

Lessons From The Song Of Solomon

presented by:

SpeakingSoundDoctrine.com

2011

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Introduction

Preface

The Song Of Solomon, sometimes also termed "The Song Of Songs," draws considerable controversy. Some of the questions are: who wrote it, when was it written, and what does it mean? Also, like the book of Esther, there is no mention of God, His law, or worship, nor are any passages there from quoted by New Testament writers. Therefore, doubt has arisen over whether the volume even belongs in the canon of scripture. An investigation of the book's rightful place in the Bible is left to a separate study, which is admittedly complex and daunting, though important and beneficial. However, a few points on the matter are stated nevertheless.

To begin, the Song Of Solomon has been included in the Hebrew Bible since ancient times and attested as such by historians of the New Testament era, such as Josephus. Moreover, it was included in the Dead Sea Scrolls, along with many other Old Testament manuscripts. Those who were in the best position to know affirm its rightful place. Furthermore, the book holds up a high moral standard when viewed in the light of the remainder of scripture. Nothing in the text contradicts divine law or historical facts. Notwithstanding, even if its canonicity is disregarded, there is still a moral reward gained by its study: a point in favor of a divine origin. This study moves forward on the basis of accepting the book to be inspired by God.

Practically every reliable translation renders the opening as, "The song of songs, which is Solomon's." However, scholars agree that this phrase in the original language is not clear whether the possessive case indicates that he authored it, that it is about him, or that it is in accordance with him. Controversy about the time of the writing arises as well. Some observations are offered regarding this. Solomon is indicated as king in this dialog (3:11), having at this time 60 wives (queens) and 80 concubines (6:8). He would eventually accumulate 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3), so it would seem safe to say it was written some time during his reign. Moreover, many references to horticulture, agriculture, architecture, and wildlife appear in the narrative, about which Solomon was an expert and skilled writer (1 Kings 4:33; Ecclesiastes 2:4-6). The dialog also contains a reference to a filly of Pharaoh (1:9), and Solomon did horse trading with Egypt (1 Kings 10:28, 29). An argument heard against Solomon as the author is that a monogamous marriage relationship is herein glorified (6:3), but Solomon was a blatant polygamist. Nevertheless, Solomon was a prolific writer (1 Kings 4:32) completely capable of speaking favorably of monogamy, seeing its worth in the lives of others (Proverbs 5:18). Besides, by the inspiration of God, men were often moved to write about things they did not understand (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). It is fully plausible and reasonable that Solomon is the author. Regardless, we do not need to know with certainty the author; we don't know with certainty the authorship of several books accepted as canonical. Our primary concern in this study is not about these things but about the examples of love and grace manifested which we can apply in our own relationships.

The scriptures contain frequent references to all kinds of human sexual activity; some lawful and wholesome, some unlawful and corrupt. In the Song Of Solomon especially, candid discussion on passionate, physical desire dominates the dialog. For this reason, this study should be applied with some age sensibility. Participants need to be able to consider and discuss these matters openly and maturely. The New Testament writers at times had to tailor their teaching to the maturity of their audience (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2, Hebrews 5:13, 14). Good judgment regarding age appropriateness needs to be exercised in this study as well. Furthermore, those who will benefit from this study are not limited only to young adults in their courtships and in early married life but also to those in advanced relationships. All such relationships usually have room for improvement, and the aged for whom such relationships are passed can learn from this study how better to teach the young (Titus 2:2-6).

Approach

The interpretation of this book has long been the subject of speculation and debate. Some of the various ideas are as follows:

- This is a love story regarding one of Solomon's marriages.
- This is only an allegory of God's love for Israel or Christ's love for the church. The verses are not speaking literally of the love between a man and a woman but are purely figurative.

- This is nothing more than factual history.
- This is merely a collection of erotic poems and love songs.
- This is not about Solomon at all but a shepherd who is loved by the Shulamite maiden. As references to Solomon are in the third person, he is not actually involved in the dialog.
- This is a story of a love triangle. A beloved shepherd is the second man in addition to Solomon. The third character is a Shulamite maid who loves the shepherd and cannot be won by Solomon's advances.

For this study, the last of these views is the one used as an approach. This viewpoint is adopted, not with dogmatism, but in an attempt to harmonize God's divine and flawless word. This suggested approach will hopefully be shown to be valid as the study progresses. This approach will be applied consistently throughout the study with every attempt to harmonize the context and the remainder of scripture. Some other interpretation of the text may be correct, but if it is, care must be taken to likewise explain its harmony to the rest of scripture. In some cases, the explanation given may seem to be a stretch, however, similar difficulties in explanation will characterize other approaches as well, if not worse. This viewpoint is simply taken to be the most feasible; the others are rejected for reasons as follows.

The view that this is the record of yet another one of Solomon's many marriages is rejected in light of God's one-woman-for-one-man plan from the beginning (Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:15) and His contempt for polygamy (Deuteronomy 17:17). Polygamy is demonstrated to typically associate with idolatry and unfaithfulness in the Old Testament (Genesis 4:23, 1 Kings 11:4-8; Jeremiah 2:2-5; Daniel 5:2, 3, 23). It would seem out of place for scripture to glorify such a relationship.

The view that this is only an allegory of God's spiritual relationship with His people may have arisen from the notion that we ought not be so openly discussing physical, sensual, sexual desire, especially in mixed company. The focus of teaching in scripture is certainly spiritual, not carnal. However, if this approach is taken, we are forced into some very imaginative speculations to fabricate allegories we have presupposed must exist. Moreover, in reaction, some have even recommended that young people should not read this book. This view is rejected as an unnecessary safeguard which has no value against fleshly indulgence (Colossians 2:20-23). Sex in lawful marriage is beautiful and sacred in the eyes of God (Hebrews 13:4). God is the one who placed this urge in man at creation, and He regulates its lawful fulfillment in a binding lifetime covenant. Christians need to teach frankly God's laws concerning this important facet of human existence in order to avoid fornication.

Nevertheless, an allegory between a marriage relationship and the church and Israel is undeniable, as the connection is revealed in many passages (Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 3:1, 20; Hosea 3:1-5; Matthew 25:1-13; Luke 5:34, 35; John 3:29; Ephesians 5:25, 32; James 4:4). Since scripture reveals the allegory, that which we learn about the human relationship in this study is legitimately extended to the spiritual relationship. The idea that this text contains **no** allegorical messages is as shortsighted as the idea that it contains **only** allegorical messages. There are many lessons to be applied from this book, and the Bible student needs to be open to all of them. Allegorical applications are made in this study as appropriate and in harmony with scripture.

The very liberal viewpoint that this is nothing more than a historical record of events is also rejected. God's revelation to man is never trivial (Romans 15:4). Likewise, the idea that this is merely fiction or a collection of erotic poems is dismissed as pure humanism (2 Peter 1:21). This idea is possibly based on the argument that the dialog contains no plot. This might be an overstatement, however, as a shallow plot does exist in that the lovers are separated at the beginning (1:7), they seek one another in the middle (3:2; 4:8), and they are united at the end (8:5). Besides, as this is set in pure poetic form with deep imagery, we ought not be surprised at the frequent use of figurative language. One such figure, apostrophe, is when the speaker turns aside to address an imaginary or absent audience, which could possibly explain why the dialog sometimes seems to unexpectedly jump between the characters. We ought not presume that the dialog needs to flow with a progressing plot the way the book of Esther does in order for it to have a structured message.

The view that Solomon is not a dialog character spawns partly from the observation that references to him are in the third person (speaking *about* another). However, this is not exclusively the case. In 8:12, Solomon is clearly addressed in the second person (speaking *to* another). Other characters in the dialog are also

sometimes referenced in the third person (2:3-6). Moreover, the Shulamite is brought into the king's chambers (1:4) and is apparently seated somewhat near him at his table (1:12). There is no reason to categorically exclude him from any dialog. Certain subjects, descriptions, and references in the verbal exchanges also possibly implicate him as the speaker in places, which will be brought out as we develop the characters. Besides, whether the king or the shepherd is the speaker does not make much practical difference in the application. This also ought not rule out the possibility that Solomon could be the author. Other writers of scripture also sometimes refer to themselves in the third person (John 20:2; 21:7, 20).

Regardless of what interpretation one may adopt for this study, the moral principles and instructions will be the same, if a consistent harmony with scripture is maintained. Whether or not you believe that a shepherd is the beloved or that Solomon speaks in the dialog will not essentially change the lessons to be learned. We are free to differ in opinions on incidental matters, and such disagreement between brethren does not mean we have broken fellowship (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 10). Nevertheless, this allowance for disagreement on opinion does not also mean we can agree to disagree on any matter of faith and moral doctrine yet still maintain fellowship (Romans 16:17, 18).

