

A journey through the Song of Songs

Our journey in the Song of Songs doesn't start with the way of salvation but with a believer, a maiden, who is tired of religion and wants a real and intimate relationship with the Lord (1:2-4). She longs to know God more and to experience His presence. The Lord responds to her desire and they embark on a journey of growing in intimacy together where the maiden enjoys time in the Lord's presence.

When the Spirit is at work in our lives it is seen by others. This fresh desire for intimacy with the Lord awakens a similar desire in her friends, the Daughters of Jerusalem (1:4b).

As she spends time in God's presence she becomes aware of both the nature of God that is at work within her and of her own sinful nature which are in conflict with each other (1:5-6a). This leads her into her first crisis where she gets caught up in works and being busy for God and neglects to spend time with Him (1:6b). She feels cut off from God, hurt by the Church and isolated (1:7).

In response to her cry for help the Lord shows her that the way to find Him again is to be part of the Church, to take up the responsibility that He has for her and to come under the spiritual authority of the leaders (1:8).

The journey of intimacy is also a journey of obedience – the two go hand-in-hand – and as she follows Him the Lord commends her on her obedience (1:9-11). They then enjoy a time of greater intimacy where the maiden becomes ever more aware of His presence, spends more and more time with Him and is receiving spiritual revelation as she feeds on His Word. The maiden can't get enough and just wants to stay in this place of enjoying His presence and receiving revelation (1:12-2:6).

As the Lord comes with a new and fresh revelation of Himself as the Overcoming King (2:8-9a) she struggles to receive it and feels challenged. She's comfortable with knowing Him as the God of Love and is unsure of this demonstration of His power. She has built a wall to keep her relationship with the Lord private and safe (2:9b) but this wall is now between them. The Lord tries to woo her out (2:10-14) but she finds the Lord is asking too much of her and feels unable to follow Him (2:16-17).

She continues to seek the Lord as before but His presence isn't there anymore (3:1) and so she experiences her second crisis. As this continues she becomes desperate and eventually she breaks out of her comfort zone and seeks the Lord in this new revelation. She asks her leaders for help and they show her the way (3:3-4a). She is then united with her Lord again. Having experienced this 'separation' she is determined not to let it happen again and realises it was caused by her disobedience and that the Lord was not angry with her but withdrew His presence in order to draw her out from behind her wall (3:4).

There then follows a time where the maiden receives a deeper revelation of the Lord (3:5) and comes out of this period knowing her Lord as the Victorious King and that she is united with Him, that her life is hidden with Christ in God and that she can face anything that comes her way because He who is in her is greater than he who is in the world (3:6-10). This brings such great joy the Lord (3:11)!

His joy overflows in praise for the maiden and He commends her single-hearted devotion (4:1), her ability to receive His Truth (4:2), the way she not only receives the Truth but also expresses it (4:3a), how her emotions have come under the influence of the Holy Spirit (4:3b) and that her will is submitted to His

(4:4). He also sees a growing ability in her to nurture others (4:5). With every fresh revelation of Himself the Lord encourages the maiden to experience the same in her own life. She is now ready to face all her challenges and obstacles – knowing that this is only possible through denying herself by submitting to God’s ways and developing her prayer-life (4:6).

As her journey continues the Lord now calls her to live from this place of victory – she is seated with Christ in heavenly places! – and to view the enemy and his ways from this heavenly perspective (4:8). He encourages her again with how much He delights in her devotion and in her obedience (4:9). He delights in her even more than she delights in Him (4:10) and feeds on the fruit and fragrance that is produced in her life! He commends her spiritual maturity (4:11), her purity (4:12), the abundance of fruit produced in her life (4:14), the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit that flows through her as well as the wealth of spiritual revelation that is stored within her (4:15).

Realising how much the Lord delights in her the maiden wants to go even deeper in intimacy with Him. She is aware now that intimacy grows in difficult times just as much as in times of blessing, so she opens herself up to both – to times of testing and to times of refreshing (4:16). As more abundance is produced in the maiden’s life so the Lord delights even more in her (5:1) and she is able to minister effectively to other believers (5:1b).

The maiden is enjoying such a level of intimacy with the Lord that she is continuously aware of His presence (5:2a). The Lord now comes with a fresh revelation of the suffering Christ (5:2b) and leads her into a time of severe testing. She goes through her own Gethsemane experience as she knows the will of the Lord but struggles inwardly because she knows it will lead her into a time of great suffering (5:3). The Lord strengthens her (5:4) and she is able to muster the courage to follow Him (5:5).

