

Invest in the Best
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Allen Power

Song of Solomon 5:2–8, 6:1–3, 8:4–7

Opening Question: What do we mean by the expression, “The honeymoon is over?” How do things change after we’ve been married a while (habits, irritations, etc.)?

- Today’s lesson is all about working to keep a marriage strong and growing. We might say this lesson is about: “How to keep your dream marriage from turning into a nightmare.”
- In the Song of Solomon (his Song of Songs) the bride has two different “bad dreams.”
- At the beginning of chapter three she dreams she can’t find her fiancé and goes searching.
- When she finds him, she “...held him and would not let him go.” That was during the courtship.
- Now they’ve settled into married life. Things have become more predictable and less exciting.
- In chapter five, verse two Solomon’s bride recalls: *“I slept, but my heart was awake.”* She’s having a bad dream.

Song of Solomon 5:2–8 (ESV)
The Bride Searches for Her Beloved
She

2 I slept, but my heart was awake.
A sound! My beloved is knocking.
“Open to me, my sister, my love,
my dove, my perfect one,
for my head is wet with dew,
my locks with the drops of the night.”

(She replies...)

3 I had put off my garment;
how could I put it on?
I had bathed my feet;
how could I soil them?

4 My beloved put his hand to the latch,
and my heart was thrilled within me.

5 I arose to open to my beloved,
and my hands dripped with myrrh,
my fingers with liquid myrrh,
on the handles of the bolt.

6 I opened to my beloved,
but my beloved had turned and gone.
My soul failed me when he spoke.
I sought him, but found him not;
I called him, but he gave no answer.

7 The watchmen found me
as they went about in the city;
they beat me, they bruised me,
they took away my veil,
those watchmen of the walls.

8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,

if you find my beloved,
that you tell him
I am sick with love.

- Let's quickly review this bad dream Mrs. Solomon had.
- **Where is she? Where is he?**
- **What does she want? What does he want?**
- **How did she respond? How did he respond?**
- Now before we go any further, ladies, this lesson is not just about Solomon's wife saying, "Not tonight, I have a headache." Stay with me...there's more to this lesson than that.
- **What bizarre thing happened to her in her dream?**
- In Old Testament times if a female was outside the house in the middle of the night, the watchmen on the walls of the city would have assumed she was one of two things. **Any ideas?**
- **Any idea what this strange encounter with the watchmen might have meant in her dream?**
- Back in chapter 3 verses 1-4, when she was engaged, she had a similar dream.
- **Question: Sometimes when we have a recurring bad dream what might it indicate?**
- If she is dreaming about saying "not tonight I have a headache" to Solomon, **what does that probably indicate about the marriage?**
- Let me hit the "pause" button and give you the BIG IDEA of this lesson. Really some questions: How can we prevent DISTANCE from growing between us and our spouse? What can we do to shoo away those "little foxes" we talked about last week? How can we INTENTIONALLY keep our dream marriage from becoming a nightmare.
- I find it hard to determine when she woke from the bad dream. But at some point she awakes and is moved to action. **Question: When you've had a bad dream involving someone you love what do you immediately want to do when you wake from it?**
- Step #1 to keeping your dream marriage from becoming a nightmare is: When something begins to put distance between you...don't ignore it, deal with it face to face.
- Big CAVEAT: Don't obsess over every little mood constantly asking: "Is something wrong?"
- Solomon called those things that can cause distance in a marriage, "little foxes."
- In their book *The Language of Sex: Experiencing the Beauty of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*, Gary Smalley and Ted Cunningham point out some of the 'little foxes' in a relationship:

Escalation

Escalation sneaks in when we start defending or trying to win an argument. This intruder invites you to volley back and forth with accusatory and defensive statements. You invite this intruder into your marriage whenever you say, "it's your fault," "you always..." "Or "you never..."
Escalation works much like a volcano. You never know what it is going to erupt, and you usually cannot control the flow.

Harsh language

Notice we did not see curse words or foul language. That alone would not cover it. The Bible says, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth but only what is helpful for building others up" (Ephesians 4:29). Harsh language is anything spoken that is belittling, demeaning, or cruel.

