



The Maturing of Christ's Bride

(Growing in Marriage, Part 7)

Song of Solomon 7

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life

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livinghopechurch.net

“The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus.” ~**Hudson Taylor**

1. Expositor's class, tonight 4pm and evening service at 5pm
2. Trinity Christian Choir – this Wednesday. We still have 12 girls that need 3 or 4 per home. Can we have 4 people that would volunteer?
3. Caleb Asher Polderman was born early Friday morning (Jun 3) at 1:36am. He was 7lbs 13oz and 21 in long.
4. Abraham Flores was also born May 29

If you don't have a Bible, there should be one in the seat in front of you. Open your Bible to **Song of Solomon**. The title of our message this morning is “You are Dearly Loved by God.” This is part 6 in our series “Growing in Marriage.” We are looking at Song of Solomon 6 today.

Outline

We are called to grow in Christ. How do we do that? That Christ's bride will grow in various ways...

- The Bride matures in her **beauty**
- The Bride matures in her **strength**
- The Bride matures in her **communion**

Beautiful in His Time

So many people feel ugly. They try to get creams or even surgeries to make themselves look better. But what we need this morning is something more than what man can do. A facelift or botox just won't do!

The **facelift we need** is lifting up our heads and fixing our eyes on Jesus!

Ecclesiastes 3:11, “He has made everything beautiful in its time.” It's not going to happen over night. It takes time to make you beautiful in Christ.

The Crawling Butterfly

Have you ever seen a crawling butterfly? You know a caterpillar should go into his cocoon for three months, and come out as a butterfly! The caterpillar who was once bound to the ground should be able to fly!

Can you imagine if the butterfly with great big wings just crawled on the ground and never wanted to fly? What if he kept saying: “I’m only a caterpillar – I can’t fly!”

Some of you are like that caterpillar. God has given you wings of holiness and a Spirit-filled nature, but you are like that crawling butterfly. You have the power to fly in conformity to Christ, but you keep crawling on the ground of old sinful living.

You may not be continuing in sin the way you used to, but there are little slave masters in your life that control you. It may be anger. It may be lust. It may be anxiety and worry. It may be irrational thoughts and fear.

A Christian is not sinless

It is not that a Christian is sinless, but sinning less. So you say, ok, I want grow and change in Christ. How can I do that?

Song of Songs 6:11-12, “I went down to the nut orchard
to look at the blossoms [greenness] of the valley,
to see whether the vines had budded,
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.
12 Before I was aware, my desire [soul] set me
among the chariots of my kinsman [willing one], a prince.”

Like a Fast Chariot

She’s saying, before I knew it, I went as fast as a fast chariot to my beloved’s garden. She is no longer burned out and scorched. She is now a woman who is growing as a woman and growing and maturing in her marriage. She has an eagerness to grow in her love with her beloved.

An Eager Believer

This is a picture of an eager believer, whose heart is being stirred up by the spirit within to care about the kingdom purposes of her beloved, and to do something about them. It’s like she’s compelled; she’s propelled. His love is so great that she has to share it with others. She has to care about others experiencing the love that she’s experienced.

I. Christ’s Bride matures in her beauty, 7:1-6.

The Beauty of Christ’s Bride Matures

6:13b, “Why should you look upon the Shulammite,
as upon a dance before two armies?”

Solomon is saying, “The beauty of the Bride is all mine!” But if you must know why I love her, and if you must know how I would describe her beauty, then listen and I will tell you.

Her Beauty is Royal

7:1a, “How beautiful are your feet in sandals,

O noble [royal] daughter!”

Though the others regard her as a mere “camp dancer,” (6:13b), Solomon considers her his royal princess. She is like a prince’s daughter.

Certainly she didn’t “feel” like a prince’s daughter. Her family was messed up. She said, “My own vineyard I have not kept.”

And so it is that we do not “feel” like the children of God always. “and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”

1. Her Royal Feet

Complete in Christ from Head to Feet

Our sandals are royal, are they not? You are to be doing the King’s business. You are to go where He sends you!

Once we were degenerate (Isa. 1:6), “from the sole of the foot even unto the head,” but now we are transformed from our feet to our head – we are “complete in Christ” (Col. 2:10). We are new creations! We are no longer what we once were!

Where Do Your Feet Take You?

The peasant princess’s feet are dignified and royal. She is beautiful inside and out. Her feet tell that story. Where do your feet take you?

