

The Song of Songs

Part 6 – Love In Every Season

I. Love In Every Season

1. One of the most valuable lessons we can learn from the Song of Songs is what it looks like to love God in every season. God uses every season of our life – the good, the bad and the ugly – to produce wholehearted love in us.
Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.
2. When we understand the security of God's love and the wisdom of His leadership we can not only be content in every season, but intentionally growing in partnership with the work that God is doing in us through it.
3. Overview of the Seasons of Song of Songs
 1. Seasons of Refreshing (1:1-2:9, 4:1-7, 5:1, 6:4-10, 7:1-10)
 2. Seasons of Separation (3:1-5, 5:2-8)
 3. Seasons of Stretching (2:10-17, 4:8-16)
 4. Seasons of Testing (5:2-6:3)
 5. Seasons of Labor (6:11-12, 7:11-13)
 6. Wilderness Seasons (8:1-5)

II. “I am my Beloved's and He is mine” - Growing in our identity during seasons of refreshing

1. Seasons of refreshing are the seasons of wooing – where God's love is very near and real to us.
2:6 (8:3) His left hand is under my head,
His right hand embraces me.
2:8 The voice of my Beloved!
Behold, He comes
2. They are seasons of simply resting in His presence and receiving His love, and they are essential to our growth as believers.
2:3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods,
So is my Beloved among the young men.
In His shade I delighted and sat down,
And His fruit was sweet to my taste.
4 He has brought me to His banqueting house,
And His banner over me is love.
Luke 10:38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”
3. This is the season where our hearts grow in a firm identity as a lover of God and as the beloved of God. It's the season that gives birth to 'the King has brought me into His chambers' (**1:4**) and 'dark am I, yet lovely' (**1:5**).

4. In seasons of refreshing we need to be feeding on the revelation of all God has done for us in love, and all that He has prepared for us in love.

1:4 the King has brought me into His chambers

1:17 The beams of our house are cedars;
our rafters are firs.

3:11 Come out, you daughters of Zion,
and look upon King Solomon wearing the crown,
the crown with which His mother crowned Him
on the day of His wedding,
the day of the gladness of His heart.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God... 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Matthew 25:6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'

5. And we feed on the revelation of who we are in God's eyes because of His love.

4:1 Behold, you are fair, My love!

Behold, you are fair!

7 You are altogether beautiful, My love;
there is no flaw in you.

Psalms 45:10 Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. 11 The King is enthralled by your beauty; honor Him, for He is your Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

6. In doing so we cultivate our identity as those who belong to God. Who exist to love Him and be loved by Him, so that our heart is not easily distracted from receiving His love, and so when seasons of separation or testing come we are not shaken in who we are.

6:3 (also 2:16, 7:10) I am my Beloved's and He is mine

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God

Romans 1:5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. 6 And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

III. "I will seek the One I love" - Pursuing God in seasons of separation

1. Seasons of refreshing will inevitably eventually give way to seasons of separation and seeking. Sometimes because we miss an invitation, but always because God knows that seeking is good for us – 'absence makes the heart grow fonder.'
2:17 Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my Beloved, and be like a gazelle
Or a young stag on the mountains of separation.
1 By night on my bed I sought the One I love;
I sought Him but did not find Him.
5:6 I opened to my Beloved,
but my Beloved had turned and gone.
My soul failed me when He spoke.
I sought Him, but I could not find Him.
I called Him, but He gave no answer.
2. Seasons of separation are to produce in us a hunger and a longing that makes the next season of refreshing all the more enjoyable, and that produces in us a tenacity to cling to God and not let go.
3:4 When I found the One my soul loves;
I held onto Him, and would not let Him go
5:9 What will you tell Him?
Tell Him I am lovesick.
Psalms 73:28 (NAS) But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.
Luke 6:21 Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh.
Psalms 63:1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water... 5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. 6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, 7 For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. 8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.
3. In seasons of separation, our heart's response has to be to rise up and seek. To hunger for His presence.
3:2 I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek the One my soul loves.
Psalms 27:8 When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."
4. This is empowered by the revelation that He loves us. He does not hide from us because He's angry or disappointed... He hides because He wants to be sought after, and when we seek we will find.
3:4 Scarcely had I passed them when I found the One my soul loves.
Proverbs 8:17 I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me.
Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
Proverbs 25:2 It is the glory of God to hide a matter, But the glory of a king to search it out.
1 Chronicles 28:9 If you seek Him, He will be found by you

IV. “Let my Beloved come into His garden” - Saying yes in the seasons of stretching

1. God's love meets us where we're at – He calls us beautiful just as we are. But He also calls us to rise up and follow, to let Him work still more beauty in us.

2:13 Rise up, My love, My fair one,
And come away with Me.

14 O My dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret places of the cliff,

Let Me see your face,
Let Me hear your voice;

For your voice is sweet,
And your face is lovely.

