

Study Guide - "Love Songs", from 2-4-2018

Warming Up

Pastor Baugh told the story of his youth pastor making the students compose lists of ideal characteristics in a future mate. Thinking about yourself, if you are single, what characteristics do you have that might be on someone's list? What are your good points that could attract the right person? If you are married, how closely do you believe you are completing your spouse's list? Is your spouse's list realistic? Discuss.

Takeaway # 1 -Grasping For the Wind

Part of God's criticism of His people is expressed in chapter 8, verse 7, "They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind." Discuss this imagery. How effective is it to sow or plant into the wind, which is not stable nor substantial, and continually moves? Ecclesiastes 1:14 reads, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind." Solomon repeats this description, "grasping for the wind", nine times in the next few verses of this book. What are some examples of someone symbolically grabbing for the wind, trying to grasp it?

Make a detailed list of things that people eagerly pursue which will become nothing when this life is over. Are all of these necessities of life, or are some just luxuries to make life feel better? Now, make a list of things that can be pursued which have eternal value. How much time and how much money do you spend on the things that will fade away as opposed to those that will last?

Pastor Baugh said, "When things are going well, we sometimes think we don't need to rely on God." When we get tempted to forget about needing God, is it normally when things are going well with the things of the world, well spiritually, or both?

Proverbs 30:8-9 warns, "Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal." If we believe that God is our provider, what makes us tempted to forget about God when we have success? What drives this part of human nature, and how can we correct it?

Takeaway # 2 - Blind Obedience

When God told Hosea to "take yourself a wife of harlotry, And children of harlotry" (Hosea 1:2), he did not hesitate. Have you ever experienced God telling you to do something that did not seem logical? Were you more like Hosea, or more like Jonah, who did not go to Nineveh when God told him to?

Discuss how easy or difficult it is to know for sure that God is telling you to do something. Discuss why we try to apply logic to a command of the God who knows all.

Hosea and Gomer had three children, although two may not have been Hosea's. Their names represented God's judgment on Israel during their time of spiritual harlotry. They meant "God scatters", "You are not loved", and "You are not my people." These phrases represent how God felt; yet, in reality, these people were God's people, and He planned all along to redeem them. Discuss the concept that God's favor can be removed from His people when they are in rebellion to Him, and that this removal can last for years and be very severe.

Takeaway # 3 – Double Love

In Chapter 3 of Hosea, Hosea finds Gomer at an auction. "So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man — so, too, will I be toward you." (Hosea 3:2-3) Would you have bought her back, or would you simply looked at her and judged, "She deserves this"? How does God see us?

Hosea already had Gomer as his wife, and she should have been faithful to him. But, he bought her again and reestablished the covenant with her, pledging to be faithful himself, although he had never been unfaithful to her. Does God ever expect behavior from us that is not what He Himself lives up to? Are his commands unreasonable?

Pastor Baugh quoted, 1 John 4:19, "We love Him because He first loved us." Do you think that this truth is realized by most Christians, or do many believers think that they loved God, then He immediately loved them back? What comfort and security should it give us to know that God loved us before we loved Him? Discuss this and Ephesians 1:3-6.

Pastor Baugh said that this message was for people in any of three conditions, and he explained what we should take from this message and apply to our everyday lives:

1. Those who don't know God - Your sin is not greater than God's love.
2. Those who knew God – God will pursue you because you have always belonged to Him.
3. Those who know God – See others as God does. We all deserve hell, but "The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting." Psalm 100:5

Conclusion:

Do you think that Gomer believed that she deserved Hosea's double love? Sometimes we let guilt and shame convince us that God could never really love us again. But, when we know God, we can enter into the truth about the power of His love, and join Paul in saying... "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

Do you really believe this enough to forgive yourself and to rest in God's eternal love?