Prelude

If a man were allowed to seek happiness and fulfillment in earthly things with nothing held back, could he find it there? Is true happiness found in much wealth? Is it found in unrestrained sexual gratification? God makes an experiment and example of Solomon. God grants all these things to Solomon, but in the end, his retort is "all was vanity and grasping for the wind" (Ecclesiastes 2:11). A common idea is that true happiness can be found in fulfilling the desires of the flesh, but Solomon proves this to be wrong. We don't have to try it to know; Solomon has done it for us. The Song Of Songs thus becomes an indictment against Solomon's lifestyle, who, forsaking God, went after many strange women, who turned him away after their gods (1 Kings 11:1-10).

The Song Of Solomon is a ballad, a story in poetic song, as if it were a musical play. The story is understood to be the courtship of two lovers: a Shulamite vineyard maiden and her shepherd boyfriend. Love is here depicted as a garden. How do our gardens grow: with flowers and fruits or with weeds and thorns? Are our gardens cultivated and nurtured, or are they let go to be choked with weeds and trampled by creatures? God placed man in a garden and created a suitable helper for him (Genesis 2:18).

Husbands and wives who serve God are better equipped to have a strong marriage. Likewise, husbands and wives with a strong marriage are better equipped to serve God in every respect. For example, men who serve as elders in the church are required to have a wife and a healthy home life. Heaven as a goal is easier to achieve with a wife as helper. That, after all, is the true purpose of life and ultimate goal of the study of this book (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

There are perhaps six characters (or groups of characters) in the context, the dialogs of whom are indicated in this outline as follows, listed in their order of identification:

SOLOMON (1:1):

His language is often typified by military metaphors, references to jewels, precious metals, servants, and the trappings of royalty.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM (1:5):

To assume that these are members of Solomon's harem or his concubines can only come by conjecture. A harem was more the culture among Persian kings, where women were taken into custody and not allowed to have contact with men, other than eunuchs or the king, as seems to have been Esther's situation for a time. Women in such a harem were not free to leave the women's quarters on their own (Esther 2:8-17). The women here are apparently free to go as they please (3:2, 11). According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon (BDB), the definition of the original word here for "daughter" includes merely the women of a particular place. The Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament (LXX), has exactly the same original phrase in 1:5 as Jesus utters in Luke 23:28, as if He borrows it from this book. These Daughters of Jerusalem appear to be shallow in thought and word and are infatuated with the king.

THE BELOVED'S COMPANIONS (1:7):

At least twice in the narrative is mentioned a group other than the Daughters of Jerusalem who appear to be associated with The Beloved and are also infatuated with The Shulamite, but in a different way.

THE BELOVED (1:13):

Here is the shepherd boyfriend. He is a rugged outdoorsman, whose dialog is flavored with symbolism of horticulture, the forests, and the wildlife of the fields.

THE SHULAMITE (6:13):

She is a beautiful maiden who tends flocks and gardens. She is single-heartedly smitten by the love of a young shepherd and repeatedly refuses the advances of Solomon. She speaks candidly at all times without pretence.

HER BROTHERS (8:8):

The maiden's brothers are protective and watchful for their little sister, viewing her in innocence and purity.

Whether these are in fact actual historical characters or fictional characters in an historical setting is beside the point. We can likewise discuss whether the good Samaritan in Jesus' parable is an actual, historical person or someone fictitious to accommodate a story (Luke 10:30-37). It doesn't matter; the messages and moral principles we learn from this study will be the same regardless. To contend over this would be futile (1 Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:9).

Please keep in mind that the indication of who is speaking in this narrative is only this writer's opinion. The translators of the New King James Version (NKJ) have added similar character indicators in the text, which are disclaimed as editor remarks only, not part of the original Hebrew manuscripts. These references are altered slightly here at this writer's discretion.

The book is written almost entirely from the first person point of view (speaking about *one's self*). Therefore, a key to understanding the text is to be able to determine who is doing the speaking in each verse. To determine the speaker's identity, it is usually helpful to note the gender, number, and subject matter. For example, when the text says "let him kiss me," (1:2) the speaker is understood to be female. Shamefully, in twenty-first century North American culture, homosexuality is gaining widespread acceptance. It is disgraceful that we should even need to mention that the kind of love involved in this study would be an abomination in a same-gender relationship (Romans 1:24-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:12; 1 Timothy 1:10).

In the afore mentioned verse, the pronouns are also singular, so the speaker would not be the Daughters of Jerusalem but rather the Shulamite. It is also helpful to note the cases where one is being addressed by name (8:12), which would rule out that one as the speaker.

In the case of a male speaker, distinguishing between Solomon and The Beloved is not as easy. Consider what would likely comprise the verbal responses of Solomon, a self-centered king at this point in his reign. We would expect him to frequently talk about himself and his possessions: the kingly things in his life, for examples, jewelry (1:10), warriors (6:4, 10), his house (1:17), his wives and concubines (6:8, 9), servants (7:1), purple textiles (7:5), armories (4:4), and royal horses (1:9). In his quest for fulfillment, King Solomon is competing for the love of a young Shulamite maiden, but his desire appears to be primarily carnal. He will also often repeat himself, endlessly praising the maiden's physical beauty, but saying virtually nothing about love or devotion. These things will implicate him as the speaker in certain passages.

On the other hand, the beloved shepherd will often speak in detail of things familiar to him, for example, outdoor life (2:12), tenderness (2:15), intimacy (4:8), fidelity (8:6), and love (8:7). Of course, Solomon also has vineyards and sheep by virtue of his dominion over all the land west of the Jordan (1 Kings 4:21-24), but indications are that he delegates the care of these to servants (8:11). The shepherd is portrayed as a hands-on individual who spends much time in the field near the sheep (1:7, 8). Of course, a shepherd will also know something about the stuff of kings, such as servants and jewelry, though probably with little familiarity to him. Notwithstanding, these things are utilized only as guidelines and indicators, not dogmatic interpretive rules.

Sometimes, in the middle of a dialogue, the gender or number will change. This obviously indicates the speaker changes, too. An example of this occurs in 7:8-10. Sound judgment needs to be employed to determine the point at which the change occurs and who is involved. In some cases, the speaker is difficult to determine. However, the primary objective of this study is not to technically dissect the book but rather to glean the lessons we can apply to our relationships today. In other cases, the speaker is irrelevant; the

message is the same regardless. Room for opinion in cases naturally has to be allowed, but not at the sacrifice of scriptural harmony. Good reasoning sense will make this clear.

In this study, we must understand that, though every word of scripture is true (Psalm 119:160), scripture in some places is a true record of a person speaking falsely or unwholesomely. For example, the serpent truly said to Eve, "you will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4), but it was a lie. Similarly, Job truly said, "The Lord has taken away" (Job 1:21), but the truth was that God only allowed Satan to take away. Likewise, in this study, we will find Solomon making some unwholesome statements. In these cases, the Holy Spirit is teaching us how not to think and act by exposing the folly of another's words. Sound reasoning will be required to determine when the lesson in the text is in this way negatively or otherwise positively derived.

The fundamental message is that love and passion are meant by God to be marvelous things and are wholesome when properly pursued. However, it comes as a story in poetic form with detailed descriptions and deep imagery. The lyrical and symbolic style gives the story of romance a heightened sense of wonder and beauty. Coincidentally, a review of figurative language in scripture would be a good precursor to this study.

Solomon once wrote, "There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the middle of the sea, And the way of a man with a maid" (Proverbs 30: 18-19, New American Standard version). To most of us, it would be easier to understand the aerodynamics of winged flight, the biophysics of how snakes move without legs, or the fluid dynamics that propel ships, than it would be to understand the complexities of the relationship of a man and a woman. This book gives us divine insight to this wonderful thing we call love.

Commentary follows the verses which are in boxed areas with indication of the speaker consistent with the approach and premise explained above. Bible words from the original Hebrew or Greek appear in upper case with pronunciations following in brackets. The biblical text and quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

1. Chapter One

NARRATOR:

1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

1.1. Love

No greater song could be than that of love (1 Corinthians 13:13). There is no emotion as compelling; love conquers all and never fails (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8). It is the more excellent way (1 Corinthians 12:31).

