

Becoming One: The Journey of a Lifetime!

The Joy Of the Lord Is Your Strength!

Hardly anything beats a "radiant face"

1. Vision - ... and we've been saying that same sentence for 6 straight years TODAY! Happy Birthday!
2. Group Connect - CELEBRATE 94 people starting tonight!!
 - a. Guys - you won't get everything out of this if you just show up occasionally on Sundays!
 - b. You need people - and we want to help!
- 3.

INTRO:

1. Hunting season gives me a great illustration for what we're about to do today.
2. There is a difference between a rifle and a shotgun.
3. A rifle shoots one bullet and is supposed to be incredibly accurate.
4. A shotgun shoots one bullet but has anywhere from 60 - 100 pellets in one single round.
5. MOST of my sermons are meant to be rifles. 1 main idea - right to the point.
6. TODAY we are going bird hunting and our sermon has 9 bb's...
7. I basically have 9 big ideas for us to consider as we close out our series on Song of Solomon and I hope anywhere between 5 to all 9 get to you in some way or another.
8. Now, in this series, we've looked at a man, looked at a woman, two SEPARATE people becoming like Jesus - and last week we watched them become one POSITIONALLY in the wedding ceremony.
9. I want to, as best as I can, put into focus everything that happens AFTER the wedding. The next 60 years in just 32 minutes - so that notes quickly and listen fast.

3 Ways We Become One After the Wedding Day!

1. WE BECOME ONE PHYSICALLY

1. Song of Solomon 4 brings us into the intimacy between husband and wife.
2. And the first thing that stands out is how different biblical intimacy is from the cheap version our culture sells.

Intimacy Begins With Honoring Words

1. Chapter 4 begins with the husband admiring his wife in verse 1.
 - a. Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, leaping down the slopes of Gilead.
2. Again and again, he calls her beautiful in verse 7...
3. Then verse 7 summarizes his delight: You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.
4. Before anything physical happens, *he speaks*.
5. And what he says creates safety rather than insecurity.
6. That's worth noticing - because words matter in intimacy.
7. Guys, we live in a culture that makes all it's money on our wives insecurities...
8. What's interesting is he says "there is no flaw in you"...

9. Let's chat for a minute - do you think he means that there is literally no flaw in her?
10. No, in fact - nobody is more aware of her flaws than she is.
 - a. She said a few weeks back not to look upon her because of her appearance.
11. All of us have flaws - but what he's saying here is this *"You are my standard of beauty."*
12. She was ashamed of her dark skin because she had to work in the fields - and what he's saying is "Well, perfect, I love dark skin!".
13. This creates security - why - because she's not being compared to anyone or anything else!
14. If someone asked me "So, are you a blonde or a brunette kind of guy?" My answer is simple:
 - a. What has Meredith done with her hair today - because that's what I am...
15. *Listen closely - Intimacy grows where there is honor.*
16. And wives, the same is true in the other direction.
17. Men are often carrying more insecurity than they'll ever admit out loud.
18. Your words matter to him, respect matters, admiration matters, encouragement matters.
19. Physical intimacy does not begin in the bedroom.
20. *It begins with the way we treat each other everywhere else.*

Intimacy Is Meant to Be Exclusive

1. Then verse 12 gives us this beautiful picture:
2. *A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.*
3. The language is poetic, but the idea is clear.
4. There is something protected here.
 - a. It's reserved.
 - b. It's exclusive.
5. Throughout the Song we've repeatedly heard: *Don't stir up or awaken love before the proper time.*
6. There has been restraint.
7. Then comes covenant.
8. Positionally one before physically one.
9. ***That's God's order.***
10. And God's order gives something our culture desperately wants but keeps undermining: **security.**
11. Exclusivity says:
 - a. I'm not comparing you to anyone else.
 - b. I'm not shopping around for anything else.
 - c. I'm not cultivating an emotional relationship over here and pretending it isn't affecting us.
12. My eyes, my affection, my sexuality, my covenant loyalty belong here.
13. That security is incredibly powerful.
14. Pornography does the exact opposite.
15. Pornography trains the heart toward endless novelty.
 - a. Next image.
 - b. Next body.
 - c. Next experience.
16. Covenant trains the heart to say: **Still you.**
17. Our culture thinks exclusivity limits freedom.

