

June 4 — It's Worth the Wait!

READ

Song of Solomon 1:1-8:14

Song of Solomon 8:6-7, “...*Love flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with all his wealth, his offer would be utterly scorned.*”

THINK

We've seen the devastating aftermath of wildfires and floodwaters that have wreaked havoc across our nation. Ironically, these very elements of nature, when in control, are meant to help sustain life. It's when they go beyond their intended boundaries that they cause death and destruction.

As with fire and water, the God-given gift of sex can be devastating when it goes beyond its intended boundaries when this God-given desire goes haywire amid lust and passion. In God's great wisdom, He designed the most intimate of experiences between a man and woman to be shared within the context of marriage. However, in our culture today, the gift of sex too often goes far beyond God's protective guardrails and guidelines, leaving a trail of collateral damage such as guilt, poor self-esteem, broken relationships, and dire consequences. Conversely, that same passion within the marriage bed is an act of worship, and that's exactly what today's reading reveals!

The Song of Solomon is a beautiful depiction of the God-given gift of marital love and intimacy. Within its chapters, we read about the courtship and blossoming relationship between a man and woman. Then, with vivid word pictures, the author colorfully portrays the passion and oneness that creates healthy marriages full of vitality and growth — all part of God's masterful design!

Therefore, if you aren't married, stick to God's plan! His way is always best, blessed, and well worth the wait!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for all Your wonderful gifts. Help me to respect and honor this most precious gift of marital intimacy. I know that Your way is always best, and I seek to live within Your protective boundaries. In Jesus 'name, Amen,

June 5 — The Ultim-IT Life!

READ

1 Kings 11:1-45
Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, *“Meaningless! Meaningless! ’says the Teacher. Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless. What do people gain from all their labor at which they toil under the sun?”*”

THINK

New things are exciting. New cars, new clothes, new toys. But after a while, the newness fades along with our enthusiasm. This is a common occurrence in the Christian life, as well. Many of us accept Christ and are excited about starting a new life rooted in His love and grace. But before long, that old familiar Sinatra-esque song starts playing in our hearts and minds, “I’ll do it my way.” And, all too quickly, God becomes an afterthought in the rear-view mirror of our minds.

What does “doing it my way” look like? We work toward the world’s definition of success, indulge in whatever we desire, burn through relationships, waste decades of our lives and leave behind a trail of collateral damage. This bleak outcome does not have to be ours, nor was it ever meant to.

Living for Christ is the "ultim-IT" life. So, what is “it?” It’s a life filled with purpose, hope, and grace on top of grace. When we go all-in, we gain a level of confidence and enthusiasm for the things of God. In this, we find meaning, meaning, and more meaning! You’ll be amazed to discover all God has in store if you are willing to do life His way.

PRAY

Dear Heavenly Father, Your way is always right, though I sometimes lose sight of that. Without You, my life is meaningless and messy. With You, I have purpose and hope. Help me to stay focused on doing life Your way instead of my own. In Jesus ’name, Amen.

June 6 — Whole Life

READ

Ecclesiastes 1:12-6:12

Ecclesiastes 5:2-3, *“Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool.”*

THINK

Actions speak louder than words! In fact, Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 25:21, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” Notice He said, “well done,” not “well said.” This is also Solomon’s point in today’s reading — no more lip service! Do the right thing in a reliable way. In a word: integrity.

Integrity comes from the Latin word “integer,” meaning whole, undivided. People of integrity are honest, reliable, and driven by an unwavering sense to do what’s right. God gives us a moral compass through the Holy Spirit. He guides us and enables us to grow more and more like Jesus, who makes us whole. But, first, we must choose to follow His lead.

How can we become people of integrity? Start with the basics: strive to be the same person in private as in public. When the numbers at work aren’t adding up, be honest. When others talk behind someone’s back, choose not to gossip. Don’t keep secrets from your spouse. Don’t lie to cover your tracks.

Living as a person of integrity is a daily — sometimes moment-by-moment — decision. And when you fall, be honest with God and get back up. Don’t just *talk* about it, *be* about it. Do this, and someday Jesus will look at you and say, “Well done!”

PRAY

Dear Lord, You determine what’s right and wrong. Without You, I would remain hopelessly incomplete. Give me the drive and strength of character I need to back up my words with actions. And guide my decisions with Your Spirit so that my life outwardly reflects my inward connection with You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

June 7 — So You Thought...

READ

Ecclesiastes 7:1-10:20

Ecclesiastes 9:11, *“I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned: but time and chance happen to them all.”*

THINK

“Rise and Grind.” “Good things come to those who hustle.” These statements underscore the fact that we want to believe that the person who works the hardest and does the best work wins in the end. But, the best team doesn’t always secure victories. The hardest working employee doesn’t always get the promotion. The person who does everything right doesn’t always get the results they want. If we put all of our trust in our work, those moments that don’t pan out in the way we’d hoped can be devastating. That doesn’t mean we abandon hard work. We just don’t rely on that alone. We acknowledge there are things out of our control and trust God in those areas.

Trust is not abandoning our responsibility to work hard; it's doing everything we can do while leaning on God to do the things only He can. We show up for work every day, bringing our best and trusting God to provide the new client, the creative ideas, or the relationships that we need. We commit to spending time with Him daily and placing our faith in Him above all else.