She experiences a ‘dark night of the soul’, a period of time where the presence of God is lifted from her (5:6) – even though she is walking in complete obedience. Just as Job, even though he was upright, suffered greatly for a season, and just as Jesus, even though he never sinned, suffered at Calvary, so the maiden suffers a season of ‘separation’ from God as well as being criticised, accused, rejected and persecuted by others in the church – including her leaders (5:7). In her desperation she turns to her friends, the still immature Daughters of Jerusalem, who wonder why she is still so devoted to the Lord after all that she is going through (5:8-9).

Despite her intense trial and ‘separation’ the maiden’s devotion to the Lord has not changed – if anything it is even stronger than before. She praises His uniqueness, His superiority and His unfailing strength (5:10). He is the Lord, holy and perfect (5:11a), and He is also completely devoted to her – His eyes are fixed on her (5:11b-5:12)! His nature and character are unchanging (5:13a) and His words of Truth resonate in her heart (5:13b). His ways are perfect and holy (5:14a) and all that He does is motivated by His divine love (5:14b). He is steadfast and sure (5:15a) and wholly divine (5:15b). Nothing delights her more than intimacy with her Lord (5:16).

Seeing this devotion stirs a new passion in her friends to seek after intimacy with God and they ask her how they can find Him (6:1). To which the maiden points them in the direction of the Church and to a life of pure devotion (6:2).

The Lord breaks His silence as the maiden has triumphantly overcome this time of severe testing (6:4). He is overwhelmed by her dedication and devotion to Him (6:5) and praises her again for her ability to receive Truth (6:6) and her strength of character (6:7). She has now reached full maturity and stands out compared to other believers (6:8-9a). Less mature believers see this in her as well (6:9b) and how she also reflects the beauty and glory of the Lord as she walks in victory (6:10). The maiden's attention, however, is not on the praise of men – she is overcome with a love and zeal for the Church and becomes more involved in ministry to God's people (6:11-12).

There were some in the Church who questioned whether she deserved such recognition (6:13) to which the friends answer by praising her ministry in the area of evangelism (7:1) and her ability to nurture the harvest that she will bring forth (7:2). They admire how she nurtures those in the Church (7:3), her life of obedience (7:4a), her openness and purity (7:4b) and her spiritual discernment (7:4c). They also recognise her authority in the Spirit (7:5).

The Lord Himself then expresses His delight in the maiden (7:6) and confirms her maturity as one who has substance and who He can partner with (7:7-8a). He then pronounces a three-fold blessing over her – for a greater capacity to nurture others; to impart the Spirit and bring refreshing to others; and for greater intimacy with God (7:8b-9a).

The maiden expresses her desire for her relationship with the Lord to have a reviving effect on others (7:9b). The maiden has become a true co-labourer with the Lord and starts to take the initiative (7:11a). Her desire is not only to minister in the Church but also to the lost (7:11-12) and she has learnt how to cultivate her intimacy with the Lord while being fully involved in the Lord's work.

There is still one area, though, where she does not feel completely free. The maiden feels restrained and restricted in displaying her love and passion for the Lord in public – others are offended by such open displays of affection (8:1-2). She knows, though, that the Lord is also working in this area (8:3) and she enters another season of deepening revelation (8:4).

She comes out of this season in complete dependence on the Lord's strength (8:5a) – all earthly striving has ceased, aware that she is simply a sinner who is saved by grace (8:5b). The Lord leads her into the fullness of His love where she can now enjoy and express His love with complete freedom (8:6-7).

As the maiden now fully dwells in the love of God her concern is for others who are immature in their faith. Christ's love compels her to see the Church mature and be prepared for His Second Coming (8:8-9). This can only be achieved by working where the Holy Spirit is at work (8:10).

The maiden is now fully confident in her identity and ministry. She views herself as one who is completely set apart for the Lord Himself, as one who has reached full maturity and as one who is able to nurture and protect all those that the Lord gives her to care for (8:10).

The maiden's final revelation at the close of the Song is of the Second Coming of Christ, of accountability for what God has entrusted to us and eternal rewards (8:11-12). Her final cry is for the Lord's return – the Second Coming – when she can finally be with Him for all eternity!