Dear child of God, there is so much trouble in this world. Do your feet take you to the attractions of the “vanity fair” in this world? Or perhaps they take you to far away to isolate yourself in fear or depression or raging anger.

Where do your feet take you?

Or do your feet take you to serve the saints? Do you serve Christ’s Bride? Or perhaps your feet take you to spread the good news to the lost.

Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

Perhaps your feet take you to a prayer closet where you bow before the God of glory and bring the sweet incense of prayer and petition and supplication.

Keep in Step with the Spirit

We are called to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). If you are growing in Christ, you will be keeping in step with the Spirit of God. Are you open to His moving and leading? Are you willing to pray right now – “Lord show me the dark pathways I’ve been on. Clean me up. I need to see.”

Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:11, “Thy Word have I hid [or treasured] in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.”

Will you pray, “God give me *royal* feet?”

2. Her Jeweled Joints

Fitted Like Jewels in Christ’s Body

7:1b, “Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the work of a master hand.”

The idea here is that her joints are like jewels. The joints of her thighs and legs are like those hammered out by a master jewel crafter.

Today we have laser cut diamonds in order for them to be perfect.

The joints of the church are “fitly joined together” (Eph. 4:16). We are fitted like jewels in the Body of Christ.

We are to be edifying each other by being in the right place – with our “jeweled joints.” It’s so vital to be where God wants you to be.

Are you serving where God wants you to serve? Are you right where He wants you to be? Are you born again? Are you saved?

Pray with me, “Spirit of God, move me to here you want me to be in the Body of Christ. I’m willing! I’ll do whatever you want me to do. I want to be a ‘jeweled joint’ in the Body of Christ.”

3. Her Healthy Navel

7:2a, “Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine.”

This woman is fed well. It’s funny that body image changes from generation to generation. In most places in the world, a heavier woman is more attractive. In places where there is famine, a gaunt woman is despised and looked down upon.

So it was in Solomon’s day. This was a healthy woman who lacked for nothing. Her navel was like a rounded glass or goblet that never lacked wine.

4. Her Child-Bearing Belly

7:2b, “Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies.”

Solomon says in verse 2b, “Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies.” Today, if you say that to your wife, that’s enough to get the cold shoulder for a while!

The comparison of her belly to wheat may allude to the color of her skin, but it also implies that she is with child and fruitful with him.¹ She is now big, bearing Solomon children. Lilies represent life. By the description, she has a baby or two or two on the way!

Now realize that she’s not as young. Children are coming. Solomon tells his wife that she is a work of art. Yet Solomon says she looks like she’s been made by a master craftsman. The queen’s form has certainly changed since her honeymoon. But Solomon is sincerely satisfied with his wife’s form.

Everything Changes when We Bear Little Ones!

Everything changes when little one’s come. First of all, life gets messy! Diapers. You gotta feed ‘em. You gotta cloth them. They are work. Did I mention diapers. Oh, those diapers! They’re messy!

Do you want little ones? Are you ready for little ones in Christ? They are messy!

Miscarriage

¹ Song of Solomon 7:1-13 (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs (NAC))

Some of you today are not bearing fruit as believers. You started out well, but now you are miscarrying because of sin in your life. You need to be safe in the Word, but you're no longer getting the nourishment of the Word, and you are miscarrying spiritual fruit in your life.

Pray to the Spirit

You have become unhealthy in your soul. You need the medical attention of the Holy Spirit. Pray to Him right now. "Spirit of God, heal me! Open my eyes to evil! Grant me repentance! Grant me true fruit! Heal the spiritual fruit in my life. Don't let me miscarry this fruit. Let me bring forth strong spiritual fruit. Lord, I repent. Spirit, *wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me!*

5. Her Child-Feeding Breasts

7:3, "Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle."

Do you know that little ones get hungry? So it is with babes in Christ. They desire the "sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby." Are you ready to feed those new believers in Christ?

A Sign of Spiritual Maturity

She's now a mother, and she's not just interested in getting what she needs, but also in giving to her children, in giving benefit to others. That's a sign of spiritual maturity.

She's now capable of supplying and satisfying the hunger of others. It's not "gimme, gimme, gimme." A baby does that, right? "Waaah, feed me!" That's a sign of immaturity.

Some Churches Are at Times Grown-up Nurseries

It's okay to be immature if you're a baby, but the problem is, so many of our churches are at times just like big grown-up nurseries.