18. But anybody who has experienced covenant security knows exclusivity creates a different kind of freedom.
 - a. I don't have to compete.
 - b. I don't have to wonder where I rank today.
19. I know: You've chosen me.
20. And I have chosen you.

Intimacy Is Mutual - and Blessed by God

1. Then verse 16 is important.
2. Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.
3. The woman invites her beloved.
 - a. She's not passive property.
 - b. She's not an object being used.
 - c. She participates.
 - d. She desires.
 - e. She gives herself.
4. *Biblical intimacy is mutual.*
5. That's important because sex inside marriage can still become selfish.
 - a. One spouse can pressure.
 - b. Another can manipulate.
6. Sex can become a bargaining chip or a weapon or even a source of shame.
7. *None of that reflects God's design.*
8. Healthy marital intimacy asks a different question from lust.
9. Lust asks: **"What can I get from you?"**
10. Love asks: **"How can we care for one another here?"**
11. Bridge Family, *God is not embarrassed by marital intimacy.*
12. He designed it.
13. Within covenant, it is not dirty. *It is a gift.*
14. So we become one physically.
15. And then - almost immediately - the Song gives us something else.
16. Conflict.
17. *Welcome to marriage.*

2. WE BECOME ONE THROUGH CONFLICT

1. Song of Solomon 5 opens with tension.
2. ***And I love the honesty of that.***
3. We've barely gotten through the romantic scenes, and now somebody is irritated.
4. That's marriage.
5. Conflict doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong with your marriage.
6. *Sometimes conflict simply means two different people are close enough to discover their differences.*
7. The goal isn't to eliminate all tension.

8. Some tensions are managed rather than permanently solved.
9. The goal is learning how to become more like Jesus in the middle of them.

Don't Let Small Neglect Become a large Door

1. In verse 2 he comes to her.
2. 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."
3. There is a lot of imagery here but he comes to her - and she hesitates.
4. Her response is essentially: I've already gotten ready for bed, I've washed my feet., Do I really have to get up?
 - a. *GUYS LISTEN - It's a tiny moment.*
5. There is no massive betrayal.
6. Nobody has hired a lawyer. *Just a small relational miss.*
7. But by verse 6,*she opens the door and he's gone.*
8. That feels very true to marriage.
9. Many relationships don't collapse because of one giant event.
10. They weaken through a thousand small cuts.
11. One little thing doesn't destroy a marriage.
12. But little things become patterns and patterns become distance and distance becomes normal.
13. And eventually two people can share an address without sharing much of a life.
14. Here's a question worth asking:
15. ***Where have I gotten lazy with something that used to communicate love?***
16. Maybe when you were dating, you listened, now you multitask.
17. You used to pursue and now you assume.
18. You used to say thank you and now you expect.
19. You used to touch when you walked past each other and now you barely look up.
20. Don't wait for a catastrophic marriage problem before you pay attention.
21. *Sometimes maturity means fixing the paper cut before it becomes an infection.*

Pursue Instead of Punish

1. Verse 6 says she goes looking for him.
2. 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.
3. She calls, she pursues to find him... Here's why that's important
4. She doesn't simply sit there saying: *"Well, if he wants to act that way, I'll show him."*
5. That's the instinct we have to fight.
6. Because when we're hurt, we want the other person to hurt too.
7. So we punish.
8. And punishing looks like withdraw, being cold, or come up with some brilliant passive aggressive come backs...
9. *We make sure they know we're angry without actually addressing the problem.*
10. Here's what CAN HAPPEN in your mind...
11. You rehearse the offense in your mind over and over.

12. You make them come far enough toward us before we're willing to move an inch toward them.

13. But somebody has to go first.

14. And disciples of Jesus should be very comfortable going first, because that's exactly what Jesus did with us.

15. *Romans says that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

16. He didn't wait for us to make the first move.

17. So when conflict comes, ask: ***Am I trying to repair this, or am I trying to win?***

18. Those aren't always the same goal.

19. Winning the argument while damaging the relationship is a terrible victory.

20. Sometimes the most spiritually mature sentence in the room is: "I was wrong."

21. Or: "I can see why that hurt you."

22. Or: "I don't agree with everything you said, but there's something here I need to own."

23. Pursue repair. ***Don't punish.***

Speak Well, Even in Conflict

1. Then we get to verses 9–16 and here's what basically happens...

2. Her friends ask in verse 9: *What's so special about this guy anyway!?*

3. And here's what's interesting - THEY ASK THIS QUESTION IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR FIGHT!

4. She's hurt, and she's looking for him - and they're still in conflict...

5. This would be the perfect moment to say: *"You know what GUURRL, let me tell you..." And unload.*

6. But she doesn't.

7. Verses 10 and 11:

8. ***My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. ¹¹ His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven.***

