

SESSION 1

Our Desire for More



Our life with God is a journey—a journey that starts with His reaching out to us. When we acknowledge our need and recognize our desire to belong to Him, we know that He always responds to that desire. By faith in the Word that tells us of His love for us, our redemption by Him from the penalty of sin, and His promise to give us eternal life, we are made clean in His sight, and He becomes our Savior. But that is just the beginning.

Read the stories noted in our *READ* box and *discuss* the questions below.

READ

2 Samuel 11:1–12:26, 1 Kings 19:1–21, Hosea 1 and 2

How do these people respond *emotionally* in their circumstances?
How does God respond *emotionally* to us in our struggles?

Discuss with your group.

Our heart, the spiritual dwelling place of God, has a vast and mysterious capacity. It is like a diamond with many facets—beautiful and infinitely valuable. The reason we have deep and diverse emotions is because God does. We are made in His image. Part of His plan is to allow the trials we undergo to trigger those emotions and drive us to Him.

Did you ever wonder why David's sin is so blatantly described when he was supposed to be a man after God's own heart? David's excruciating guilt at knowing he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and conspired to have her husband killed to cover up the unborn child she carried, led him to fasting and a deep repentance experience with the Lord, followed by the ultimate death of their love child. This emotional crisis brought this man to his knees and opened the door of his heart to write many of the incredibly insightful Psalms that minister to us so often. His next son with Bathsheba as his wife was Solomon, the one whom God chose to build the temple. God's love and immense grace are obvious here.

Then we read about Elijah's lapse of courage after he had just dramatically destroyed Queen Jezebel's priests at Mount Carmel. Hearing that there was now a price on his head, he fled and hid—slipping into a fit of fear, self-pity, and unbelief—only to be cared for miraculously there in the wilderness. God then confronted him by the soft whisper of His love, revealing the next great climax in his already exciting ministry.

The prophet Hosea is one of first prophets to understand and allude to the bridal relationship between God and Israel. In the book of Hosea, the prophet is chosen by God to live out his

life in such a way as to illustrate His justice, tempered by His passionate grace and love for Israel—His chosen people, His betrothed. This beautiful book reveals a God who has strong and powerful emotions and wants a bride who will respond to His love for her.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist’s revelations were the first recorded recognitions of Jesus as the perfect Lamb of God and also as the bridegroom who was coming for His bride (John 3:27–30). You may be surprised at the number of references you will find in your Bible’s New Testament concordance and commentary to *bridegroom* and *bride* when referring to Jesus and His redeemed people.



The last third of this Bible study is a blank JOURNAL.

Each session, you will be asked questions. Write the answers along with the Bible references noting the date in your JOURNAL. Include your personal comments at any point during the lesson. Hopefully, even if you have never “journalled” before, this will help you, step-by-step, to develop the habit and see the value.

Of course, your journal is private. However, there may be times of discussion when you may want to share something you’ve written.

- When did you come to know Jesus as your Savior?
- List other milestones in your understanding of His love for you.
- Circle words that portray an emotional response on your part.



Write your answers in your JOURNAL.

Psalm 45 is a key to understanding the primary meaning of the Song and is often quoted in the New Testament as it applies

to Christ. The Psalm prophetically describes the wedding procession, the bridegroom, and the bride with no ambiguity.

Some here see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only... they are short-sighted; others see both Solomon and Christ...they are cross-eyed; well-focused spiritual eyes see here Jesus only, or if Solomon be present at all, it must be like those hazy shadows of passers-by which cross the face of the camera, and therefore are dimly traceable upon a photographic landscape. (Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*)

<p>READ Psalm 45</p>

In the Song, Solomon and the Shulamite, the unnamed principals of the poem, if taken as real people, may deflect from the real purpose of the Song. The story's two leading characters (the bridegroom and the bride) are the Lord Jesus Christ and the church/the individual believer. Variances between the different translations are common due to the literary style of the poem and can cause some confusion as you begin to read. One such feature is the name of the speaker given by the translators at the beginning of a passage. They are not in the original as far as we can tell, and often, credit is given to the bridegroom when others believe that this is a passage spoken by the bride. Therefore, we must rely on the Holy Spirit as He speaks to our heart in these instances.

For the most part, I will refer to Jesus as the *bridegroom* or the *Beloved*, which is in agreement with His words in the Song. The *maiden*, *she*, or *bride* refers to the loved one. The *virgins* or *friends* mentioned along with the daughters of Jerusalem are believers who are either young in their faith or more mature and observing the drama, much like a chorus.

The names and descriptive words used give us real pictures that we can relate to the agrarian lifestyle in the time in which it was written (probably by Solomon himself), understanding

that there were no movies, magazines, or other printed pictures with which to describe a beautiful woman or handsome man. The poet's subtle delicacy with which he evokes intense sensual awareness while avoiding crudeness is a part of the beauty of the Song.

