



Devotional

June 28 - Oct. 3

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WEEK ONE (JUNE 28–JULY 4)

Day 180: June 28, 2020

Full Plan: Song of Solomon 1:1–4:16

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 1:1–31

Song of Solomon is love poetry, capturing the passion of human love. But it is also filled with metaphors and images of the natural world. It's a reminder that love encompasses all of creation, and care for the planet is an act of love and devotion. How does this change your perspective on caring for the environment?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 181: June 29, 2020

Full Plan: Song of Solomon 5:1–8:14

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 2:1–22

The Bible names and normalizes many emotions: sadness, happiness, fear, anger, joy, etc. But only Song of Solomon names passionate, intimate love. It's one of the soul's great desires, and finding a person to share it with is one of life's greatest gifts. Who might that person be for you? For whom are you that person?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 182: June 30, 2020

Full Plan: Isaiah 1:1–4:6

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 6:1–13

Isaiah may have been written nearly 2,800 years ago, but its indictments against the world then are just as applicable now: Do right, seek justice, defend the oppressed, care for the orphan and widow (1:17) and turn weapons of war into seeds of peace (2:4). How will you contribute to those efforts?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 183: July 1, 2020

Full Plan: Isaiah 5:1–7:25

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 7:1–25

The first 5 chapters of Isaiah paint a bleak picture of the world as it is: violence, injustice, evil. Isaiah 6 is what the world can be when filled with God's love: glorious, transformative, celebrative. All God needs is for us to say as Isaiah did: Here am I; send me.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 184: July 2, 2020

Full Plan: Isaiah 8:1–11:16

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 9:1–21

Isaiah 8-11 contains many Advent texts promising peace. But it also has hard images crisis and pain. It's what the Israelites needed to change their views. It's nicer to be motivated by love, but sometimes crisis and pain are what push us to grow. When have you ever been positively motivated by crisis?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 185: July 3, 2020

Full Plan: Isaiah 12:1–16:14

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 11:1–16

God pulls down the proud and the oppressor. But God will also pull down the oppressed if they cross the fine line to become the oppressor. It includes anyone who says "I will ascend to heaven, and raise my throne above the stars of God," (Is. 14:13). In what ways are you either the oppressed or the oppressor?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 186: July 4, 2020

Full Plan: Isaiah 17:1–23:18

Abbreviated Plan: Isaiah 24:1–23

Isaiah reminds us that no nation is perfect. But Isaiah 19:18-24 envisions pockets of faithfulness seeking God's best, shining as a witness to the world. May the church be that "City of the Sun" (18:18) and may we each play a part in creating it.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

June 28 – July 4, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Gary Uremovich

Solomon was Israel's 3rd king and the most literary of them. He penned over 3,000 proverbs and more than 1,000 songs (1 Kings 4:32). This book is called 'The Song of Solomon' or the 'Song of Songs' which means it is just one of many. One commentator calls this book 'the most difficult and mysterious in the entire Bible'!

You may have felt a somewhat embarrassed while reading this very expressive book. To have it in our Bible is truly remarkable and suggests that physical love is a gift from God. Some have seen this as an allegory (Christ and the Church pursuing each other); others as a metaphor between physical romance and spiritual intimacy (The Bride of Christ in Ephesians 5:22-33); still others view it as 'just' Middle East love poetry with no obvious spiritual application.

Some view this book as the story of Solomon's first love and wife before he became polygamous. The book is divided into the courtship (1:2-3:5), the wedding (3:6-5:1), and the maturation of the marriage (5:2-8:4). There is a constant expressive dialogue between the King, his beloved, and the daughters of Jerusalem.

In a recent group Bible study we discovered many wonderful facets of each of these approaches to understanding this beautiful book. The Shulammitte is the beloved and the King is her lover. She is seen as incredibly beautiful. But that is not her view of herself!

Verse 6 is the only instance of body shaming and personal embarrassment of appearance in the Bible! 'Do not stare at me!' She tells us that the sun has burned her skin because she has had to work outdoors. Her step brothers forced her to work in the vineyards and she had no opportunity to take care of her own vineyard (her appearance). The King does not see her in this way - he sees her as extraordinarily beautiful!

You also may see yourself as unattractive - physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Maybe you have experienced this kind of self-loathing. Sadly, it is so common for us to be our most severe critic. The wonderful reality of the Gospel is that Christ pursues us and sees us as His beloved. He does not see the flaws in our character or behavior. We are robed in His righteousness (I Corinthians 1:30).

You are beautiful - just as you are! You don't need to pretend you are someone different. You are loved unconditionally. The King pursues you! We see the Shulammitte suddenly acknowledge that she is beautiful as reflected in the eyes of her lover. Christ is the lover of our souls. Once we have tasted such deep-seated love we can

never be the same. There is something incredibly transformational about this kind of love.

The hymn 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul' was written by Charles Wesley (in 1738) within several months of his conversion. It is a hymn that still speaks to us today. Please spend a few moments reflecting on it's meaning for us today. Despite our obvious failings, He loves us unconditionally!

Jesus, Lover of My Soul

Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Savior, hide
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide
O receive my soul at last....
Thou, O Christ, art all I want
More than all in Thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint
Heal the sick and lead the blind:
Just and holy is Thy name
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am
Thou are full of truth and grace.

Charles Wesley (1738)