9. In the middle of this argument - she remembers what is good.

10. That doesn't mean we deny problems.

11. ***It means conflict does not give us permission to dishonor our spouse.***

12. There was a famous study in the 1990's (1900's) - by Dr. John Gottman and he could, with 90% certainty tell if a couple was headed for divorce within 15 seconds of meeting with them.

13. You know what he called the "Kiss of Death"? ***CONTEMPT.***

14. Contempt what contempt does is CONSTANTLY compare your strength to your spouses weakness - and in that - you'll win every time.

15. What Gottman learned that couples that walk in contempt - DON'T EVEN HAVE THE ABILITY TO SEE THE GOOD IN THEIR SPOUSE!

16. There is a huge difference between saying: ***"This is where we're struggling"***

17. and: ***"My spouse is worthless."***

18. ***Healthy couples learn to attack the problem without attacking the person.***

19. You can be angry and honorable at the same time.

20. You can disagree without being disagreeable...

21. You can say something needs to change without destroying the dignity of the person you're asking to change.

22. We becoming one physically and almost immediately we become one through conflict.

23. ...Then the Song shows us something that takes much longer.

3. WE BECOME ONE PROGRESSIVELY FOR A LIFETIME

1. Marriage doesn't mature automatically because years pass.
2. *You have to keep tending it.*

Keep making new memories, not simply living off the old memories.

1. Song of Solomon 7:11–12 finds the woman saying:
2. Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; ^{ld 12} let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom.
3. Come away with me. Let's go somewhere. WE NEED A VACATION!.
4. Here's what's cool - we've fast forwarded a few years in marriage and THEY'RE STILL MAKING NEW MEMORIES...
5. *One danger in long marriages is living entirely off old memories.*
 - a. You talk about when the kids were little.
 - b. The trip you took fifteen years ago.
 - c. The things you did when you were dating.
6. Those are wonderful.
7. But you can't simply live off old stories.
8. *Living off the old days is how marriages AND CHURCHES die...*
9. Make new memories. Get out of the house. Try something new.
 - a. Carsons fish tank... Turns off the aerator and oxygen is removed - becomes stagnant.
10. Your marriage needs fresh oxygen.
11. And this is especially important as seasons change.
12. Eventually the children who consumed all your energy may leave home.
13. Then you look across the table and discover: We're still here.
14. Do we still know each other?
15. Don't spend twenty years only raising children and forget to keep building the marriage they'll eventually leave.
16. Your kids need parents who love them.
17. They also need to see parents who still enjoy each other.

Allow "Me" to Become "We"

1. Each week of bible study - something always blows my mind... Here's what is was for this week...
2. There is a repeating verse that I've known is there - but a commentary pointed out ONE SMALL DIFFERENCE - and I think it's gold...
3. In Song 2:16, early in the relationship, she says: **"My beloved is mine, and I am his."**
4. Later in 6:3 the order changes: **"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."**
5. We shouldn't press the changed word order too hard as though the first statement were selfish.
6. Both statements clearly celebrate mutual belonging.
7. But the shift gives us a beautiful picture for marital maturity.
8. Early love naturally thinks: **Look what I have.**
9. Mature love increasingly asks: **What can I give?**
10. Immaturity sees marriage primarily through: "What am I getting?"

- a. "Are you meeting my needs?"
- b. "Are you making me happy?"
- 11. Maturity begins asking:
 - a. "How can I be for you?"
 - b. "What do you need in this season?"
 - c. "How can I help you become who God is calling you to be?"
- 12. That's me becoming we.
- 13. You start with: **"You're mine."**
- 14. And over a lifetime you learn the beauty of: **"I'm yours."**
- 15. Marriage is not losing yourself.
- 16. *It is learning Christlike self-giving.*
- 17. Jesus did not use love to grasp. He gave Himself.
- 18. That's the direction discipleship moves us.
- 19. Now, lastly...

