

Connection to Song of Songs 2:15–3:5

We are all created for relationship—first with God through Jesus and then with each other. To live outside of relationship is to live outside of how He has created us.

Introduction/Opening

To be isolated is to be miserable. Mankind has come to understand this and therefore uses isolation as a form of punishment. If a criminal is not behaving well, he is put in solitary confinement. If a child is not listening, she is relegated to her room by herself. Neither the adult nor the child enjoy being alone.

Given the fact that we are created for relationship, it becomes vital to understand how to live in right relationship with God and others. We must first focus on our relationship with God and then our relationships with others. Jesus clearly articulates how to live in right relationship with God.

Outline

1. Love Him With All of Our Hearts.
 - a) The English word *love* can have multiple means. We can love someone so much that we are willing to die for them. We can love our favorite food. We can also love someone like a brother or sister. The Greek word used in Mark 12 is *agape*. It means to love someone so much that you are willing to die for them. This type of love also goes beyond an emotional response and moves toward a willful decision to love no matter what. This is the kind of love that God has for us, and this is the way He wants us to love Him back.
 - b) God doesn't want us to live in isolation, but rather love Him with our entire hearts. The heart represents more than the muscle that beats within one's chest. It represents the center of who we are. We love our spouse, kids, parents, grandparents, etc. with all that we are and are willing to die for them. This is what God is calling us to exhibit in our relationship with Him.
2. Love Him With All of Our Souls.
 - a) The word translated *soul* in the original language is an emotional word. Part of being created in the image of God is being created with emotions. Mankind is the only being in all of creation that has emotions like we do. Therefore, if we suppress our emotions, we are going against His design for us.
 - b) It is rather easy to express emotions. Take a good bite of your favorite food and your emotions will reveal themselves. Watching your favorite team beat their rival is an emotional experience. If we can express emotions in these settings, then let's find healthy ways to express emotions in our relationship with God.

3. Love Him With All of Our Minds.
 - a) The mind represents our intellect. God wants us to engage in an intellectual relationship with Him. It is okay to ask Him questions and search His Word for the answers. He is neither opposed to nor afraid of our questions. He desires to transform us by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2), and this is achieved when we seek to love Him with all our mind.
 - b) In order for us to fulfill this portion of God's command, it is vital that we monitor what our minds dwell upon. If we are looking at or listening to things that are not pleasing to God, then we are less likely to love Him with all our minds. If, however, we are dwelling upon His Word and things that are pleasing to Him (Phil. 4:8), we are more likely to love Him with all our minds.

4. Love Him With All of Our Strength.
 - a) When we love someone with all that we are, this love is acted upon. We do things for our loved ones not because we have to, but rather because we want to. Our actions support our words and show our love.
 - b) While God wants us to love Him in our actions, there is nothing that He needs from us. He does not need us to serve Him in order to be complete or to feel value. He wants us to experience more of Him and His love for us in and through us loving Him with all of our strength.

Conclusion

A key word in understanding and applying this passage is the word "all." The Bible says that our God is a jealous God. This does not mean that He struggles with fits of rage. Instead, He desires all of us. A wife wants all of her husband's heart and does not want to share him with anyone. Our Father wants all of us too.

Let the faithful follower of Jesus be challenged in this message today. Let him reflect upon his life and seek to love God with all that he is. Let the one who doesn't know Jesus reflect upon the truth that He wants you to love Him right where you are at. He loves you too much to leave you where you are, but He takes you as you are and changes you from the inside out.

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