Love takes many forms, and we use the English word in many ways. We may say we love chocolate, puppies, our wives, and God. In each case, the word "love" is used, but we realize the meaning is different. Conveniently, the Greek language in which the New Testament is originally written has at least four different words that distinguish various forms of love. The most common, PHILIA, describes familiarity and includes the love of friendship (John 20:2). STORGE describes the affectionate love between family members (Romans 1:31, in the negative sense). AGAPE describes the love that always seeks a man's highest good, regardless of his character (John 3:16). The word EROS pertains to physical love or "mostly of sexual passion" (Liddell-Scott Greek-English Lexicon). It comes to the English language in the word "erotic," which we commonly associate with lust, lewdness, or pornography. Proverbs 7:5-27 describes a seductive, immoral woman, and the Septuagint in verse 18 uses this word in the phrase, "Let us delight ourselves with **love**." Though the word EROS may include these things, it is certainly not limited to them. This word also describes the love of romance. It is the love that makes us write poems and bring flowers. It is the love that makes our palms sweaty and our hearts beat faster. This word is not used in the New Testament, but the concept can be seen described as a burning passion (1 Corinthians 7:9).

However, the original language of the Song Of Songs is Hebrew, not Greek. In Hebrew, as in English, the words for love do not have the distinctiveness as the Greek words do, but they include all facets of love. The common Hebrew words for love in the Old Testament are defined by BDB as follows:

AHABAH {a-hab-aw} noun: "1) love 1a) human love for human object 1a1) of man toward man 1a2) of man toward himself 1a3) between man and woman 1a4) sexual desire 2) God's love to His people."

AHAB {aw-hab'} verb: "1) to love 1a) (Qal) 1a1) human love for another, includes family, and sexual 1a2) human appetite for objects such as food, drink, sleep, wisdom 1a3) human love for or to God 1a4) act of being a friend 1a4a) lover (participle) 1a4b) friend (participle) 1a5) God's love toward man 1a5a) to individual men 1a5b) to people Israel 1a5c) to righteousness 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) lovely (participle) 1b2) loveable (participle) 1c) (Piel) 1c1) friends 1c2) lovers (fig. of adulterers) 2) to like."

DOWD, noun: {dode} "1) beloved, love, uncle 1a) loved one, beloved 1b) uncle 1c) love (pl. abstract)." This word is always used of affection, especially for a close family member.

RAYAH, noun: {rah-yaw'} "1) attendant maidens, companion." Of the ten times this word appears in scripture, nine are in The Song Of Songs as a term of endearment (1:9; 2:10; et al).

By far, AHABAH and its kindred forms are the predominate terms for "love" in the Old Testament. A point of interest comes by observing that these words throughout the Septuagint are sometimes translated as a form of PHILIA and sometimes of AGAPE. However, they are translated as AGAPE or a kindred form in The Song Of Songs without exception. By the sensual and familiar nature of the subject matter, we might have expected those scholars to have chosen the word families of PHILIA, the love of friendship, or EROS, the love of sensuality, but they did not. Though it may be commentary as much as translation, these scholars saw fit to choose Greek words that portray a surrendering, sacrificial, selfless love that manifests itself in self control and seeks the highest good for others. This is the love in The Song Of Songs.

As this study continues, we will be referring to many scriptures dealing with how we ought to treat others with love and kindness, and we all readily make the application to strangers. However, we need to remember that the Lord's instructions for husbands and wives are not limited to those passages where husbands and wives are specifically mentioned (Ephesians 5:33). The generic instructions, as well, have a direct and vital

application to family, friends, and especially husbands and wives (Matthew 7:12). We will see this more clearly with further study.



THE SHULAMITE:

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth -- For your love is better than wine.

3 Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.

4 Draw me away!

The Greek word for love, PHILEO, only appears in this book in the Septuagint here and in 8:1, where both times it is in the form that signifies a kiss: the mark of friendship.

1.2. Reputation

A Shulamite maid speaks of her admiration for her beloved: a shepherd (Song 1:7). The original word for "name" includes the idea one's reputation: that quality by which he is known by others, whether good or bad. The Beloved has a good reputation, beneficial and soothing as ointment, which flows out onto the world. It makes him deserving of the love and admiration of others (vs. 4). He is someone she is proud to introduce to her mother (Song 3:4; 8:2). We all earn a reputation of some kind: honorable or dishonorable. Which one is ours? It will be how we are remembered when we are gone.

Proverbs 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.

Proverbs 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth;

Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 6:1-7; 10:21, 22; 16:22; 1 Timothy 3:7; Titus 2:6-8

Since our reputation is built upon how others see us, we might be able to fool people with outward righteousness, at least for a while, and achieve an undeserved good reputation. In 3 John 12, Demetrius is said to have a good testimony ("report," King James Version: KJV) among all. The original word here translated "testimony" is MARTUREO {mar-too-reh'-o}, which Joseph H. Thayer (JHT) defines as "1) to be a witness, to bear witness, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because taught by divine revelation or inspiration...." However, note that his good report is not only among men but also of the truth itself. Truth is never deceived. We cannot fool God; we may fool men for a while, but the truth will eventually come out, if not in this life, in the final judgment.

1 Timothy 5:24, 25 Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

Young men and women need to get to know the inner person whom they are considering to marry. To do this, we cannot look only outwardly, as the world does (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Furthermore, "testimony" in 3 John 12 is in the passive voice, indicating Demetrius is merely a recipient. If our personal ambition is to build a good reputation, we will achieve only a bad one. However, if our ambition is to serve the Lord, the good reputation comes to us without pursuing it.

A favorable report among men is to be desired, but we must be careful to not put the wrong kind of emphasis on this. Scripture frequently shows godly men being spoken of contemptuously by truth haters (Jeremiah 18:18, 19; 1 Peter 4:4). If we seek the praise of men, we will fall into disrepute with God (John 12:42, 43).

A bad reputation is harmful in several ways. For example, even after Saul of Tarsus is converted, he has to endure doubt and suspicion among his brethren until he is known by his fruits (Acts 9:13, 26). The hostile character of Alexander the coppersmith is openly published (2 Timothy 4:14, 15), and several others among the brethren are identified as disorderly, who are to be avoided (Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 2:16-19). Furthermore, in certain cultural situations, exercising our liberties without regard for a weak brother's conscience can needlessly harm both our reputation and that of the church, not to mention leading the weak brother into sin (Romans 14:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 10:28-33).



THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

We will run after you.

THE SHULAMITE:

The king has brought me into his chambers.

1.3. In But Not Of

Solomon brings her into his palace, but her heart is with the beloved shepherd. They are separated but desire to be together. She is in Solomon's palace but not of his palace.

Christians are in the world but not of the world, but this does not mean that maintaining the distinction is always easy. The Shulamite needs to be careful; Solomon's palace and the association with his many idolatrous wives is probably not the best environment for her to receive a godly influence. We may not be as strong as we think we are to resist temptation in every situation. There are times when a godly person realizes he is in the wrong place and needs to get out before he is ensnared in the sin which surrounds him (1 Corinthians 10:12-14; 15:33, 34; Hebrews 12:1). Moreover, we ought not be inviting or welcoming such a circumstance.

Though we should avoid evil situations, circumstances that challenge our faith still sometimes unavoidably come our way. This is no reason for us to go with the crowd, but an opportunity to let our light shine.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Titus 2:12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

John 17:14-18; Col 3:2-7; Jas 4:4

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.

The Daughters Of Jerusalem welcome and praise the maiden, expecting that she will be like them or even be chosen as another of Solomon's wives.



THE SHULAMITE:

5 I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, Like the tents of Kedar, Like the curtains of Solomon.

6 Do not look upon me, because I am dark, Because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me the keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyard I have not kept.

1.4. Propriety

The original word translated "lovely" in verse 5 ("comely," KJV) is *NAVEH*. The definition includes befitting, appropriate, or suited to the occasion (BDB, Psalm 33:1). It is not about mere physical beauty. A different word in the Old Testament is translated "fair" or "beautiful," which emphasizes physical beauty (Genesis

12:11; Song 1:8). In the Septuagint, NAVEH is here translated KALOS, which is commonly translated "good" in our English New Testaments (1 Timothy 3:7). Thayer's definition of KALOS includes not only physical beauty but also "...commendable, admirable, ...excellent in its nature and characteristics ...genuine, approved, ...noble, beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life and hence praiseworthy, morally good, noble, honourable...."

By describing herself as lovely, she is not boasting in regard to her physical beauty; she is defending her claim to decency: not promiscuous, but proper and well-mannered (1 Corinthians 11:13). As she responds to the Daughters, she does not consider herself anything to look at but sees herself as what we would call a type of Cinderella. There is nothing wrong with giving attention to one's own outward appearance, but inner beauty is more important (Romans 2:28, 29).