"Waaah, feed me! Tend to me, change me, fix me, touch me, help me . . . me, me, me." The sign that we're seeing a mature love here is that here is a bride who is capable of giving, blessing, supporting others, encouraging others. As Christ fills and satisfies us with Himself, then He wants to flow through us to minister grace and supply and satisfaction to others.

As believers, we are all to grow up to be spiritual mothers. **Eph. 4:11-12**, we are to get fully equipped by the ministry of the Word and Spirit to do the work of ministry.

6. Her Priceless Neck

7:4a, "Your neck is like an ivory tower."

There is no such thing as an ivory tower. It does not exist. It would be beyond what could be paid for. He is saying "You are priceless to me!"

The thing about the neck is that you can't see it without a mirror! You cannot see your position in Christ without the mirror of God's Word.

The neck connects the head to the body. We are connected to Christ legally through justification and spiritually through regeneration.

Justification means that because of Christ, we as sinners are declared to be righteous persons before a holy God. He's paid it all! You are priceless.

Regeneration is the spiritual re-birth of the sinner to become a child of God. You receive the Spirit of God – the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, and now you are *seated in the heavenly places*.

7. Her Peaceful (Oasis) Eyes

7:4b, “Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.”

The pools of Heshbon were an oasis. It is like saying, “Your eyes are like the oceans that surround Hawaii.”

Your eyes are a window to the soul. You are no longer at war with God in your soul. You are at peace. Christ has torn down the walls of hostility in your heart. He has united you and reconciled you with Himself.

8. Her Evangelistic Nose

7:4c, “Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus.”

There was a tower in Lebanon that protected Israel from Syria. Solomon felt secure with his wife. She defended his honor.

Do you defend the honor of the Lord? Do you praise Him? Do you extol Him? When was the last time you boldly proclaimed the Lord’s glory to an unbeliever? Do you have a desire to be on the lookout for those who are God’s enemies, that He might transform them and bring them into His Kingdom?

9. Her Fruitful Head

7:5a, “Your head crowns you like Carmel.”

Carmel means “garden.” It’s the ridge above Jerusalem, and it is beautiful and fruitful. It is your Head that gives you strength.

Psalm 27:6 – a believer’s head is always lifted up over his enemies. We are more than conquerors. We always overcome.

Isaiah 40:28-31, “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

Christ is the Source of our Fruitfulness

It is in Christ that you are a garden! In Christ you are fruitful. You cannot bear fruit without Him!

John 15:1-5, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

10. Her Captivating Hair

7:5b, “Your and your flowing locks are like purple;
a king is held captive in the tresses.”

Solomon was the **sovereign** of Israel, but he was a **slave** to his wife’s beauty. And so the Lord is sovereign, but He chooses to use us in the advancement of His Kingdom. He chooses to become like a slave, a servant, a mere human to rescue us. He is God who became low because of His great love for His bride!

We can say the Lord is held captive in the tresses of the church. He loves her. He uses her to carry His kingdom forward. He is using you. He is held captive by your tresses. He doesn’t have to, but He wants to. He is your sovereign, but He chooses to use you.

11. Her Pleasant Delights

7:6, “How beautiful and pleasant you are,
O loved one, with all your delights!”

The Delights and Growth of God in Us

We have so many delights in us because of Christ! We are “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17) in Christ! As **James 1:17-18** says, we are “brought forth” by Word of truth, by the Father of lights. There are so many delights. We are renewed and birthed by the Spirit.

Dear ones in Christ, you want the kind of beauty that can last and increase as you age, unlike mere physical beauty. For physical beauty, the only way is down. There are only so many surgeries, there are only so much you can do. We are all deteriorating.

We Don’t Feel Delightful

As we get older, that outward person is decaying, it’s deteriorating, but Paul says, “though the outward man perish, the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

II. Christ’s Bride matures in her **strength**, 7:7-9a.

Trials are Intended to Strengthen Us

7:7-9a, “Your stature is like a palm tree,
and your breasts are like its clusters.

8 I say I will climb the palm tree
and lay hold of its fruit.

Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
and the scent of your breath like apples,

9a and your mouth like the best wine.”

He says to her, “This stature of yours is like a palm tree.” It speaks of maturity, beauty, and fruitfulness.

Palm Trees Thrive under Attack

Palm trees are quite amazing trees! For starters, you can cut it, but you cannot kill it. The nutrients that most trees need to survive are found just below the bark, so when you cut them, they die, but not the palm tree. Its life comes from its heart, so it thrives even under attack.

