

## **I Will Search for the One My Heart Loves**

People have been building walls for centuries. We all know of famous walls like the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's 75-mile wall in Britain and the Berlin Wall that divided East and West Berlin. Walls are built to divide us or protect us, depending on your point of view. But did you know that walls can make you ill?

After the Berlin Wall went up, East German psychiatrists observed that the wall seemed to cause a dramatic increase in mental illness, rage, dejection and addiction. The closer people lived to the wall, the more acute their disorders. The only cure, they postulated, for the "Wall Disease" was to bring it down.

And sure enough, when the wall came down in 1989, so did the number of people suffering from "Wall Disease." <sup>i</sup>

We come now in our love song to a theme that is found in almost every love story – certainly it's in the classic love stories like Romeo and Juliet or Pride and Prejudice or Shrek and Fiona. That theme is the reality of separation. As glorious and satisfying as being in love is, it also opens a door to a new source of pain – the possibility, almost the inevitability, of something causing you to be separated from the one you love.

So, let's see how this is dealt with in the Greatest Song of All. First, we see **I. The Shock of Separation**

In almost every love poem, daylight, sunrise, sunshine are images of what is good about love. In chapter 2, the woman is describing how, before her lover appeared, it was winter, it was dark, it was rainy. But since he showed up:

**See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.**

**Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come...**

Maybe this is where George Harrison got the idea for:

*Little darling, it's been a long cold lonely winter*

*Little darling, it seems like years since it's been here.*

*Here comes the sun. Here comes the sun, and I say, it's alright.*

Or, maybe he just got that from living through an English winter!

Conversely, darkness, shadows and night are images that depict challenges and obstacles to love, which is where this third chapter of Song of Songs begins:

**All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves;**

**I looked for him but did not find him. (Song of Songs 3:1)**

She's not physically looking for him, but emotionally looking. Have you ever experienced that? I'm sure you have. No matter your age, you've spent nights on your bed, unable to sleep because your heart is longing for someone – maybe a lover, but maybe a friend or a father. In 1960 in this country, only 17% of children grew up without a father present in their life. Today, 40% of all American homes with children are fatherless. In our Men's Fraternity group that meets every Tuesday morning at 6 a.m., we're going over the impact of the "Father Wound" right now. This is the third time in six years that we've addressed this. Why? Because

Dad's presence in the life of both boys and girls is huge. This is not to say that Mom's influence isn't also huge, because it is, if not even larger than dad's; but most people acknowledge the impact of a mom while they don't understand the impact of a dad.

Dr. Meg Meeker is a pediatrician and a professor in the Department of Pediatrics and Human Development at Michigan State University. She has written two books entitled, *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters* and *Strong Mothers, Strong Sons*. Listen to what she has to say about the impact of fathers on their daughters:

[Play "What a daughter needs from her Dad" Youtube start at 1:07, end at 2:18]

This need obviously is no different for boys. Dr. Robert Lewis, the author of our study material for Men's Fraternity this year, lists four outcomes if a boy doesn't have his father's love. Those outcomes are one or more of the following:

1. Anger and pain
2. Extreme behaviors
3. An inner sense of lostness or incompleteness
4. Sexual-identity confusion

He tells the true story of the Hollywood actor, Burt Reynolds. Reynolds was a college football hero turned actor who played almost exclusively macho, alpha male roles in movies like *Deliverance*, *The Longest Yard* and *Smokey and the Bandit*. In an interview with *Parade Magazine*, however, Burt made this statement:

There's a saying in the South *no man is a man until his father tells him he is*. It means that someday when you're 30 or 40 – this man, whom you respect and love, and want to love – you hope he'll put his arms around you and say, "You know, you're a man now, and you don't have to do all those crazy things that you're doing and get into fist fights – and all that – to defend your honor. You don't have to prove anything to me. You're a man and I love you." But with my dad and me – we never hugged, and we never kissed and we never said 'I love you.' No, we never even cried together. (Reynolds paused for a moment and then said...) So what happened was that later I was desperately looking for someone who would say, "Burt, you're grown up now and I approve of you, and I love you, and you don't have to do these things anymore." But that didn't happen. And I was lost inside. For most of my life, I couldn't connect; I was incomplete. And I didn't know then what I needed to know...