Proverbs 11:22 As a ring of gold in a swine's snout So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion. (NAB)

1 Timothy 2:9, 10; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

1 Peter 3:1-5 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel -- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.

We all have different personalities and traits, but if we are deliberately quirky or odd only for the sake of being such, we are effectively saying, "Hey, everybody, look at me!" Some young people today adopt the goth subculture, which features ostentation and the defiance of social norms. There's nothing inherently sinful about wearing black lipstick or dyeing our hair blue, but if we do these for reasons other than Halloween or some other culturally respectable occasion, we are not manifesting sobriety, modesty, or discretion, as holiness would demand (Titus 2:4, 6, 12). Other subcultures do similar things. Devout women are not impudent and never behave inappropriately.

1.5. Putting Others First

In 1 Timothy 2:9, the word "modest" is translated from KOSMIOS {kos'-mee-os}, meaning "well arranged, seemly, modest" (JHT). The word "propriety" is AIDOS {ahee-doce'}, meaning "a sense of shame or honour, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect" (JHT). The characteristic of immodesty is to dress, speak, and act in such a way as to stand out from social norms, regardless of what anyone else thinks. Conversely, the godly woman never seeks to draw attention to herself.

1 Corinthians 13:4, 5 ...love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own,...

Black sheep were raised in the region of Kedar. The tents (curtains) used by the shepherds in that area were made of dark colored fabric. She metaphorically refers to her skin, darkened by sun exposure as a result of spending much time outdoors, laboring in her brothers' vineyards and putting their work ahead of her own.

Philippians 2:1-8 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Though we may relate sun-darkened skin with beauty in our culture, oriental cultures would not. Her words are self-deprecating.

TO HER BELOVED:

7 Tell me, O you whom I love, Where you feed your flock, Where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself By the flocks of your companions?

1.6. A Desire To Be Together

She turns her thoughts outside, toward her lover. Tormented by her separation from him, she asks him by apostrophe (addressing him though absent) why she must be, as it were, hidden by a veil ("turned aside" KJV) from him. Husbands and wives in healthy marriages want to be with one another. People can sometimes be heard saying that they occasionally need some time away from their spouses, else they get on each other's nerves. This is farthest thing from a remedy to the problem. The answer is to stop getting on each other's nerves! For example, take interest in what the other takes interest in. Similarly, try not to force upon the other a thing for which he or she has no interest. Learn what annoys the other, and stop doing it; learn what pleases the other, and start doing it (Matthew 7:12).

1 Corinthians 7:32-34 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

Make time for each other and seek out special ways to share life. As this study continues, we will see that the couple never expresses the idea that they need some separation, and they always speak kindly to each other. We will cover this more when later discussing friendship and communication in relationships. This desire to be together (Song 1:4) will naturally result in husbands and wives cleaving to one another, as God intends (Mark 10:6-9). More discussion on this will follow in chapter three.

In an allegory for the church, the bride of Christ, and for Christians individually, we ought to want to be near Jesus. The apostle Paul would even have welcomed death, knowing it would bring Him to the presence of the Lord (Philippians 1:21-24).

2 Corinthians 5:1-9 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

Yet even in this life, we cleave unto the Lord, as spouses should, by seeking the things which please Him and doing them (Acts 11:23). Since He has done so much for us, why would we ever want to turn away from Christ? How shameful it is when Christ must turn his face away because of our sin (Deuteronomy 31:17, 18; Micah 3:4).

SOLOMON:

8 If you do not know, O fairest among women, Follow in the footsteps of the flock, And feed your little goats Beside the shepherds' tents.

9 I have compared you, my love, To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.

10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with chains of gold.

1.7. Relationship Attitudes

In his chambers, Solomon flatters her, offering material gifts to win her affection. The symbolism of the military and riches are typical of Solomon's speech. In our culture, we would not try to compliment a woman by comparing her to a horse. However, a strong horse is a graceful and majestic creature and a symbol of power (Judges 5:22; 1 Kings 1:5; 1 Kings 4:26). Notwithstanding, wild horses are broken so that their power is controlled by a man for his uses. Solomon's comparison here may reveal a desire to control and subdue her, like his Egyptian horses. We will hear more such assuming language in later dialogs.

Not only wives, but husbands also need to learn that submission builds a strong marriage (Ephesians 5:21). When either spouse takes a high hand to control the other, the relationship is strained. Consider to what degree Christ was willing to submit for the sake of the church, his bride, and imitate that selflessness (Ephesians 5:25; Philippians 2:5-8). As much influence that a husband, as head of the household, is to have over his wife by divine law, nothing in scripture suggests his role is to dominate her.

1 Peter 3:7, 8 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

A popular song of 1981, "One Hundred Ways," expresses the importance of this kind of devoted, humble, sacrificial, and self-less love:

*Compliment what she does; Send her roses just because;
If it's violins, she loves, Let them play;*

*Dedicate her favorite song; And hold her closer All night long;
Love her today; Find one hundred ways...*

*Maybe she has it in her mind That she's just wasting her time
Ask her to stay; Find one hundred ways.*

*Being cool won't help you keep a love warm; You'll just blow your only chance;
Take the time to open up your heart; That's the secret of romance.*

*Sacrifice, if you care; Buy her some moonlight to wear;
If there's one more star she wants; Go all the way.*

*In your arms tonight, she'll reflect That she owes you, the sweetest of debts;...
Love her today; Find one hundred ways.*

~ Kathy Wakefield, Ben Wright, Tony Coleman

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

11 We will make you ornaments of gold With studs of silver.

1.8. Attraction

Gold and especially silver were common in Israel in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 10:21-27). The Daughters of Jerusalem want to fix up the Shulamite as they are. They have become comfortable with the lavish lifestyle and wish to share that with Solomon's newest pursuit.

THE SHULAMITE:

12 While the king is at his table, My spikenard sends forth its fragrance.

13 A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, That lies all night between my breasts.

Spikenard is an aromatic oil derived from the crushed and distilled roots of a Himalayan flowering plant. Having an earthy, musty scent, it is used therapeutically and as perfume. It is the expensive ointment with which Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping with her hair (John 12:3). Myrrh is derived from a waxy gum sap commonly harvested from a variety of African thorn trees. It coagulates and hardens into a glossy resin. Pungent and bitter, it is used as incense and for medicinal purposes (Mark 15:23).

Though she is with Solomon, the Shulamite's perfume is not intended to attract his interest. The perfume she wears is for the beloved shepherd who is not present, and it comes to represent him as a type. Though she is apart from her love, he remains as close to her as the perfume she wears. Her perfume reminds her of him, however, there is a possible pitfall. Be careful, women. Excessive beautification will cause you to attract someone you might not actually want to attract. If your appearance is sexually provocative, do not be surprised when men react. If they lust, you will be partly to blame. Married women working in professional office environments need to be especially cautious to exercise moderation. A godly woman will make an effort to avoid such over-attractiveness, saving the glamour for her husband at home.

Proverbs 31:11, 17 The heart of her husband safely trusts her;... She girds herself with strength.

Sensual love is not necessarily lascivious but simply a love motivated by the senses. The senses are often referred to in the Song: the way he looks to her (5:10), the smell of her perfume (1:13), the taste of the lips (1:2), the sound of his voice (2:8), the feel of his embrace (2:6). These things have a strong but temporary effect. Though romance often starts here, a relationship based on senses alone is shallow and cannot endure after the sensual beauty is gone. Love at first sight is mere infatuation; it is not based on a full knowledge of someone. Love needs to grow beyond that which is apparent. Proverbs 31:10-31 lists the lasting and often hidden qualities a man should look for in a woman (1 Peter 3:1-5).

Proverbs 31:25-30 Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

John 7:24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

2 Corinthians 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

"A bundle of myrrh is my beloved." She does not say that the myrrh *represents* him but that it *is* him, by metonymy. We use many such types for remembrances. For example, the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread of the Lord's Supper are similarly the blood and body of the Lord, not literally, but figuratively (Matthew 26:26-28).

SOLOMON:

15 Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes.

16 Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green.

