

Relational Investment  
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Song of Solomon 5:2-16

This chapter in Song of Solomon (Songs) is about a married couple working through conflict. The story is a common scenario that can cause friction between spouses. He comes to bed with one idea; what she is thinking is very different. I told you this collection of love poems could be very practical. Spoiler alert: The couple in this text has learned how to productively deal with marital conflict.

Big Idea: Though the honeymoon is over, the romance doesn't have to be. Relationships change over time but wise spouses can love their way through times of conflict or disconnection because they have invested in that marriage.

Let's get the picture beginning with verses two through six. The setting is the wife's bedroom (in that culture husbands and wives had separate bedrooms.) Most scholars believe this is another "dream sequence." The wife speaks:

Song of Solomon 5:2–16 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup>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." <sup>3</sup>I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them? <sup>4</sup>My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. <sup>5</sup>I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. <sup>6</sup>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.

- She slept but her "heart was awake." She was either drifting off to sleep or was dreaming. Either way, the lesson for us is the same.
- Her "beloved" comes to the door looking for "amore."

- Look at the language. She doesn't say, "*There's that sweaty, irritating slob again and I know what HE wants!*" She still calls him her "beloved."
- His language is very romantic of course, "*my love, my dove, my perfect one.*" You could say this is because he's initiating sex but the full story would tell us that both spouses still adore each other outside the bedroom.
- Even if a marriage is one of respect, deep love, and romance between spouses, sometimes there are moments of distance and conflict.
- "*Let me in dear, my hair is wet with dew.*" What does THAT mean? Did he just come in from work in the fields? Had he just showered in anticipation of lovemaking? Is he in a hot lather like a racehorse? We'll never know.
- Verse three doesn't require much interpretation. She says, "*I've already take off my clothes, taken a shower, and I'm in the bed.*"
- The husband is thinking, "*No clothes, just cleaned up, that's no problem!*"
- She's really saying, "*Not tonight I have a headache!*"
- As she delays, he rattles the door lock trying to persuade her. As he fiddles with the lock, his presence at the door begins to warm her heart.
- In fact, the more he tried to "unlatch the door" she got excited.
- Some commentators believe this is double entendre. You decide.
- Verse five (NLT) <sup>5</sup> I jumped up to open the door for my love, and my hands dripped with perfume. My fingers dripped with lovely myrrh as I pulled back the bolt. <sup>6</sup> I opened to my lover, but he was gone! My heart sank. <sup>i</sup>
- Let's pause and consider what we don't read. The husband didn't loudly demand that she get up and open that door, or worse, break it down.
- Remember, this was the ancient near east and the husband was "king." Assuming this was Solomon, he was really the actual king!
- It also doesn't say the rejected husband blew his stack in a huff.
- If it was Solomon one might speculate he had another 699 wives and 300 concubines so he would just be off to the next

one. We believe this was in his younger years before he got sidetracked into the sin of polygamy. This isn't just about getting sex. The text makes it clear this husband is passionately all about making love with her specifically.

- The text also doesn't quote the wife as sighing in angry resignation saying, *"Okay, let's get this over with so I can go back to sleep."*
- Though lovemaking was not initially on her mind, it appears that she warmed up pretty quickly as her "heart was thrilled" within her.
- A little sidebar on the "liquid myrrh" in verse five. Either he had perfumed up or she had perfumed up, regardless, the door latch smelled great.
- Why that detail? Fragrant, precious myrrh adds to the romantic setting.
- She threw open the door, but he was gone. No harsh words, just gone.
- Verse six: "My heart sank. I searched for him but could not find him anywhere. I called to him, but there was no reply." <sup>ii</sup>
- So, the wife goes through the streets seeking the husband and something bizarre occurs.

<sup>7</sup>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.

- Like I say, it's a strange turn of events. What does it mean?
- Was the wife mistaken for a prostitute on the prowl at night?
- Those who see this as a dream, see the abuse as symbolism in her subconscious mind. Let's go with that theory for our study.
- Thomas Constable: *"The fact that in her dream the watchmen beat her may indicate that she subconsciously felt that someone should punish her for refusing him."* <sup>iii</sup> Faith Life Study Bible: *"This encounter may symbolize an obstacle to intimacy between the lovers, or some kind of division in the relationship."*
- <sup>iv</sup> Others: The beating symbolizes the pain of separation.
- Though some kind of disconnect had worked its way into this marriage relationship, now she was feverishly looking to reconcile with her husband.

- She enlists the help of her women friends in trying to find him.

Song of Solomon 5:8–16 (NLT)

<sup>8</sup>Make this promise, O women of Jerusalem— If you find my lover, tell him I am weak with love.

<sup>9</sup>Why is your lover better than all others, O woman of rare beauty? What makes your lover so special that we must promise this?

