

In chapter one we saw the bride's desire for Solomon but also her lack of confidence in her beauty. The chapter concluded with the king telling her how beautiful she was in his sight. Throughout the song we are encouraged to see that God sees us clothed in Christ. We cannot exaggerate the grace and love God has for us. In chapter two she again expresses her desire for him and the joy she experiences being with him. He hurries to be with her and calls her to come away with him and enjoy the season of spring. He tells her of his desire to see her face and hear her voice. Then we have the first expression of their oneness. <sup>16a</sup> *My beloved is mine, and I am his; 2:16a* We learned of the security we have in Jesus claiming us as His own. In chapter three she awakes at night to find he has gone. She goes out into the city searching for him and finds him. Her fears vanish as they spend the rest of the night together as if it was reliving their honeymoon. The chapter concludes with the recollection of their wedding, when the king sent his own royal palanquin with armed guards to bring her to the ceremony. Chapter four is entirely the king's description of his delight in her beauty, describing her from head to toe as he sees her. In the first verse of chapter five they relive their honeymoon again. We saw how we need this reassurance of how God sees us because we know our own many faults. How wonderful to know He sees His work in us complete. He will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5<sup>i</sup>).

We begin the second half of the book from chapter five verse two. <sup>2</sup> *I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."* Song of Songs 5:2-9 The bride had fallen asleep waiting for her groom to come home. My heart was awake may mean she is asleep but alert. A sound woke her. The business of the kingdom has kept the king working into the late hours of the night. When he arrives, he finds the door locked. Not a good sign, but perhaps necessary. He knocks and wisely calls out with words of love describing her as my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one (Ephesians 5:26,27<sup>ii</sup>). Sweet talk has done it before, but it is not working tonight.

Have you ever been disappointed in Jesus' response to your prayers? Did He not do for you what you expected? One day you are thrilled with your relationship with Him and the next disappointed, even doubting His love, because you cannot understand why He would allow a painful event you experienced. That is when we lock the prayer closet door. We might pray, but it is not with an open heart to pray His will or allow the Spirit to prompt us. We turn a deaf ear to His words of love (Hebrews 4:7<sup>iii</sup>).

Where do we see the groom outside knocking in Scripture? Revelation 3:20<sup>iv</sup> - It is the voice of Jesus! Does your Bible have this verse as a cross reference? It should! (ESV does.) That is evidence that we are on the right track in our interpretation of this being about Jesus and His bride, the church. Let your heart receive the words with which He describes you: my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one. Do not make excuses like she did, but drop everything and run to let Him in.

Can we blame her for falling asleep? Spurgeon likens it to spiritual lethargy. Perhaps she should have waited in expectation knowing he would eventually come home (Mark 13:33-37<sup>v</sup>). But I do not see this as such. God gives His beloved sleep (Psalm 127:2<sup>vi</sup>). She may have tried to stay awake but as time went on sleep overcame her. I do not see her at fault until the next verse when she starts making excuses for not rising.

<sup>3</sup> *I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?* Song of Songs 5:3 Perhaps the bride is making excuses because she is upset that he has come home so late. "Was business more important than me and our time together?" she may have asked. She is in bed and would have to get dressed (perhaps implying that she was naked and waiting for His love), and her feet are clean, and she does not want to get them dirty (again implying she had prepared herself for him). Was she thinking, "Too late buddy! Not tonight! I am going to punish you!" Surely that has never happened to any of us.

What is your excuse when the Lord knocks? "Sorry Lord, I have got to get this done first. I have run out of time, and my schedule today is packed." Sometimes we do not answer because we are ashamed that we failed to do the last thing He prompted us to do, not realizing He was not asking *us* to do it, but rather He wanted to do it through us. We have so many distractions that we allow to get in the way and rob us of that intimacy with Jesus in prayer. And sometimes we give Him the cold shoulder because our prayers were not answered the way we expected, and like this woman, we think we would rather not bother. Have you experienced the spiritual parallel? There are times when we must face the fact that we are ignoring God because He did not respond the way we wanted Him to, as if our way could ever be better than His.

<sup>4</sup> *My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me.* Song of Songs 5:4 She could hear her beloved trying to move the latch. In those times a timber bolt on the inside held the door shut. A hole in the door below the beam gave access for a metal rod or wooden dowel. The key was shaped just right to fit through the hole and by twisting it lift or slide the timber bolt. Her beloved was trying to get the door open even when she did not answer him. Anticipation probably made her heart begin to pound. She was thrilled but at the same time wanting to punish him for being late. Her heart was torn in two directions delaying her action.

See how persistent He is to meet with her. A normal man may have thought she was demanding too much and that she should have been sympathetic with his workload. But he tries to get in any way. A wise man like Solomon would understand a woman's feelings. There is One greater than Solomon who understands our feelings and still continually pursues us (Matthew 12:42<sup>vii</sup>). He tries to find a way to be with us, to pick the lock to our heart so that He might enter and shower us with His love. What a Savior! If we knew how great His love is for us, we would be waiting at the door all night to fling open the bolt and welcome Him in. Any hesitation on our part is from misreading the love that God has for us. Hesitation is our loss, and I believe hurts His heart as well.

