

Righteous Romance
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Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) 1:7-8,15–2:2,15; 4:9-12

Why would anyone want advice on marital romance from a man who had “seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3)?” We know that King Solomon later took multiple pagan wives and was led into pagan worship by this practice. But this song was written about Solomon and his first wife. It’s about one man and one woman engaged, then married, then living as husband and wife.

- A little background on this book. There is much controversy about it.
- Did Solomon write it or was it written about him? Based on verse 1 we’ll count Solomon as author. Scripture tells us Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32) but this was his greatest HIT...his SONG of SONGS.
- Is it ALLEGORICAL and instead of the romance of Solomon and his bride it’s a picture of how God loved Israel and Christ loves the church?
- Or is it simply a story about the intimate, passionate love of man and wife?
Question: If it IS really a love story about a man and his wife, why would the Holy Spirit have inspired it to be a part of scripture? Why do YOU think this song is in the Bible?

For our lesson today, let’s consider it as a celebration of God’s gifts of love, marriage, and intimacy. And though the euphemisms and symbolism can get a little “steamy,” remember this is a part of scripture and doesn’t contradict God’s command that sex belongs only in marriage. In fact it REINFORCES that this is all about a husband and wife.

This song is so free-form it can be hard to follow. Some modern translations present it like a play showing us who is speaking when. There are even arguments about that.

But reading it like a play CAN help us to track with what’s happening.

So, who are the “characters” in this story?

The bridegroom, Solomon - Also called “the beloved” and a “shepherd.”

The maiden Shulamite (either her name, a pet name, or based on where she came from.)

A chorus of other voices: Daughters of Jerusalem; the maiden’s brothers; and the voice of God endorsing their honeymoon consummation (5:1b).

This romantic poem, this song of love begins in verse two with the maiden, the Shulamite maiden dreaming of her fiancée. To help us better follow it I’m reading from the New Living Translation. She’s speaking as we listen in:

Song of Solomon 1:2–6 (NLT)

Young Woman*

2 Kiss me and kiss me again,
for your love is sweeter than wine.

3 How fragrant your cologne;
your name is like its spreading fragrance.

No wonder all the young women love you!

4 Take me with you; come, let’s run!

The king has brought me into his bedroom.

Young Women of Jerusalem
How happy we are for you, O king.
We praise your love even more than wine.
Young Woman
How right they are to adore you.

Doesn't she sound smitten with her fiancé?
"Hearing his name is like smelling perfume." "All the girls want him but he's mine!"
In verse 4 she says, "Let's just run off and get married." She's even daydreaming about the honeymoon.

5 I am dark but beautiful,
O women of Jerusalem—
dark as the tents of Kedar,
dark as the curtains of Solomon's tents.
6 Don't stare at me because I am dark—
the sun has darkened my skin.
My brothers were angry with me;
they forced me to care for their vineyards,
so I couldn't care for myself—my own vineyard.

- **What does verse 5 tell us about her appearance? What does verse 6 say about it?**
- **Why would she be sort of apologetic about her complexion?**
- **What else does verse 6 tell us about this young woman?**

Song of Solomon 1:7–8 (NLT)

7 Tell me, my love, where are you leading your flock today?
Where will you rest your sheep at noon?
For why should I wander like a prostitute* (veiled woman)
among your friends and their flocks?

- To clarify that last part: Some scholars say she didn't want to wander through the fields and have people think she was a prostitute looking for a man.
- Others say "veiled woman" means like a woman in mourning.
- **What is she planning here?**
- Finally Solomon speaks and he teases her...

8 If you don't know, O most beautiful woman,
follow the trail of my flock,
and graze your young goats by the shepherds' tents.

- Solomon says, "You know where to find me and my flock at lunchtime!"
- When you were dating, what lengths would you go to to meet up with that special person? Even if it's just at lunchtime!
- **What's the lesson in verses 7 and 8 for married couples?**
- Now that we're married how hard do we work to be together?
- Once they get together out there under a tree by the pasture, the dialog continues:

Song of Solomon 1:15–2:2 (NLT)

Young Man

15 How beautiful you are, my darling,
how beautiful!

Your eyes are like doves.

Young Woman

16 You are so handsome, my love,
pleasing beyond words!

The soft grass is our bed;

17 fragrant cedar branches are the beams of our house,
and pleasant smelling firs are the rafters.

Chapter 2

Young Woman

1 I am the spring crocus blooming on the Sharon Plain,*
the lily of the valley.

Young Man

2 Like a lily among thistles
is my darling among young women.

- **What is this engaged communicating in these verses?**
- **Why are expressions of admiration so important in a marriage relationship?**
- This admiration is a little “over the top.” **How can your spouse express admiration in a way that doesn’t make you gag or roll your eyes? What kinds of things would you like to hear?**
- Sometimes in a marriage it’s not only a lack of admiration, even kindness goes missing.