Reynolds never resolved this disconnection with his dad and so he spent his entire life trying to prove that he was a man. He burned through two marriages (and dozens of affairs), burned through all his Hollywood money and friends. And today at 78 he is struggling to ward off the IRS who's after him for tax evasion and the bank for failure to pay his mortgage.

Why am I taking so much time, in our study of a love song between a man and woman, to talk about our relationship with our dads? Because when Jesus taught us to pray he said...

**This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father..." (Matt. 6:9)**

What three words would you use to describe your relationship with your biological father? Some of you had or have great fathers so your three words are things like: strong, patient and kind or loving, fun and romantic. But for others of you, you have words like Dr. Robert Lewis' words for his relationship with his dad:

drunk, absent and fishing. Dr. Lewis has a beautiful photo of his wedding except for one thing – someone is missing. It's his dad. He was at home, drunk.

So, right now, how's your relationship with your dad? AND let me ask you this: right now, how's your relationship with your heavenly Father? Do you see any connection? In our brain we know that God and our dads are two very different individuals, but in our hearts, it's not always so easy to make the separation. If darkness has descended over your relationship with your dad, the same darkness may be influencing your other relationships – like with your friends or colleagues at work or your spouse or even with God.

**All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves;  
I looked for him but did not find him.** (Song of Songs 3:1)

What if anything, can be done about this? Verse 2 says...

## **II. "I Will Search for the One My Heart Loves."**

These words are descriptive of the woman moving from wishing she could find her lover to taking strong action to actually find him. Commentator Duane Garrett says there are three Hebrew verbs in verse two which are translated, *I will get up, I will go about* and *I will search*; the last literally saying *I will find*. He concludes:

*(These) are strongly assertive and connote determination: she has made up her mind to find him. She stops her idle, romantic fantasizing and actually goes after him with all the emotional risks that this action entails.* <sup>ii</sup>

Then, in verse five, which was not read earlier, is a statement that we find also in S of S 2:7 which says:

**Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.**

These are the exact same words of S of S 3:5. What's this about? First, why is the Beloved charging the girls by gazelles and does? The Hebrew word for *gazelle* sounds very much like the Hebrew word for God, *Sabaoth*. And the Hebrew word for doe sounds very much like the Hebrew word for *God Shaddai*. This is called a circumlocution, which means "a round-about way of speaking." She's charging them poetically by the nature of love itself, because love is a creation of God.

Now, what is she charging them to do (or technically, NOT do?) The repeated charge is:

Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

What does this mean - don't be physically intimate unless you're emotionally swept off your feet? No, actually quite the opposite. In verses 1-5, the woman is conflicted, but she's not just struggling about being separated from her lover. It's bigger than that. She's struggling with the question of whether this is the time and whether this is the man to whom she will give up her virginity. She's giving and repeating this warning to the other "girls" because she realizes that this, besides the decision to trust her life to God, is the biggest decision of a woman's life. Dr. Garrett puts it this way:

*[She knows that] The passion of love and of the powerful emotions of the transition from virgin to sexually active woman are to be experienced with what the Old Testament calls the "husband of your youth." ...the exhortation can only mean that they should avoid promiscuity and save their virginity for*

*marriage... A woman who awakens love with a man who is not giving of himself or prepared to sustain her will find herself bitter and desolate.* <sup>iii</sup>

On the human, emotional level this song is teaching both men and women that physical intimacy is much, much more than physical. It is also emotional, intellectual and deeply spiritual.

Do you see the analogy to other human relationships, especially to your relationship with your father? A child is very vulnerable and very much in need of a dad's selfless and sustaining love. If the dad chooses not to give that kind of love to the child, the child will be wounded. It's unavoidable if the father refuses. So, then what? Does that child just have to live with a gaping wound for the rest of his or her life?

Song of Songs does not answer that question, but the rest of the Word of God does. Peter asked Jesus, "...how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" And Jesus replied, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matt. 18:21-22) When a father doesn't give a child the love, the time, the attention, the blessing he or she needs, it's as if he is placing a burning hot coal in the child's soul. Forgiveness is the only way to put out the fire. Forgiveness is as much for you as it is for him. That's the **first treatment for the Father Wound: forgive him.**

But secondly, you must also risk asking for your father's blessing. Dr. Lewis tells of a highly successful surgeon from Houston who had a really bad relationship with his Christian father. His dad had a family business and this surgeon was the only one of three sons who decided to break out on his own. His dad chided him and made him feel that he was being disloyal to the family. So, he left home without his father's blessing and became a very successful and sought-after surgeon.