17 The beams of our houses are cedar, And our rafters of fir.

The words "fair" and "handsome" are from the same original Hebrew term mentioned earlier with emphasis on physical beauty: YAPHEH {yaw-feh'}. Older translations (KJV, ESV, ASV) render the word "fair" or "beautiful" alike in both verses 15 and 16. Since the English word "handsome" is usually used in a masculine reference and "fair" a feminine, some later translations (NAB, NKJ, NET) suggest a gender distinction between the speakers in these two verses, which the original text does not necessarily support. Consistent with our starting approach, Solomon is implicated as the speaker in all three verses above, since we would not expect the Shulamite to revel at Solomon's appearance. Moreover, there is no need for the speakers to switch back and forth between verses 15 and 17.

The "bed" does not necessarily indicate a place of sexuality but perhaps a couch (NAB), a place of relaxation. "Green" does not indicate color but means flourishing, fresh, and lush: luxuriant (NAB). Solomon is further assumed as the speaker due to the references to luxuries and cedar houses. The king uses the finest cedar of Lebanon to build the temple of the Lord (1 Kings 6), and he likewise uses it for his own palace and many other houses as well (1 Kings 7:1-12). He now tries to use the luxuries of his palace to win the heart of the Shulamite. Relationships built upon wealth die when the prosperity is gone (Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:17). Likewise, those built upon beauty die when the attractiveness is gone.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter One

1. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Why is love a virtue greater than faith and hope?
2. When Jesus said, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them," was He talking about husbands and wives?
3. Is it possible to have a bad reputation among men while doing what is right? If so, list some ways this can happen.
4. Is it possible to have a good reputation among men while doing what is wrong? If so, list some ways this can happen.
5. In what ways can a bad reputation be hurtful? In what ways can a good reputation be beneficial?
6. What might easily happen to the one who thinks he is standing firm in the midst of sinful influences?
7. Husbands and wives are to leave their parents and cleave to one another. Explain the significance of these things in light of the analogy of Christ and His bride, the church.
8. In the relationship of Christ and His church of which he is head, who sacrifices more, Christ or His disciples (Hebrews 12:2-4)? What application can be made to wives and husbands?
9. Philippians 2:4 states that we should not look merely to our own personal interests but also to those of others. Does this precept have any applicability to a marriage relationship?
10. As attraction between a man and woman based only on physical beauty is vain, compare this to what is supposed to attract us to Christ. What Old Testament Messianic prophecy mentions Christ's physical appearance? List some things that make Christ attractive to us, and explain how they can be applied to a marriage.

2. Chapter Two

THE SHULAMITE:

1 I am the rose of Sharon, And the lily of the valleys.

THE BELOVED:

2 Like a lily among thorns, So is my love among the daughters.

2.1. Standing Out

The Shulamite is different than the Daughters. She is a simple girl with simple dreams and aspirations: genuine and sincere. Sharon is a beautiful coastal plain south of Mount Carmel where many shepherds keep their flocks (Isaiah 65:10). The rose of Sharon is most likely not the flower of a woody, thorny vine or shrub, as we think of a rose, but a bulbous flower, as a tulip. Not a hot-house hybrid specimen, it grows wild in abundance on Sharon's plain. The Daughters are like thorns to her: a prickly problem in a delicate situation.

We observed earlier that a Christian woman ought not make herself different for the sake of being different, drawing undue attention to herself. However, when we are different for the right reasons, not conforming to the sinful world (Romans 12:2), we will stand out and often look odd to others or even be hated by others. We may be tempted to compromise our principles in order to try to blend in with the world, but we need to stand firm (1 Corinthians 15:58).

1 Peter 4:1-4 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles -- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

Matthew 5:10-16; John 15:18-21; 1 John 2:14-17

The Beloved is also different from others in this good way, as noted in the verse to follow.



THE SHULAMITE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, So is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, And his fruit was sweet to my taste.

4 He brought me to the banqueting house, And his banner over me was love.

5 Sustain me with cakes of raisins, Refresh me with apples, For I am lovesick.

6 His left hand is under my head, And his right hand embraces me.

2.2. Contentment, Simplicity

The dialog reminds us of the love feasts metaphorically mentioned in Jude 1:12. The Shulamite similarly uses simile here: the beloved is like an outstanding tree, the shade of which to her is as a banquet house. As he is not literally a tree, she is also not speaking of literal apples. The sweet fruit is his kindness, and she is sustained by this. This kindness is not in words only but also in deeds.

Galatians 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Nothing fancy is necessary for her to be pleased by the shepherd. Just eating, as it were, apples and cakes together in the field is sufficient; joy is found in simple pleasures. A palace of gold does not interest her; she wants a palace of love. (Proverbs 15:16; 1 Timothy 6:6-8).

7 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the does of the field, Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.

She waits for the proper time in marriage. Do not rush ahead but be patient. We will develop more discussion on this when we reach chapter four.

8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes Leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, Gazing through the lattice.

10 My beloved spoke, and said to me:

2.3. Eliminating Obstructions And Hindrances

Her imagery is of a graceful deer with dignity majestically leaping over obstacles in the fields. Let nothing come between you and your spouse. As a deer in the field can easily leap a fence or a hedge, so do not allow obstacles to block your relationship. Palace walls separate her now from her love, through which she can see and hear him with some distance.

THE SHULAMITE QUOTING THE BELOVED:

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away.

11 For lo, the winter is past, The rain is over and gone.

12 The flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing has come, And the voice of the turtledove Is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree puts forth her green figs, And the vines with the tender grapes Give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away!

14 O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret places of the cliff, Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your face is lovely.

15 Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes."

The shepherd calls her out of Solomon's courts. The little foxes are the little problems of life that can add up to be a big problem if they are not taken care of (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7). In Moses' law, a newly-wed man was to be free of the duties of work and war for one year so he could spend time with his wife (Deuteronomy 24:5). Commerce and national security took second-place in importance to making the marriage strong.

In a spiritual analogy, we need to remove the things from our life that hinder our devotion to God (Hebrews 12:1). Jesus uses strong hyperbole to explain the importance of removing the stumbling blocks:

Matthew 18:6-9 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. (NAB)

2.4. Tenderness, Gentleness

Love is depicted as a tender, delicate fruit that can easily be damaged by little acts of carelessness. If a single rose is removed from a bouquet and passed around for everyone to touch it and smell it, some of its beauty

is lost, because it is fragile. It furthermore becomes less desirable; it is no longer fresh and new but has been "used." Young people need to keep themselves pure, not "passed around" to many others before marriage. The Shulamite's marriage will have a fresh start, which would otherwise be compromised. Godly engaged couples ought never persuade one another to behave in such a way to damage the other's innocence or conscience. When one has a self-gratifying attitude, then both will suffer shame. Deeper discussion on sexual propriety will be developed in chapter four.

Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

James 3:13-18 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Paul's discourse on love indicates many characteristics from a negative perspective, that is, things that love is not. Failure in this arena will spoil the fruit of the Spirit in a marriage.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

A turtledove (rendered "turtle" in KJV) is a common bird similar to our North American mourning dove. The call of the turtledove, unlike the mournful coo of the other species, is a purring sound, or a "turr, turr," from whence its name is derived. The species forms a strong pair-bond with its mate. It is a migratory bird, whose arrival in Palestine marks the coming of early spring.

THE SHULAMITE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies.

THE SHULAMITE TO HER BELOVED:

17 Until the day breaks And the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, And be like a gazelle Or a young stag Upon the mountains of Bether.

She does not say, "My beloved belongs to many women;" she is not speaking of Solomon. These lyrics will be repeated in Song 6:3. God's intention from the beginning is one man for one woman. However, at this time, Solomon has sixty wives (Song 6:8). She plans her get-away for the morning.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Two

1. When we follow Christ rather than the world, we will stand out and look different. Are we to follow Christ so that we may stand out and look different?
2. List several ways that Jesus stood out from the world. Explain how these can apply to us, His followers.
3. Mark Twain said, "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example." Why do some people hate others who try to do what is right?
4. Explain how the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-26 particularly apply to a marriage relationship.
5. List some otherwise wholesome things in everyday life that can become a hindrance in a marriage relationship if they are not properly managed and prioritized.
6. Consider the attributes of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and list some specific examples of how unloving behavior can erode a marriage.
7. What does James say is the end result of envy and self-seeking?
8. List the things that James states are the characteristics of the wisdom from above.
9. Explain how each of these attributes have special application in a marriage.
10. What are the implications of the statement, "My beloved is mine, and I am his?"