<sup>5</sup> *I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt.* Song of Songs 5:5 Finally she got up to let him in. It seems he put his finger through the keyhole and tried to slide the bolt with his finger, only to leave behind the myrrh which was on his hands and is now on her hands. He had prepared himself as well. Then she must have realized she had been mistaken about his heart. While it was necessary to work late, he was eagerly expecting their time together and prepared for it. Ultimately each partner wants the other's love. Each loves the other with their whole heart. But we misread comments or situations and both parties miss out on the intimacy we mutually desire.

Myrrh is a fragrant resin from a thorny plant that was used as an anti-inflammatory, pain reducer, perfume, and to anoint kings and priests as well as on dead

bodies to cover the smell of decay. It was very costly and therefore precious. What Jesus touches leaves behind a fragrant and precious residue (2 Corinthians 2:15,16<sup>viii</sup>). When the Spirit draws us to Jesus there is a lingering spiritual fragrance, something that reminds us of our time with Him.

We can see that Solomon had prepared himself to be with her just as she had prepared herself to be with him, but her expectations of the timing left her disappointed which caused her lack of response. Now with the myrrh on her own hands she knows she misread him and is eager to be with him.

*<sup>6</sup> I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.*

Song of Songs 5:6 The sound of his voice calling her my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, set her heart pounding. Opening the door she finds he is gone. Anticipation turned into disappointment. He left. Did he think she was rejecting him, that she did not want him back in bed with her? She started running down the street calling his name, but there was no answer. Disappointment now turns to dread. Where has he gone? He is already out of range of the sound of her voice. Now she must search in the dangerous night for him.

We experience a similar regret when we close our ears to the voice of the Spirit. When we need His comfort and reassurance, we sometimes find the heavens to be brass. We must first repent of the hardness of our hearts so our relationship can be restored (1 Corinthians 7:9,10<sup>ix</sup>). If we know of no reason for repentance, we must trust the Lord that He is developing in us greater love for communion with Him perhaps in ways we have never experienced before.

I digress from the exegesis of the passage to share a list of the essential needs of a husband and of a wife:

Women: ***His cheerleader.*** A man thrives on his wife's approval and praise.

***His champion.*** A wife's respect and encouragement lifts a man's spirit and his sense of self-worth.

***His companion.*** A man wants his wife to be his best friend.

***His complement.*** A woman is necessary to complete a man.<sup>x</sup>

Men: ***Time.*** The currency of a relationship; clearing space in your calendar for her says, "You are valuable to me."

***Talk.*** This is how she connects with you. It is also a way she handles stress. Men, on the other hand, often take flight in response to stress (Peterson, "To Fight Stress").

***Tenderness.*** It feeds her soul when she is nourished and knows she is cherished.

***Touch.*** Non-sexual, affectionate touch is crucial to a wife. And if she only receives it as the pre-game warm-up to intimacy, she will begin to feel used, like a marital prostitute.<sup>xi</sup>

Time with him was the one thing that she was craving. The disappointment led to her response that she regretted. He did want to be with her but was unavoidably detained. Once she realized that, she hurried to make things right with him.

*<sup>7</sup> The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls. <sup>8</sup> I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.*

Song of Songs 5:7,8 The watchmen catch her, and thinking she is up to no good, they

beat her. But her love is so strong it does not deter her. She must find him, so she asks the waking daughters of Jerusalem if they find him to tell him she is lovesick. It is a message of repentance. She wants him to know that her love for him is as strong as ever.

Are there times when you felt prompted to pray, when you knew God was drawing you? You let the busyness of the day delay you time and time again. Finally, you go to pray, and it seems the heavens are brass. What happened? You long for the comfort of the Holy Spirit, but He does not seem to be there (Job 23:8-10<sup>xii</sup>). The first person you ask for help condemns you and leaves you discouraged. You ask other believers to pray for you because your prayer time is suddenly lifeless. Is this not the analogy that we see here? Are these blows the blows of remorse for our past behavior of ignoring our Savior? How could we put other things first and drift away from our relationship with our Lord? How did we end up rejecting His loving call to us?

I am talking about the dark night of the soul. No matter what we do, we do not sense that connection we had before. It seems Jesus has left us to our own devices. But what may be happening is really the discipline we sometimes see in the Old Testament. The prophet Azariah told King Asa and all Israel, *“If you forsake him, he will forsake you!”* 2 Chronicles 15:2c But that was preceded by *“If you seek him, he will be found by you.”* And yet, there are many passages that tell us that He will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5<sup>xiii</sup>). There is a sense that He is not with us which is there to cause us to return; and He promises that when we do, He will return to us (Zechariah 1:3<sup>xiv</sup>). It is as if He says, “You are too busy for me, so I will let you experience a sense what is like without me so that you will realize how much you need me.”

