just walk in the trail of the flock, but should continue to serve.

(Ephesians 4:16) "...the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies... the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

(John 21:15-17) "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" ... "Tend My lambs." ... "Shepherd My sheep." ... "Tend My sheep."

iii. The tents of the shepherds refers to submission to spiritual authority. Jesus calls us to **refuse unsanctified independence** and directs us back to spiritual leaders He has placed over us. Jesus wants us to have an open spirit to the leaders that He places us under. We will find Jesus in deep way as we relate to His imperfect leaders. When we see faults in our leaders, we must resist the temptation to separate from them, and instead, we submit to them in humility with a teachable spirit. *The lowest place is always where we will find Jesus.*

(Hebrews 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they may do this with joy, not groaning; for this would be unhelpful for you.”

(1 Timothy 5:17) “The elders who lead well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

1. Elders should not dominate a believer’s faith. The maiden was caught up in the fear of man from her angry brothers and submitted to them apart from communion with the Holy Spirit. New Testament leadership is to keep watch by shepherding people through servanthood and giving direction to the local church for the purpose of unity. *Jesus always leads from the lowest place.*

(Matthew 20:25) “the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them, and those in high position exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”

(2 Corinthians 1:24) “Not that we domineer over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.”

(1 Peter 5:1-5) “...I urge elders among you...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not with greed but with eagerness; nor yet as domineering over those assigned to your care, but by proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.”

Questions for Discussion:

- 1) How is your vineyard? Have you experienced the veil of shame from serving God at a distance?
- 2) Have you ever struggled to refuse unsanctified isolation? Idleness? Independence? How did the Lord lead you through these temptations back in to connected life?
- 3) What was one significant truth from this session that was profound to you? How will you live differently in response?