3. Chapter Three

THE SHULAMITE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

1 *By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him, but I did not find him.*

2 *"I will rise now," I said, "And go about the city; In the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love." I sought him, but I did not find him.*

3 *The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, "Have you seen the one I love?"*

3.1. Openness

She does not have to tell the night watchmen his name; everyone knows who is the one she loves. She makes that clear (Song 2:16). It is not a fact she ever hides from others. Never be ashamed of your spouse or hesitate to let others know to whom you belong. When we are away from our spouse and out with our friends or co-workers, we should remember to speak highly of our mate to others when the occasion presents the opportunity. It teaches others by example what God intends a marriage to be. If you are at a gathering and an acquaintance or coworker of the opposite gender shows you some interest, mention your spouse as appropriately fits the conversation. However, if you remove your wedding band when you go out and behave as if you are available in order to enjoy some attention or flirting, your flirt is actually with disaster.

Proverbs 6:23-29 For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.

In a spiritual analogy, we should never hesitate to let others know we belong to Christ nor be ashamed to admit it (Luke 9:26; John 12:42; Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8). When the occasion arises to conveniently mention Christ or his church to others, we should speak up for Him. It can open doors of teaching opportunities. For example, consider if we make excuses for not socially drinking because we are driving, instead of stating that it is because it opposes the teaching of the Lord. Likewise, consider if we decline an invitation to participate in an event, stating that we have a "prior commitment," instead of openly stating that it conflicts with our worship attendance. If we do these things, we fail to let our light shine, and we are flirting with evil.

Matthew 5:13-16 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The actions of the Shulamite demonstrate that a solid relationship is going to require some effort. We are going to have to get up and take action. We are going to have to pursue closeness; it is not going to happen automatically. We might even need to seek the counsel of others when trouble arises. Fundamentally, God ordained marriage so that man would not be alone and for procreation (Genesis 1:28; 2:18), not so that a man would be loved or be happy. Love and happiness are not automatic in marriage - they have to be worked for (Titus 2:4). This is universally true: both in a marriage and in our relationship with God. We have to seek Him.

Acts 17:26, 27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

We will examine this further in chapter four when we consider trust as a virtue.



4 Scarcely had I passed by them, When I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go, Until I had brought him to the house of my mother, And into the chamber of her who conceived me.

3.2. One Flesh, Compatibility

We discussed in chapter one the desire to be together. When God instituted marriage on the day He created man, He ordained that husbands and wives are to leave their parents and be joined (cleave, KJV) to one another (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:3-12).

Mark 10:6-8 But from the beginning of the creation, God "made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh;" so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

The original word translated "join" in Mark 10:7 is PROSKOLLAO {pros-kol-lah'-o}, meaning "1) to glue upon, glue to 2) to join one's self to closely, cleave to, stick to" (JHT). You are a new family when you become married; the two of you are now one. It is not good for young married couples to live with their parents. They need to start a new life on their own, leaving their mother and father. They cannot cleave until they leave.

So close is this joining that Jesus declares they are no longer two but one. When two pieces of wood are glued together, there is actually a barrier layer between them. The connection is created by virtue of this thin bonding film lying between and adhering to both wood pieces. If you cut through the joint, you can see the three distinct elements. However, this is not what Jesus describes; He says they are one. Therefore, joining in marriage is more like welding, where metals are melted and infused. One piece is not part of the other but *is* the other.

"Flesh" is translated from SARX {sarx}, and Friberg's definition includes "as relating to the earthly sphere of existence,... earthly life...." Flesh is the medium through which spiritual man experiences life on the physical earth (Hebrews 2:14; 5:7). Therefore, "one flesh" implies that everything in life is to be shared: plans, goals, possessions, responsibilities, duties.

Ruth 1:14-17 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

Those couples who live together, sharing only certain aspects of married life without marriage, are missing the true oneness God intended. A false and unlawful oneness is shared.

Since everything in life is to be shared in the "one flesh" relationship, then compatibility is of utmost importance. In violation of God's will Solomon chose idolatrous wives, which were incompatible for him.

Proverbs 12:26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.

It should be noted that dissimilar metals, such as bronze and steel, cannot be welded together. Couples contemplating marriage should consider their similarities. Do you enjoy doing things together? Are your moral principles in agreement? Do you have similar ideas on raising children? If not, it will be a more difficult marriage. These are questions that need to be answered *before* the marriage vows. However, incompatibility is no lawful cause for divorce. The welding illustration is just an illustration that breaks down at some point. If you marry someone dissimilar to you, you are still married and bound for life, as is our next discussion point.

3.3. Lifetime Commitment

After the Shulamite speaks of holding on to her Beloved, she declares that she will not let him go. In her mind, their relationship is permanent, as God has ordained marriage to be from the beginning. Accordingly, after Jesus speaks of the one flesh joining, He continues on to stress this very point as well.

Mark 10:9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

Romans 7:2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. (1 Corinthians 7:39)

The original word in Mark 10:9 translated "join" is SUZEUGNUMI {sood-zyoog'-noo-mee} meaning "1) to fasten to one yoke, yoke together..." (JHT). The original word translated "bound" in Romans 7:2 is DEO {deh'-o} meaning "1) to bind tie, fasten 1a) to bind, fasten with chains, to throw into chains... [to] put under obligation, of the law, duty..." (JHT). As bound prisoners and yoked oxen cannot free themselves, so then the marriage bond, by divine appointment, is a covenant bond from which a man cannot free himself. If a man can free himself, then he is not actually bound in any practical sense.

Even couples who are only engaged to be married need to start thinking and acting like their relationship is permanent and exclusive. It will be in earnest when the vows are exchanged, so it is good to start getting accustomed to it. This is not the time for a man to be courting other women. If this feels too restrictive, then he is not ready to be contemplating marriage. Common practice of the world is to give the groom-to-be a bachelor party to celebrate his last day of freedom without a wife. (The world views marriage as imprisoning; a Christian views it as liberating). These parties usually include heavy drinking and lewd women: things which a sober-minded Christian about to marry will disdain. Marriage is a thing that couples need to approach not frivolously but with seriousness, and the activities of a modest wedding ceremony should reflect this as well.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Titus 2:6, 7 Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, ⁷ in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.

The first year of most marriages is usually a particular challenge, as each party learns to understand the other. There will inevitably be rough spots, but it is completely counterproductive for newlyweds to ever suggest to one another that they perhaps should not have gotten married. What's done is done, and they need to look ahead, accept their state, and do their best with resolute acceptance that the marriage bond is irrevocable (Philippians 3:13-15). Fundamentally, when couples devote themselves to serving the Lord first, it is impossible for their marriage to fail. Conversely, in any marriage that ends in divorce, sin is somehow the root cause.

Psalms 127:1 A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

Unlawful divorce is an abomination to God (Malachi 2:14-16). God's law today permits putting away a spouse for two reasons only: because of an unlawful marriage (Mark 6:17, 18; 10:29) and for the cause of fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Remarriage is lawful for the second reason only. Nevertheless, man has perverted God's law in attempts to circumvent the permanence of the lawful marriage bond and allow putting away for other reasons. A complete investigation of these false doctrines is beyond the scope of this study, but a brief overview is nevertheless presented here.

- **Heresy:** Since baptism washes away all sin, when a non-Christian in an adulterous marriage or having unlawfully divorced obeys the gospel, the blood of Christ also washes away those sins, making his marriage or divorce lawful. This is based on the false notion that baptism does more than remit sins but can also dissolve a marriage bond. It further assumes that God has one law for Christians and another for non-Christians. However, repentance is also necessary for the remission of sins (Acts 3:19). Repenting demands ceasing from sin (Acts 26:20), which would include putting away anything unlawful.