Trusting in our work alone eventually leads to disappointment. But trusting in God gives us the freedom to work on what we can control, knowing He will be faithful to take care of the rest.

PRAY

God, Please make me aware of when I trust in my work above of trusting in You. Help me to grow more dependent upon You each day. Thank You for Your consistency in my life. Amen.

June 8 — The Conclusion of the Matter

READ

Ecclesiastes 11:7-12:14

1 Kings 12:1-33

2 Chronicles 10:1-11:17

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, *“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”*

THINK

As the saying goes, you save the best for last! That's why bands always close concerts with a hit song, and dessert is always served at the end of the meal. The same is true in Ecclesiastes. The entire book explores the meaning of our fleeting lives and then ends by giving us the bottom line for how to live a meaningful and purpose-filled life: Fear and obey God.

This fear of God is a reverence that motivates rather than a revelation that paralyzes. Through twelve chapters, Solomon exposed the emptiness of pursuing life apart from God. And he should know! He had everything the world had to offer — in abundance! But he concluded that our motivation should originate with a healthy respect for the One who made us and a willingness to do what He says. That's where our purpose is found!

At the end of life, God will judge us for everything we do, think, act, and say, in both secret and public. That's when we will see the true value of where we invested our time, energy, and resources. It's when we'll celebrate all the opportunities we got to engage in for God's purposes here on Earth. Today, you can step into your best life by looking for ways to be obedient and make His name known. Let the adventure begin!

PRAY

Dear God, I respect and obey You. Today, I choose to make all necessary changes to do what's right in Your eyes because I know that where You are, I will find purpose. Amen.

June 9 — God, You're Right!

READ

1 Kings 13:1-15:15

2 Chronicles 12:1-15:19

2 Chronicles 12:5-6, *"Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the leaders of Judah who had assembled in Jerusalem for fear of Shishak, and he said to them, 'This is what the Lord says, You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak. The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, 'The Lord is just.'"*

THINK

Things are going great. You've reached the pinnacle of success, and you feel strong — the world is your oyster; nothing can stop you now! How great is that! If you're nodding along to the statement above with self-assurance, it's time to hit the brakes because danger awaits! Why? Because where is God in that scenario?

King Rehoboam was in the spotlight, secure in his reign. The puff of pride had over-inflated his ego, and he turned away from God. In his unfaithfulness, Israel followed and they, too, became estranged from God. The bad thing is, when we tell God, "Leave me alone," He just might answer that prayer! And so it was with Israel. God sent a prophet with a strategically pointed message for the king and other leaders: "You have abandoned Me, and now I will abandon you in this time of need." Gulp! Now, God is not petty, but He does allow consequences that match the offense, so He allowed the mighty Egyptian army to attack the Israelites.

Israel's leaders and the king immediately humbled themselves and admitted to God what He already knew, "You're right! We're getting what we deserve!" So, God protected them from complete destruction but said, "You will, however, have to serve the Egyptian king." It was a hard lesson.

When we stray from God, there will always be consequences. We will face difficulties and endure hardships as a direct result of our actions. However, God's punishments always come with a promise — a lesson intended to get us back in step with Jesus. So, if you're currently estranged from God, all you have to do is stop, look up, and admit to God what He already knows: "You're right! I do need You!" Then, He'll meet you right where you are and guide you with His loving hand.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, You're right! I am prone to disobedience and pride. I need You, Lord. Please help me remain in step with You and live obediently to Your commands that You may be glorified through me, Amen.

June 10 — When Brooks Run Dry

READ

1 Kings 15:16-17:7

2 Chronicles 17:19

1 Kings 17:2-7, *“Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: ‘Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine ... You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there. So he did what the Lord had told him ... and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat ... and he drank from the brook. Sometime later, the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.’”*

THINK

Have you ever noticed how squirmy kids get while sitting in time-out? Parents pick a place isolated from toys and games to give their children a moment to think about their behavior. As the clock ticks by, kids can't wait to get back to playtime and fun. But they can't move until their parent says, “Time's up!”

In today's reading, God's man, Elijah, was sent with a rather rude awakening and message for Israel's terrible king, who the Bible notes “did more to provoke God's anger than all of the kings prior.” So, imagine the blood draining from his face as Elijah told him, “God says there won't be any rain or dew for the next few years!” This was a big deal — God's judgment befell him, and it was about to wreak havoc in the land. The phrase “Don't shoot the messenger” truly applies here! As Ahab's anger burned, God sent Elijah to a desolate place far from everyone and everything!

God faithfully supplied water from a brook and commanded ravens to drop meat off for him morning and night. But here's the thing — the brook was dwindling. So day in and day out, Elijah had to sit and watch the water slowly trickle away. Can you imagine? Most of us would hit a breaking point and leave to find other options. But Elijah didn't — he stayed and waited on God. What a display of obedience!

When the brooks of our lives start to run dry, why does God want us to wait? Why does He allow us to squirm within times of isolation and hardship? It's to cut away our self-reliance and pride to be used for His plan and purpose. So, if you feel as if God has placed you in “time out” and you're struggling with looking elsewhere to fulfill a need, sit still! God is working in you for the next big thing He wants to do in and through your life!

PRAY

Lord, I feel so thirsty at times, alone and stranded by a dwindling brook. Help me to be patient and wait on Your timing. Even if I can't see where You're leading so that I may be a blessing to others. Help me trust in Your provision and guidance. Amen.