But this wound continued to bother him so he asked Dr. Lewis what he should do. As they talked about it over lunch, this highly educated surgeon spent most of the time crying into his salad. Dr. Lewis finally said to him, "Listen. You know what you should do? Call the hospital and cancel your appointments, go buy a plane ticket to Houston and go ask your dad for a blessing." So, he did. And his dad listened but said he needed time to think it over.

A month later, this physician gave Dr. Lewis a copy of a letter he received from his father. It read:

Dear Tom,

I want you to know that I have felt pain and hurt in my lifetime: the pain of depression, the pain of having no hope – not even having any food. The pain of being a dropout from high school with no one who seemed to care. The pain of going to college with no money, no letters and no help. But the deepest pain I have ever felt was when I hurt you with stupid, foolish words. Oh, how I have wept when I think of how I hurt you, my beloved son. I weep even now as I write this. Please, please erase those words. They were not from my heart. Please forgive from your heart and think of me as not only your daddy, but your best friend and supporter. I know you forgive me, but I wanted you to hear my heart cry.

Tom, I remember when you were a little boy in bed one night, you were scared and you said, "Daddy, are you awake?" And I said, "Yes, Tom, I'm

awake.” And you said in a few minutes: “Daddy, is your face turned towards me?” And I said, “Yes, it is.” And a frightened little boy went to sleep. Tom, I want you to know that my face is still turned towards you and will never be turned away. Sleep well, my son, your daddy will always love you and help you.<sup>iv</sup>

Is there anyone here who needs your father’s blessing? Take the risk and go ask for it. Or, is there a father here who has never given a child your blessing? It’s never too late to do the right thing. Go make things right before it’s too late.

But someone here might be saying, “But it’s already too late for me. My father is dead!” Then there’s one more phrase we must see. It’s in verse 6...

### III. “Who Is This Coming Up From the Desert...?”

In verse 7 and 8 it tells us:

**Look! It is Solomon’s carriage, escorted by sixty warriors, the noblest of Israel, all of them wearing the sword, all experienced in battle, each with his sword at his side, prepared for the terrors of the night.** (Song of Songs 3:7, 8)

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, what did He say they should say? How should they address the Creator of the Universe, the Captain of the Armies of Heaven, the One who is so Holy that no one can look at Him and live? He said we should say, “Our Father,” didn’t He? And last week, we heard Jesus say:

**...I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.** (John 14:20)

The very next verse says:

**He who loves me will be loved by my Father...** (John 14:21)

So, if you are in Jesus, then as the Father loves the Son, He is also loving you. And how did the Father show His love for the Son? On three occasions, He verbally blessed him. How? The Father in heaven, spoke a three-part blessing. He said He loved Him, that He was proud of Him, pleased with Him and that He recognized that He was really good at what He did. That’s how we should bless our children.

Is there anyone here today who has never been blessed by your earthly father and you think now it’s too late because he is no longer here? Are you in Jesus by having asked Him for His mercy? Then, you need to look up. What’s that coming across this emotional desert that you’ve been living in? It’s the chariot of the king! He’s coming with a battalion of angelic warriors who are armed to destroy the “terrors of the night” that have been plaguing you all these years. He’s come, as your real father, your spiritual father to speak true words of blessing into your life. So, listen! Listen to what your Heavenly Father says to you now: (Mark 1:11)

**You are my Son [my Daughter], whom I love; with you I am well pleased.**

You’ve come here today to search for the one your heart loves; and you have found Him, and He has found you and He has blessed you. And now you can sleep in peace because you know that your Father’s face is always turned towards you. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Marcello Di Cintio, “Walls: Travels Along the Barricades” (Soft Skull Press, 2013), pp. 10-12

<sup>ii</sup> Duane Garrett, *Word Biblical Commentary: Song of Songs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), p. 171

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155

<sup>iv</sup> Dr. Robert Lewis, *Men’s Fraternity Year One: The Quest for Authentic Manhood, lesson 6* (Nashville: LfeWay Press, 2003), p.14