The Song is no ordinary love song. For those of us who are not married, there is a special opportunity to fill that empty place with the most glorious of all bridegrooms, Jesus. For everyone, it sets forth mutual love, communion, fellowship, and delight between the Lord Jesus Christ and the church, in terms of a marriage relationship.

Word Studies that may help you with the language pictures:

Kisses: Psalm 2:12, Psalm 45:2. *Kisses* refers to the extreme desire for intimacy with the Lord, which is derived from His Word, the Word which comes from His mouth.

Perfumes: John 12:3, Luke 23:55–56. Anointing oils were a special way of bestowing value and preciousness.

Chambers: Psalm 27:5, Psalm 91:1. In ancient times, a palace had *outer* courts for feasts and celebrations with the public, *inner* courts for invited guests, and the *inner chambers* where only those who were cherished and loved most warmly were personally invited.

Song of Songs 1:1–8 (niv)

Solomon's Song of Songs

She

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—
for your love is more delightful than wine.
Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;
your name is like perfume poured out.
No wonder the young women love you!
Take me away with you—let us hurry!*

Let the king bring me into his chambers.

Friends

*We rejoice and delight in you;
we will praise your love more than wine.*

She

*How right they are to adore you!
Dark am I, yet lovely,
daughters of Jerusalem,
dark like the tents of Kedar,
like the tent curtains of Solomon.
Do not stare at me because I am dark,
because I am darkened by the sun.
My mother's sons were angry with me
and made me take care of the vineyards;
my own vineyard I had to neglect.*

*Tell me, you whom I love,
where you graze your flock
and where you rest your sheep at midday.
Why should I be like a veiled woman
beside the flocks of your friends?*

Friends

*If you do not know, most beautiful of women,
follow the tracks of the sheep
and graze your young goats
by the tents of the shepherds.*

Dark am I: She sees herself as not worthy because she knows her true character, blaming it on the past difficulties of her life.

Sheep, goats, shepherd: Often used to describe the church, her leaders, and the Lord's relationship with her.

Vineyard: Isaiah 5:1-4 [dangers of neglecting the vineyard of our spirit]. An oft-used picture of our heart, spirit.

There is an incredibly beautiful plan in the Lord's mind for us—His church, His bride. We see in creation His purposeful planning in nature. The beauty, complexity, order, and extravagance of our world reveal the perfection of His vision for this planet and our environment. As Adam and Eve were created and given complete access to their Creator as well as dominion over their world, they experienced the joy and love of this partnership with their Heavenly Father and Jesus, His Son. They had everything necessary to make their existence a true and complete paradise. They had an intimate and fulfilling relationship with Jesus, their heavenly bridegroom.

Although sin interrupted this beautiful plan, God has never given up on it. In fact, He knew that giving the freedom of choice that was part of the soul of man was risky even though God foresaw the consequences to His most precious created ones—man. Confusing, isn't it?

But then, we have *John 3:16 (NIV)*, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” He still has His plan. Not only was Jesus sent as Redeemer, but He also saw His believers as His bride. Despite our sense of unworthiness, He's unrelenting in His plan to have us as His Bride, this being the most intimate of relationships. Human marriage is the perfect symbol for this relationship. It is a spiritual bond of total love and commitment.

John the Baptist knew who Jesus was when he said, “*I am not the Messiah, but am sent ahead of Him. The bride belongs to the Bridegroom. The friend who attends the Bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the Bridegroom's voice*” (*John 3:28–29, NIV*).

THIS WEEK

READ

Song of Solomon 1:1–8

Matthew 7:7–8

Use the *Word Studies* provided, and note these and other Holy Spirit revelations in the margins of your Bible. They will be here when you come back to this book in the future.



Look at this week's entries in your JOURNAL, and add more of your thoughts and insights.

Prayer and Worship

Worship music is the single most important aid to bring us into the presence of the Lord. Do not neglect this aspect of your quiet time.

Get out your iPod, MP3, or CD player and begin to collect some intimate worship music.

Suggestions: “I Love You” (album: *Declare His Name*), “The More I Seek You” (album: *Gateway*), “Relentless” (album: *Relentless–Misty Edwards*), and many, many more. I look for worship music that speaks to God in a personal and intimate way, not necessarily the great congregational hymns.

Look over your answers and comments in your journal. Prayerfully talk to the Lord about them, and don't forget to listen to His comments and replies to your questions to Him. Allow this time to be a special time of sharing with your bridegroom.

Is it difficult for you to respond emotionally especially to the Lord?

Do you feel too unworthy to accept His intimate love?

Is it difficult to hear His quiet voice?

If so, make these things your prayer priorities this week. Remember: Matthew 7:8–9.