- **Heresy:** Unhappy spouses can agree to separate for any reason, as long as they do not legally divorce. Then if one commits adultery, the other has the right to legally divorce and remarry. This is based on the false notion that Jesus condemns only legal divorce without cause, not mere separation. However, the word "divorce" in Matthew 19:9 (NKJ) means generically to send away. Therefore, by only separating, they already disobey God (Matthew 19:6), and this is also precisely the cause of the fornication (Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:5). According to God's law, the fornication must come first, then the putting away because of it. According to the heresy, the separation comes first, then the fornication because of it. The atrocity of this heresy is that it intentionally creates a situation of temptation where the couple sees who can hold out from fornication the longest, followed by a race to the courthouse.
- **Heresy:** If a non-fornicating husband puts away and legally divorces his wife for reasons other than her fornication but then later commits fornication himself, the wife, though already legally divorced, can repudiate their bond, divorcing him, as it were, in her heart and lawfully remarry. This, like the one previous, is based on the false notion of a distinction in Matthew 19 between a generic separation and a civil divorce. However, there is no such distinction in this context; putting away with or without legal divorce is still putting away, and Jesus condemns it. Furthermore, Jesus specifically allows remarriage only if the cause, reason, or grounds for the separation in the first place is fornication (Matthew 5:32).
- **Heresy:** If a Christian wife has a husband who abuses her and does not want her anymore, she can lawfully divorce him for the sake of the kingdom, as long as she does not remarry. This is based on the false notion that, since Paul says you cannot divorce an unbeliever if he will stay (1 Corinthians 7:12-15), it necessarily implies that if he will not stay, then you can divorce him. However, the conclusion is not forced. Besides, Paul makes clear the inverse conclusion: "if [he] departs, let him depart" (vs. 15). Again, the word "divorce" here is generic, meaning "send away." It is intrinsically impossible to send away someone who departs. This heresy also mistakenly assumes that God has one law for Christians and a different law for non-Christians. Moreover, in at least five verses in the context, Paul instructs them not to put away (vs. 10, 11, 12, 13, 27, 39; Matthew 19:6).
- **Heresy:** If an innocent husband learns that his wife is a fornicator, he can choose to reconcile with her but then at some later date change his mind and put her away after all. This is based on the false notion that the knowledge of the other's fornication does not automatically sever their marriage bond. However, the marriage bond is the lawful fact that one has no right to put the other away (Romans 7:2, 3). Now if the knowledge of fornication gives one the right to put away, then their bond must certainly be severed. Sexual privileges are only for those lawfully married and bound (Hebrews 13:4). This heresy also violates the principles of reconciliation, whereby the relationship would be restored with the lifetime bond exactly as it was before (Ephesians 2:13-17). It also violates the rules of dependent covenants, in which only those bound to the lifetime commitment have a right to the conjugal privileges (1 Corinthians 6:15-20; Hebrews 13:10). This heresy further proposes that the marriage bond is contingent upon one's continued happiness or the other's penitence, creating a trial or probational marriage bond completely void of scriptural foundation.
- **Heresy:** A Christian can divorce his wife not only because of fornication specifically but also for her indecent, lewd, or lascivious behavior. This is based on the false notion that Jesus was only explaining Mosaic law. Since Moses' law allowed divorce for indecency (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), so does Jesus'. However, Moses and Jesus said entirely different things; you cannot explain something by contradicting it. Besides, Jesus, as law-giver, ordained commandments which supersede Mosaic law (Matthew 28:18).

Sadly, in the church today, some gospel preachers and elders distort the scriptures into whatever they want so that some poor soul in a difficult situation has an easy way out. Moreover, it is disgraceful that some Christians tolerate such false teaching. It is terrifying to think that such men will pay for their false doctrines with their own eternal destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

In a spiritual allegory, we ought to tirelessly seek truth like the Shulamite searches for her Beloved, and when we find it, we should hold on to it steadfastly, not depart from it, and take and show it to others (Deuteronomy 4:4; 10:20; Joshua 22:5, Acts 11:23; 2 Timothy 2:2). Being a Christian is supposed to be a lifetime commitment (Ephesians 5:31, 32; Romans 7:4).

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Leave behind and do not go back to the former ways of life (Philippians 3:13, Ephesians 2:1-16). You cannot cleave to the Lord or be one with Him until you leave Satan (Matthew 6:24, 1 John 1:5, 6). We should not look back on the sinful days with fond remembrance. Your spouse does not want you to long for an old flame.

James 4:4, 5 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

The original word here translated "jealously" ("envy," KJV) is from PHTHONOS {fthon'-os} meaning "the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others..." (W. E. Vine). This is similar to ZELOS {dzay'-los}, which is often translated jealousy or zeal, indicating excitement and fervor about a thing to desire, pursue, defend, or even refute it (JHT). Vine further explains the difference between this envy (PHTHONOS) and jealousy (ZELOS). Envy seeks to deprive another of something; jealousy seeks simply to have the same thing as another. Knowing this, both envy and jealousy have possible wholesome and unwholesome senses. For examples, envy is wrong when we desire to deprive another of what is rightfully theirs, but it is right when we desire in justice to take from another what they have no right to. Applying this to James 4:5, that which God in envy would desire to take away from us is our loyalty to Satan, which loyalty God rightfully deserves.

Husbands and wives have every right to fervently desire, expect, and demand all loyalty from the other as part of their lifetime commitment. Likewise, God has every right to fervently desire, expect, and demand all loyalty from us at all times. We will discuss jealousy further in chapter 8.

5 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the does of the field, Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.

She waits for the proper time. Propriety in marriage will be discussed with detail in our review of chapter four.



6 Who is this coming out of the wilderness Like pillars of smoke, Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, With all the merchant's fragrant powders?

7 Behold, it is Solomon's couch, With sixty valiant men around it, Of the valiant of Israel.

8 They all hold swords, Being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh Because of fear in the night.

9 Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King Made himself a palanquin:

10 He made its pillars of silver, Its support of gold, Its seat of purple, Its interior paved with love By the daughters of Jerusalem.

3.4. Selfishness

In a display of pride and arrogance, Solomon can be seen with his entourage, and the Shulamite has some comments about it. He is certainly making a big impression for all the women in pomp and self-fullness (Psalm 49:12, 20; Matthew 6:16-18; Matthew 23:5-12; 1 Samuel 15:12; Proverbs 25:27; Daniel 4:30; Galatians 6:3, 4).

Matthew 23:1-12 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the

marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

James 3: 13-17 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

A palanquin is a covered and curtained couch which was carried by poles in parade fashion on the shoulders of men and used in ancient times, especially in the Far East. It was typically designed to transport one person, who would have been a dignitary.

Christians ought never think of themselves as more important or more valuable than others. It does not fit the pattern Jesus has given for the church, and it does not fit the divine marriage pattern. Though God has ordained that the husband is to be the head of the household and that wives are to be in submission, these are positions of role, not rank. Any marriage is destined for trouble when the husband begins thinking his interests are more important than those of his wife. Carnal-mindedness might say that high-echelon business managers are more important to an industrial firm, but that is not the way it works with God. Consider the problems the disciples brought upon themselves because of this thinking.

Matthew 20: 20-28 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 9: 33, 34)

The church at Corinth had fallen into the same carnal mindset.

1 Corinthians 1: 10-12 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

1 Corinthians 3: 1-9 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

In his speech, Solomon often mentions the kingly things listed in this description: the best fragrances money can buy, soldiers and servants, war and national security, the finest Lebanon cedar, precious metals, purple garments, and jewels. These features are naturally included in her description of him.

It is going to be hard for Solomon to have closeness and intimacy with a woman for the constant presence of guards, servants, and other women. Find ways to spend some time alone with your spouse.

The wedding procession is now a scene for Solomon sixty times (6:8). Solomon has interest in all the daughters. "One flesh" demands monogamy and permanence. Monogamy in the prophets represents the union of God with Israel (Jeremiah 31:32, Exodus 34:12-17) and in the New Testament, Christ's desire for the church (2 Corinthians 11:2). Polygamy is associated with idolatry in the Old Testament writings (Deuteronomy 17:17, 1 Kings 11:1-3).

11 Go forth, O daughters of Zion, And see King Solomon with the crown With which his mother crowned him On the day of his wedding, The day of the gladness of his heart.

She does not say that she and the daughters should all go together to see the king. She also does not speak accusingly of the king behind his back to the Daughters, but she suggests that they simply go on without her. She appears to not have enough interest for a closer view of such ostentation.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Three

1. Is there any harm in married people flirting with those of the opposite gender?
2. If we fail to speak up and clarify that we are married, does our silence actually say anything? What if we fail to speak up and clarify that we are a Christian?
3. In Matthew 5: 14-16, Jesus exhorts us to let our light shine like a candle on a stand. Today we have different kinds of lights: wide area flood lights and directional spot lights. Which one fits Jesus' description? Explain the significance of the distinction and the application to us.
4. A strong marriage will require some effort on our part to attain. Describe how this would apply to our spiritual marriage to Christ and our relationship with Him.
5. Describe in your own words what is the significance of husbands and wives being "one flesh."
6. What, exactly, does it mean to be bound in marriage? List several characteristics of the marriage bond.
7. If a man has the right to put away his lawful wife, is he actually any longer bound to her?
8. What are the only two things that break the marriage bond?
9. A work of the flesh is envy (Galatians 5: 21). However, James, using the same original word, states that the Spirit of God has an envious desire for us (James 4:5). Resolve this apparent contradiction by explaining the difference between wholesome and unwholesome desire over another.
10. In 1 Corinthians 3:8, Paul writes, "Now he who plants and he who waters are one." In light of the carnal mindedness within the Corinth church, what application can be made to a marriage?