Tommy Nelson writes:

A woman said to me during a marriage counseling session, “I don’t ask that my husband be romantic. I just want him to be civil to me.” She went on to say something I’ll never forget. She said, “I wish he would treat me like a Denny’s waitress.”

I thought she was kidding. She wasn’t. She explained, “He treats a Denny’s waitress with kindness, even saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’ I never get that kindness.” — Nelson, T. (1998). The Book Of Romance: What Solomon Says About Love, Sex, And Intimacy. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- Here’s a marriage “gut check:” *Am I more pleasant, kind, and charming to strangers than I am my own spouse?* We need to communicate daily how much we value our spouse.

Song of Solomon 2:15 (NLT)

15 Catch all the foxes,
those little foxes,
before they ruin the vineyard of love,
for the grapevines are blossoming!

- Solomon and his maiden knew a thing or two about “little foxes” that can tear up a vineyard.
- So they decided these words would be “code” between them.
- *“Let’s not let little things cause BIG problems in our relationship.”*
- The problem is that most of us ignore the “little foxes” thinking we only need to worry about the BIG things.
- The truth is it’s an accumulation of the “little things” that can cause BIG problems.
- **What are some “little foxes” that can spoil a marriage relationship? How can we spot them? How do we chase them away?**

- When we see a “little fox” has gotten into our “vineyard” we need to look at each other and say, *“There’s one of those ‘little foxes’ let’s run that thing out of here quick!”*

Andrée Seu Peterson writing in World Magazine said:

Not all of us will encounter the giants in our marriages, but all of us will encounter the little foxes. This is because while not many of us are adulterers or murderers or wife beaters, all of us are prone to bad habits and mild addictions and assorted baggage we carried into wedlock with us.

The thing about little foxes is that they might even seem cute or harmless or funny, and sometimes they are dormant for long stretches of time. But it is interesting that the writer of Song of Solomon mentions these, and not giants, as the culprits to watch for in this beautiful romance he describes in the middle of your Bible.

God wants us to work on eradicating the little foxes—that temper problem, that tendency to walk out of the room when things are unpleasant, that habit of getting the last word in an argument, or of excessive TV watching that robs time from your spouse, or that obsession with cleaning, or shopping, or polishing your car, or Facebook....get rid of the little foxes. And here is the promise: Your vineyard will blossom.

- Part of having a successful marriage is the choice of what to focus on, and what to ignore.
- Sometimes you need to look at your spouse with the “eyes of a 20 year-old.”
- Verse 11 of chapter 3 indicates it’s their wedding day.
- Chapter 4 takes us right to the honeymoon.

Song of Solomon 4:9–12 (NLT) (Solomon speaking...)

9 You have captured my heart,
my treasure,* my bride.

You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes,
with a single jewel of your necklace.

10 Your love delights me,
my treasure, my bride.

Your love is better than wine,
your perfume more fragrant than spices.

11 Your lips are as sweet as nectar, my bride.

Honey and milk are under your tongue.

Your clothes are scented
like the cedars of Lebanon.

12 You are my private garden, my treasure, my bride,
a secluded spring, a hidden fountain.

- Let me be blunt, this is their wedding night and this is foreplay.
- And if you wonder how things ended, read verse 16 on your own!
- Ever hear someone say about an older couple: *“They still act like newlyweds!”* That’s a compliment. Our marriages would be a lot stronger if we’d look at our spouse that way.
- We can choose to see them with the “eyes of a 20 year-old.”

So, What’s The Takeaway?

- If you want proof of the value God places on love, marriage, and even sex, here it is: He dedicated a book of the Bible to the topic. Solomon’s Song of Songs.

- We can't do it justice in a short lesson or two. It's worth reading and studying for yourself.
- Better yet, with your spouse! Let the words of Solomon and his bride remind us of some things...
- First, Song of Solomon isn't just about sex. Oh, that's a big part of it, but it's more than that.
- It's about TREASURING, CHERISHING, and ADMIRING that love of your life.
- Let your mind's eye take you back to your dating days, when you couldn't wait to be together and could talk about nothing for hours and hours and love every minute.
- Make time together a priority!
- Communicate sincere, authentic value, admiration, kindness, and tenderness to your spouse.
- Agree to spot the "little foxes" that sneak in and TOGETHER deal with them.
- And finally, look at each other with the "eyes of a 20 year-old." And don't be ashamed to "act like newlyweds!"
- Remember, a little "steam" in the bedroom can take care of a lot of wrinkles in a marriage.