<sup>10</sup>My lover is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others! <sup>11</sup>His head is finest gold, his wavy hair is black as a raven. <sup>12</sup>His eyes sparkle like doves beside springs of water; they are set like jewels washed in milk. <sup>13</sup>His cheeks are like gardens of spices giving off fragrance. His lips are like lilies, perfumed with myrrh. <sup>14</sup>His arms are like rounded bars of gold, set with beryl. His body is like bright ivory, glowing with lapis lazuli. <sup>15</sup>His legs are like marble pillars set in sockets of finest gold. His posture is stately, like the noble cedars of Lebanon. <sup>16</sup>His mouth is sweetness itself; he is desirable in every way. Such, O women of Jerusalem, is my lover, my friend.

- She's gone from apathy to admiration as she recounts to her friends and more importantly, to herself how much she loves her husband.
- When she thought she had lost him, she remembered all the things she admired and loved about him. Do you think they reconciled? Just listen to the husband's words to the wife as they embraced when she found him:

Song of Solomon 6:4–9 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup>You are beautiful, my darling... <sup>5</sup>Turn your eyes away, for they overpower me. Your hair falls in waves, like a flock of goats winding down the slopes of Gilead.

<sup>6</sup>Your teeth are as white as sheep that are freshly washed. Your smile is flawless, each tooth matched with its twin. <sup>7</sup>Your cheeks are like rosy pomegranates behind your veil. <sup>8</sup>Even among sixty queens and eighty concubines and countless young women, <sup>9</sup>I would still choose my dove, my perfect one...

- The language indicates that both spouses still passionately cared for each other both inside and out. Whatever distance had existed is over now.

- What can we learn from this story and apply to our marriages?
- Let's start with the opening scene. *"Not tonight I have a headache."*
- This isn't about portraying the wife as the "bad guy." Let's be fair, marital conflict is rarely 100% the fault of one spouse or the other.
- Sometimes the other spouse (either) is exhausted from the heavy tasks of the day and just not up to physical love. Husbands in particular have to decide not to take it as personal rejection when this is the case.
- Wives please know that it's hard for men NOT to take it as rejection.
- If the spouses are not in agreement on the frequency of intimate time together, there needs to be communication and agreement.
- Don't let silence turn into bitterness; don't be afraid to talk it out.
- This text is bigger than when a couple agrees to be intimate. It's about how to deal with conflict in all of marriage.
- Tommy Nelson in his classic Bible study on Song of Solomon says handling marital conflict correctly is not about one spouse winning over the other it's about having the mutual goal that the relationship must win.
- This couple clearly fought for their marriage to be the WINNER in conflict.
- We see that both spouses in this text seem to have learned how to deal correctly with conflict or distance in their relationship. The husband didn't force his way in or blow up and go looking for someone else at the corner bar. The wife didn't just grudgingly give in to get it over with.
- These two were deeply in love and passionately attracted to each other.
- When the wife thought about being without her husband she remembered how much she loved him and searched high and low to reconcile.
- When she found him, we don't read that he held her initial rejection over her head. He responded with words of love not recrimination.

- To rekindle how you really feel about your spouse ask, what would life be like if your spouse wasn't there? (Illustration: It's a Wonderful Life)
- Tomorrow Susan and I celebrate 35 years of marriage so I believe I'm qualified to make some observations.
- The husband in 6:9, "I would still choose my dove, my perfect one..."
- Be sure your spouse knows you would still choose them over all others.
- Husbands have been accused of having "selective hearing" and maybe we do. I believe spouses (both husbands and wives) who truly love each other have a kind of "selective vision." Miraculously, spouses who are truly in love look at the other spouse and they don't see the toll of time, they still see the things that excited them at the beginning of the relationship.
- Spouses, when the other spouse says you are as attractive and exciting as back when you met, don't roll your eyes, just smile and say "thanks."
- Look at how she describes him in 5:16, [he] "is my lover, my friend."
- Successful spouses are BOTH lovers and friends – best friends.
- What sets a godly Christian marriage apart? A truly successful marriage is one where each spouse not only invests in their relationship with each other but each in their personal relationship with Christ.
- Yes, it's possible for those who are not Christ-followers to have a good marriage, but a couple who are both Christ-followers can have the AMAZING marriage God ordained in the Garden of Eden and Jesus described in Mark 10:6-9.

### So, What's the Takeaway?

- Though the honeymoon is over the romance doesn't have to be. Relationships change over time but wise husbands and wives can love their way through times of conflict or disconnection by investing in that marriage. Will we invest daily in our marriage relationships?

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<sup>i</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (So 5:5–6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (So 5:6).

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (So 5:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/ot/song/song.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [\*Faithlife Study Bible\*](#) (So 5:7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.