It reminds me of **Psalm 92:12**, “The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like the cedar in Lebanon.” The bridegroom affirms the bride’s growing maturity, her growing fruitfulness. We’re reminded of passages like that in Ephesians 4 that tells us the goal is that we would all arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That’s the goal, the end goal—the evidence of maturity is when we look like Jesus, when His fruits are produced in us and through us in abundance.

Palm Trees Survive the Dry Times

Palm trees not only thrive in the tropics, they can also thrive in the desert, where very little thrives. As I think about that, I know that some of you here today are living in a desert—maybe in your family, maybe in a church where people don’t seem to have a hunger for the things of God. If you are in Christ, you will survive those dry times.

When you think about it, this whole world—apart from Christ—is a desert. But God can give His children the grace, the ability, to flourish—to grow, to be strong, to be fruitful, to be beautiful, even in a desert place.

Palm Trees Have an Amazing Root System

If you took a cross section of a palm tree, you would find a number of brownish spots instead of the growth rings like you’d find in most trees.

These are bundles of vascular strands that carry nutrients up and down the tree. It’s like a thick steel cable-woven from a lot of smaller steel wires that go all the way down to the roots. Each strand in these vascular bundles is connected to the root system.

Other trees have woody roots, and in most trees, 80 percent of the root system is within the top two feet of soil. But not so with the palm tree. Anyone who has ever tried to dig up a palm can tell you it has fibrous roots that not only fan out to great distances but also go down deep.

A palm trees roots sometimes go down around the tectonic plates.

As we keep our roots connected to Him, as we abide in Him, as we let Him abide in us, we will produce much fruit for His glory.

Palm Trees Bend but Do Not Break

The palm tree bends, but it won’t break. Hurricanes can blow most trees away, but not the palm tree. It can bend almost all the way to the ground, and when the storm is over, it straightens up again and is actually stronger.

The root system of the palm tree combines to give a palm tree a very solid base in the ground and a very supple trunk that will bend in the wind without breaking.

How about you, did you know that it’s trials that make us strong and help our faith to grow?

Count it All Joy

James 1:3-4, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

III. Christ's Bride matures in her **communion**, 7:9-13.

Communion with Jesus Awakens Us

She (speaking of her love)

9b, "It goes down smoothly for my beloved,
gliding over lips and teeth.

[KJV: **Song 7:9b**, "And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."]

She's now awakened. If she was sleeping, she is now alerted by the love they have for one another.

I think this could picture those who are spiritually asleep—maybe have never been converted or maybe believers who've been lulled to sleep by the world. But as a result of her devotion, her beauty, her fragrance, her fruitfulness, these sleepers are awakened. Their hearts are stirred; their hearts are revived, as they witness the intense joys experienced by this bride and her beloved.

Listen, our lives should not be lulling others to sleep. Our lives should be awakening sleepers. As they see the beauty and the power and the life of Christ within us, they want to wake up and get in on what's happening in that relationship with Him.

Song 7:10, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me."

Now we know she's the one talking because she calls him "my beloved." He calls her "my love." She finishes his sentence for him and it says, "This is all for my beloved. It's for you. It's all about you." And she continues to express that heart through the rest of the chapter. She picks up the conversation now.

Communion with Jesus Makes us Fruitful

7:11-12, "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."

Look at this invitation. It's an invitation to companionship and communion. She's never going to be alone again.

As we are abiding in Christ, one in Him, communing with Him, what happens is there is outflow. There's fruitfulness. There's going out with Him, abiding in Him, going out into the field of the world to serve with Him.

Don't Make Up Your Own Calling

You may sense that God's calling you into some new field of service. God may have all of that for you. But let me give you one earnest word. Don't try to do it without Him. Don't make

up your own mission. Don't make up your own calling. Let God birth that in you. When you do it, it's so important that you don't run out on your own but you ask, "Is this what God wants for me at this season of my life? Is this His calling in my life? Is this where He is leading, where He is taking me, and is He going with me into this?"

Communion with Jesus Restores our Passion

Song 7:13, "The mandrakes give forth fragrance,
and beside our doors are all choice fruits,
new as well as old,
which I have laid up for you, O my beloved."

Perhaps you are dry and no longer fruitful. The Bride here talks about mandrakes which were supposedly eaten to stir up passion.

As you commune with Jesus, the Spirit of God will stir you up to serve Him and bring forth much fruit.

Conclusion

If we are in Christ, in His communion through the new birth, we are going to be growing and changing in Christ.

Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He has made everything beautiful in its time." It's not going to happen over night. It takes time to make you beautiful in Christ.