15 Catch for us the foxes,
The little foxes that ruin the vineyards,
Our vineyards that are in bloom.

4:8 Come with Me from Lebanon, My bride

12 A garden enclosed is My sister, My bride,
a spring locked, a fountain sealed.

13 Your plants are a paradise of pomegranates
With precious fruits... and all the finest spices.

2. The season of stretching may be a call to run with Him in ministry, a call to remove the things that hinder love or a call to yield an unyielded area of our hearts. But always it's a call to come **with** Him, not a call to come **to** Him. He is with us even through the testing.
3. God uses seasons of stretching as opportunities for us to show our love. He always invites us to grow up rather than demanding it. It is an opportunity for us to voluntarily choose to give Him what He desires. Wholehearted love means declining the option to say no.
Mark 12:29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment
4. The security of His love (**4:1-15**) is what allows us to say yes to His leadership even when we don't understand. To yield to the seasons of testing and refreshing that He uses to perfect love in us. We yield to His stretching, not because His love for us is lessened if we don't, but because the love He receives from us increases if we do.

4:16 Awake, O north wind,
And come, O south!
Blow upon my garden,
That its spices may flow out.
Let my Beloved come into His garden
And eat its pleasant fruits.

V. “Tell Him I'm lovesick” - Seeking a testimony of love in times of testing

1. God allows times of testing, to produce in us a testimony of love. He does not promise our lives will be easy, but He does promise that we can find peace in Him in the midst of trials.

5:6 I opened to my Beloved,
but my Beloved had turned and gone.
My soul failed me when He spoke.
I sought Him, but I could not find Him.
I called Him, but He gave no answer.

7 The watchmen found me as they went about the city;
they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil,
those watchmen of the walls.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

2. Seasons of testing produce a testimony of love. Love is demonstrated in laying down our life, and in taking up our cross.

4:6 Until the day breaks,
and the shadows flee away,
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of frankincense.

3. Seasons of testing produce a testimony within us – a self-revelation of how much we truly love Him – and often a public testimony.

5:9 How is your Beloved better than others,
that you charge us so?

10 My Beloved is radiant and ruddy,
chief among ten thousand...

16 He is wholly desirable.
This is my Beloved and this is my Friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

6:1 Where has your Beloved gone,
O most beautiful among women?
Where has your Beloved gone,
that we may seek Him with you?

4. The lovesick heart refuses to be offended in a season of testing, but rather focuses on the testimony to our Beloved that our trials are producing. Our heart stays set on the One we are seeking, and not on the trial we are facing.

5:9 I charge you O daughters of Jerusalem:
If you find my Beloved,
What will you tell Him?
Tell Him I am lovesick.

VI. “There I will give You my love” - Loving God in the midst of our labors

1. God will call us to labor: whether it's in the marketplace or in our family, or in ministry. It's part of who we were created to be. What He desires is that we would learn to labor with Him in love.
2. The purpose of our labors is to give us a context in which to love God beyond just idle days in paradise. We cannot fully meet God without that context. The danger of our labors is their potential to distract us from God and to cause our hearts to be neglected.

1:6 My mother's sons were angry with me;
They made me keeper of the vineyards,
but my own vineyard I have not kept.

3. The heart in love sees our labors with God as an opportunity to give Him our love. Labors that had before been done unto themselves or unto ourselves or unto others are now done unto Him. And we no longer labor alone – we don't just labor for Him, we labor **with** Him.

7:11 Come, my Beloved,
let us go out into the fields
and lodge in the villages;
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.

There I will give You my love.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

VII. “Coming up leaning” - Maturing our love in the wilderness seasons

1. Wilderness seasons take on a variety of forms. Sometimes they're also seasons of testing, or seasons of separation, but other times they're also seasons of refreshing. But they are a few aspects almost certain to be present: isolation, weakness and humility.

8:1 If only you were to me like a brother,
who was nursed at my mother's breasts!
Then if I found You outside,
I would kiss you,
and no one would despise me.

2. The wilderness is designed to remove that most stubborn obstacle to love in our heart: independence and pride. When the wilderness season has done its work in our heart, we come up leaning – fully dependent upon God and unashamed at what others may think of that.

8:5 Who is this coming up from the wilderness
Leaning on her Beloved?

Psalms 69:7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Shame has covered my face. 8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children; 9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. 10 When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, That became my reproach. 11 I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them...

13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, Hear me in the truth of Your salvation...16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. 17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble; Hear me speedily.

3. God actually uses times where we feel unseen or ignored or cut off from those around us to prepare us for times in front of those around us. Those times where God is all we have teach us to live before an audience of one – caring only for His opinion.

1 Corinthians 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. **4** For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

VIII. Growing in love in every season

1. God allows seasons of testing and isolation to reach our lives because He has a specific work He wants to accomplish through them.
2. Understanding how God works love in our lives even through unpleasant seasons keeps us from becoming offended. And it helps us to actively partner in learning the lessons of that season so that we don't have to languish in it any longer than necessary.

3. Learning to be content in them requires recognizing the wisdom of God's leadership and the security of His love, and the fleeting nature of such trials.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For this momentary, light affliction, is working in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, **18** while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

4. We are on a pilgrimage that will lead through many seasons, including suffering, but we can find springs of life in each season, and the journey ends in Zion – an eternal season of refreshing.
Psalms 84:5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. **6** As they pass through the Valley of Baca [suffering], they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. **7** They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.