Rest in Love That Is Sealed and Unbreakable

- 1. Then we arrive at Song of Solomon 8:6–7.
- 2. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy^[a] is fierce as the grave.^[b] Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. ⁷ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he^[c] would be utterly despised.
- 3. These are some of the strongest words in the entire book.
- 4. Love is described as strong.
- 5. Burning.
- 6. Jealous.
- 7. Unquenchable.
- 8. Beyond purchase.
- 9. This isn't flimsy love.
- 10. *It's covenant love.*
- 11. And after years together, one of the greatest gifts spouses can give each other is security.
- 12. Security sounds like: **"I've seen the best, and worst of you, and I'm not going anywhere"...**
 - a. I've watched you succeed and I've watched you fail.
 - b. I've seen you confident and I've seen you scared.
 - c. I've seen you healthy and I've sat beside you when you weren't.
 - d. I know where you're strong and I know where you're weak.
 - e. I know the story.
- 13. And I'm still here. *That's powerful.*
- 14. The Song also connects love with jealousy - I want to point this out...
- 15. We usually hear jealousy negatively. And often it is.
- 16. Jealous **of** your spouse is insecurity and competition.
- 17. *But there is a holy sense in which covenant love is jealous **for** your spouse.*
- 18. Not: "I need to control you."
- 19. But: **"This covenant is precious to me, and I will protect it."**

- a. I will guard our time.
 - b. Guard our intimacy.
 - c. Guard my eyes.
 - d. Guard what we have from things that would slowly erode it.
20. And that gives us a picture of God.
21. Scripture calls God jealous because covenant matters to Him.
22. Not insecure jealousy.
23. Holy covenant jealousy.
24. He loves His people too deeply to shrug when something else steals their hearts.
25. And that leads us directly to the gospel.
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1. *And that leads us directly to the gospel.*
 2. *Because eventually, every human love lets us down...*
 3. Even the best marriage cannot heal every wound, carry every burden, or save us from our sin.
 4. And unless Christ returns first, every marriage eventually comes to those sobering words: "Till death do us part."
 5. That is as far as human covenant can go - but not His.
 6. Song of Solomon says, "Love is strong as death" and "many waters cannot quench love," and on this side of the cross, those words point us toward something even greater.
 7. **The love of Jesus went through death and came out the other side.**
 8. Death said, "This far and no farther," and Jesus walked through it.
 9. The grave closed around Him, and three days later He walked out.
 10. At the cross, Jesus didn't merely tell me, a sinner, that he loves me; He took my sin, bore my judgment, paid my debt, and gave His life in my place.
 11. *So please don't leave this series thinking the greatest question of your life is, "Do I have a good marriage?"*
 12. *The greatest question is, "Do I belong to Jesus Christ?"*
 13. You can be *happily* married and need Jesus, *painfully* married and need Jesus, *divorced* and need Jesus, *widowed* and need Jesus, or *single* and need Jesus.
 14. (Slow Down)
 15. Marriage is a wonderful gift, **but marriage was never meant to be your Savior.**
 16. You cannot buy His love, earn it through religion, or make yourself good enough to deserve it.
 17. We bring our sin and we bring our self...
 18. So whether you've followed Christ for fifty years or you're realizing today that you've never truly given Him your life, His invitation is the same: **Come to Christ.**
 19. There is a love stronger than death, a love the grave could not hold, a love your sin could not extinguish, and that love has a name: **Jesus.**
 20. So whatever story He writes for you - married or single, in joy or sorrow, with much or with little—give Him your life, follow Him faithfully, and rest in this:
 21. **our great hope is not that we can hold tightly enough to Him, but that in grace, He will never let go of us.**

THE GOSPEL: Jesus Christ is the ultimate hope for every person. Though we are all sinful and our sin separates us from God, God made a way for us to be in right relationship with him again. That way is Jesus. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. God promises that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved. This is the good news of the Bible.

1. Our prayer team will be around the room today.
2. They would love to pray with you.

COMMUNION: 1 Corinthians 11

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said,^[b] "This is my body, which is^[c] for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

*"May the Lord bless you and protect you;
may the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
may the Lord look with favor on you^[b]
and give you peace."*