The expression “sick with love” is translated in the Septuagint as “wounded by love.” It can be a very difficult time to experience. We need to be careful that we do not take advantage of the grace of God. The dark night of the soul comes over us to help us realize how much we are missing of that which really matters (Colossians 3:1,2<sup>xv</sup>). Though it may be a very painful time, it can lead us to a deeper intimacy with our Lord than we have previously experienced.

Ted Wuest in his book *Living as the Beloved* describes it as follows: *When we are ready, He gently takes a surgeon’s scalpel and works to cut out our reliance upon anything but Him. He does this when we are ready. Much as we might experience joy in the recovery room after surgery, knowing that cancer has been cut from our body successfully, the beloved knows intimately that God does indeed work all things together for the good (Romans 8:28<sup>xvi</sup>) and that we become Christ-like. As we face our spiritual wounds and the loss, we are shaped into people who can relate in love as the Trinity relates in love to one another. O joy, even in the midst of pain.*

The sense of our continual longing while seeking to restore our communion with Christ is expressed in Psalm 63:1-3 <sup>1</sup> *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* <sup>2</sup> *So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.* <sup>3</sup> *Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.* What an expression! Your steadfast love is better than life. That is why we must search until we find restored communion with Him whom our soul loves.

<sup>9</sup> *What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?* Song of Songs 5:9 In response to her request they answer, "Why do you see this one as so

special. Why are you so sick with love? In other words, "Is your relationship with Jesus that special? Is your prayer time much more wonderful than ours? If it is that special, why do you ask us who do not have as great a relationship in prayer as you?" Tell us what is so special about Him?

That is a loaded question! She is going to tell them about his physical features, but we would describe our Lord's glorious character. How does Jesus' love, grace, holiness, kindness, compassion, power, justice and all the rest of His glorious nature compare with any another beloved, meaning someone else's husband? How is Jesus better than what this world has to offer? The good qualities in any husband are merely a reflection of Jesus' wonderful attributes. Jesus is incomparable! Just the fact that the question is asked means they have never met him.

It is the question we hope that worldly people would ask us. We can then tell them what they are missing (1 Peter 3:15<sup>xvii</sup>). Our desperation to be with Him is what prompts them to ask. Our "head over heels in love" demeanor and smile on our faces prompts them to ask. What an opportunity to tell them and invite them to know Him.

In this section of the song, we have seen the need to respond quickly to the Spirit's knocking on the door of our hearts. We see that we need to avoid excuses and make our intimacy with our Savior the priority of our lives. But when we find our old nature has had the upper hand and we have missed His call to us, we should run after Him with an urgency to restore fellowship. In doing so we may meet with troubles or discipline, such as we saw with the watchmen. It may be a very spiritually painful time in our lives, but we must persevere, knowing **God is longing for the restoration more than we are.** We may ask others of their experience, if they have seen the One whom our soul loves, and in doing so we might have the chance to share why He is so special to us.

I will end the message today with two verses from a song popular at Promise Keeper events a few decades ago.

Oh-oh the deep, deep love of Jesus  
Vast unmeasured, boundless, free  
Rolling as a mighty ocean  
In its fullness over me  
Underneath me, all around me  
Is the current of His love  
Leading onward, leading homeward  
To Thy glorious rest above

Questions:

- 1 Review the chapters leading up to this one.
- 2 Have you reacted the same way when Jesus knocked on your door?
- 3 What were her excuses? What are yours?
- 4 What thrilled her heart?
- 5 When did she realize she had made a mistake?
- 6 What do husbands need? 7 What do wives need?
- 8 What is the dark night of the soul?
- 9 What are we to do when experiencing it?
- 10 Summarize the lessons in the passage.



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<sup>i</sup> **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

<sup>ii</sup> **Ephesians 5:26-27 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

<sup>iii</sup> **Hebrews 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

<sup>iv</sup> **Revelation 3:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

<sup>v</sup> **Mark 13:33-37 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup> It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. <sup>35</sup> Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— <sup>36</sup> lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

<sup>vi</sup> **Psalms 127:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

<sup>vii</sup> **Matthew 12:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

<sup>viii</sup> **2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, <sup>16</sup> to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

<sup>ix</sup> **1 Corinthians 7:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

<sup>10</sup> To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband

<sup>x</sup> Adapted from Turnbull and Turnbull, "What Your Husband Really Wants") found in-Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in Song of Songs

<sup>xi</sup> List adapted from Turnbull and Turnbull, "What Your Wife Really Wants") -Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in Song of Songs.

<sup>xii</sup> **Job 23:8-10 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; <sup>9</sup> on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him. <sup>10</sup> But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

<sup>xiii</sup> **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

<sup>xiv</sup> **Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

<sup>xv</sup> **Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

<sup>xvii</sup> **1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,