Retreat

This intruder, retreat, appears when one mate closes the other person out after an argument starts: "End of discussion," "it's over" and "fine" are all forms of retreat.

Of all the intruders, this one may not sound so bad to you. It's equally destructive, though, because you are telling your mate that you don't want to hear him or her.

Assumption

Assumption creeps into a marriage whenever we begin to assign motives to the other person's actions. For example, if your spouse comes home late, you may begin to develop negative and false beliefs about what is going on. Your imagination may begin to picture the worst- rather than the best- in your spouse. Assigning motives to your spouse's actions is toxic for a marriage. Assumption says things like, "I know what you are thinking and you are wrong," "you did that on purpose," "you are trying to ruin this marriage" or "you do not want me to be successful at my job-that is why you get mad every time I am late."

http://www.amazon.com/Language-Sex-Experiencing-Intimacy-Marriage/dp/0830745688/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1400759620&sr=1-1&keywords=9780830745685

- Back to Mrs. Solomon...
- Mrs. Solomon discusses her situation with the "daughters of Jerusalem," perhaps her girlfriends or some of her servants. She's looking for Solomon to initiate some reconciliation.
- *"If you see my husband, tell him I am 'sick with love' for him."*
- They respond (verse nine), *"Why are you so focused on finding your husband?"*
- **Then in verses 10-16...scan those verses...what does Mrs. Solomon do?**
- The wording of the last line of verse 16 is significant: *"This is my beloved, this is my friend."*
- Step #2 in keeping your dream marriage from becoming a nightmare is: Focus on all the reasons you love and appreciate your spouse...why they are your BEST FRIEND.

Song of Solomon 6:1-3 (ESV)

Others

6 Where has your beloved gone,
O most beautiful among women?

Where has your beloved turned,
that we may seek him with you?

Together in the Garden of Love

She

2 My beloved has gone down to his garden
to the beds of spices,
to graze in the gardens
and to gather lilies.

3 I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;
he grazes among the lilies.

- Mrs. Solomon is off to see her husband out in the fields. And for the rest of chapter six, all of chapter seven, and the first part of chapter eight, the husband and wife admire each other in very intimate language.

- Step #3 in keeping your dream marriage from becoming a nightmare: After you've reminded yourself what you love about your spouse...tell THEM!
- When you read chapter seven it's fairly obvious how they made up. There's a term for that. Some teachers and pastors are having a lot of fun using that term about chapter seven. I want to be direct but considerate. So let me just say that chapter seven indicates that:
- Step #4 in keeping your dream marriage from becoming a nightmare: Make up by restoring physical intimacy.
- Again, this lesson isn't just about sex, though that's certainly front and center in these verses.
- It's about NOT ALLOWING the irritations of life and relationship to cause DISTANCE in our marriage.
- After Solomon and his wife made up, their love was stronger than ever:

Song of Solomon 8:5–7 (ESV)

5 Who is that coming up from the wilderness,
leaning on her beloved?

Under the apple tree I awakened you.
There your mother was in labor with you;
there she who bore you was in labor.

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.

Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the Lord.

7 Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.

If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
he would be utterly despised.

- Any thoughts or questions before we wrap up?

Bonus Reading: The Seasons of Marriage (Thoughts from Gary Chapman) - <http://www.imom.com/mom-life/marriage-and-love/the-four-seasons-of-marriage/>

So, What's The Takeaway?

- How do we keep our dream marriage from becoming a nightmare?
- Make sure we take some INTENTIONAL measures to prevent DISTANCE between us:
 1. When something begins to create distance...don't ignore it, deal with it face to face.
 2. Focus on all the reasons you love and appreciate your spouse...your BEST FRIEND
 3. After you've reminded yourself what you love about your spouse...tell THEM!
 4. After you've sorted out the issues, it's good to make up by restoring physical intimacy.
- This week, let's look for the "little foxes" and get rid of them before they cause us marriage "nightmares."