4. Chapter Four

SOLOMON:

1 Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, Going down from Mount Gilead.

2 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep Which have come up from the washing, Every one of which bears twins, And none is barren among them.

3 Your lips are like a strand of scarlet, And your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil Are like a piece of pomegranate.

4 Your neck is like the tower of David, Built for an armory, On which hang a thousand bucklers, All shields of mighty men.

5 Your two breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle, Which feed among the lilies.

4.1. Flattery

Solomon is the assumed speaker here, as some of these words are a repeat of his dialog in 1:15. The military references also suggest him as the speaker. Furthermore, within all these words, there is not the first mention of uprightness, love, or devotion; all the descriptions pertain mainly to carnality. This point of Solomon's career is marked more by his opulence and power than by spirituality or high moral character.

Repeatedly in the book of Proverbs, wisdom warns against the flatterer (Proverbs 2:16; 6:24; 7:5; 7:21; 20:19; 26:28; 28:33; 29:5). In half of these references, the admonition is specifically in regard to the bold and enticing speech of a strange woman.

Proverbs 6:23-26 For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

Romans 16:17, 18 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Jude 1:16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.

1 Peter 1:22-25 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (Isaiah 40:6-8)

While Peter exhorts us to love one another in earnest with sincerity and purity, he reminds us that the physical beauty of all things of this earth are fleeting. Love sincere and pure will neither produce vain flattery nor respond favorably to it. It is based upon carnality. There is nothing wrong with a husband telling his wife that she looks nice, but make certain she knows the true admiration is based on inner beauty. In a strong, godly marriage, each party trusts that even if the physical body is grossly deformed due to illness or injury, love is not diminished by these things but is actually strengthened. Sooner or later the physical beauty fades away for us all, at which point, a relationship based on spirituality stands firm until life's end.

Proverbs 31:10-12 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.

THE SHULAMITE:

6 Until the day breaks And the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh And to the hill of frankincense.

As rehearsed in 2:17, she plans her get-away for the break of dawn. She has heard enough of the vain flattery void of sincerity and selfless affection.

SOLOMON:

7 You are all fair, my love, And there is no spot in you.

Solomon wants her for himself; she is most certainly very beautiful to behold: a perfect specimen for him to add to his collection of many women.

THE BELOVED:

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, With me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, From the top of Senir and Hermon, From the lions' dens, From the mountains of the leopards.

9 You have ravished my heart, My sister, my spouse; You have ravished my heart With one look of your eyes, With one link of your necklace.

10 How fair is your love, My sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, And the scent of your perfumes Than all spices!

11 Your lips, O my spouse, Drip as the honeycomb; Honey and milk are under your tongue; And the fragrance of your garments Is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

4.2. Closeness, Affection

The shepherd is the assumed speaker. Though reference is made to her physical beauty, there is something more here. The original word translated "spouse" repeated in each verse and the following is KALLAH {kal-law'}, meaning either a bride or a daughter-in-law (BDB). The word translated "sister" in these verses and the next is ACHOWTH {aw-khoth'}, meaning sister or relative or, figuratively, of intimate connection (BDB). The indication is not of incest but of closeness, perhaps referring to one of the same tribe or extended family. These terms suggest a warmth missing from Solomon's dialog.

Note the difference in these expressions: "You are fair, my love" (4:1) and "How fair is your love" (4:10). Though the distinction is subtle, carefully consider some observations. The word "love" here is from DOWD, defined earlier as affection and endearment. The word "fair" is from YAPHEH, defined as beautiful. Therefore, in the first statement (Solomon's), the Shulamite herself is declared to be beautiful. By contrast, in the second statement (The Beloved's), the Shulamite's affectionate character is declared to be beautiful. Solomon praises the outward beauty alone; The Beloved praises the beauty of the whole person, both the inner and the outer.

The idea of closeness is brought out again in Song 8:1-3, where the maiden wishes she could kiss him openly and no one would regard it as scandalous. It would be as natural as close family members showing affection toward one another in public. A closeness and trust in sharing is vital in a marriage or in any relationship.

Hebrews 10:22, 23 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

The couple speaks affectionately often. Spouses: if your mate is worthy of praise, let them know frequently and in different ways what they mean to you.

4.3. A Call To Trust

A den of lions could refer to The Beloved's assessment of Solomon's courts. Lions and leopards are dangerous animals not to be trusted. He again calls her out from there to be with him (2:10), implying a desire to be near. His reference to her lips and tongue is probably not denoting a literal dripping of honey and milk but a

metaphor for the kind and up-building words proceeding from her mouth (Psalm 119:103; Proverbs 24:13, 14; 31:26).

In a spiritual analogy, God in loving tones calls us out of one place to come into another.

2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters," Says the LORD Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

In these verses, the concept of trust as a natural product of closeness and affection is particularly brought out in God's calling us unto Him. The expressions, "I will receive you" and "I will be a Father to you," denote security and provision. Moreover, the original word for "church" in the New Testament is EKKLESIA {ek-klay-see'-ah}, meaning, "(1) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place,... for the purpose of deliberating..." (JHT).

1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (Ref. 1 Thessalonians 2:12).

A call is a request for a response; a command is a demand for a response. Two things are noteworthy in this comparison. God has every right to command us, and so He does. However, His approach to us in scripture is presented as entreaty rather than coercion. He prefers that we serve Him willingly, not grudgingly (2 Corinthians 9:7). As an example for husbands, The Beloved does not charge in and take the Shulamite by force against her will; he gives her no demands or ultimatums. Likewise, the Lord does not force us to submit to His will but appeals to us through His grace.

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Ref. Revelation 22:17).

The second noteworthy thing is that some action is required of the one being called. The Beloved is calling and ready to protect and provide, but the trust to get up and follow must come from within the Shulamite. Their relationship will go no where without effort; it will not happen on its own. The same is true of our faith in Christ. The Lord blesses no one who does nothing.

Psalm 73:28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

2 Peter 1:3-11 His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 A garden enclosed Is my sister, my spouse, A spring shut up, A fountain sealed.

13 Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates With pleasant fruits, Fragrant henna with spikenard,

14 *Spikenard and saffron, Calamus and cinnamon, With all trees of frankincense, Myrrh and aloes, With all the chief spices --*

15 *A fountain of gardens, A well of living waters, And streams from Lebanon.*

4.4. Chastity: Avoiding Fornication

He waits for the proper time. Note the following descriptive words: "enclosed," "shut up," "sealed." Sexual intimacy is to be reserved for marriage only. The book of Proverbs contains many warnings against sexual impropriety and of the misery that can result there from (Proverbs 5:1-14; 6:23-7:27; 9:13-18). In addition to the fact that fornication is sin, it can have dramatic and permanent repercussions. It can result in shame, unwanted pregnancy, venereal disease, ruined relationships, and wrecked homes.

Proverbs 5:1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear to my understanding, That you may preserve discretion, And your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil; But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life -- Her ways are unstable; You do not know them. Therefore hear me now, my children, And do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, And do not go near the door of her house, Lest you give your honor to others, And your years to the cruel one; Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, And your labors go to the house of a foreigner; And you mourn at last, When your flesh and your body are consumed, And say: "How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation."

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

In the passage cited, the phrase "sexual immorality" ("fornication," KJV) is translated from PORNEIA {por-ni'-ah}, meaning "1) illicit sexual intercourse 1a) adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc. 1b) sexual intercourse with close relatives;... 1c) sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman;..." (JHT).

Being engaged is not the same as being one flesh nor does it share the same privileges as marriage. By today's permissive standards, the idea of saving one's self for marriage is considered archaic and foolish. Years ago, premarital sex was not as accepted in society; however, God's attitude toward it never changes with changing human trends and traditions. Teachers of humanism today declare that the Bible does not condemn premarital sex between consenting adults but only condemns prostitution, adultery (sex with the spouse of another), incest, bestiality, and homosexuality. This is not true. Fornication is sin and includes unlawful sexual contact. Moreover, if consensual, premarital sex is not sin, then Paul would not have stipulated that marriage is necessary in order to avoid fornication (1 Corinthians 7:9).

1 Corinthians 6:15-7:2 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee [fornication]. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits [fornication] sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of [fornication], let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Someone might ask what they are supposed to do if they simply cannot control their desires. False teachers will claim that God bestows on some the gift of self control, as he did Paul, but does not give this to others, citing 1 Corinthians 7:7, 8 as proof. However, self control was not Paul's gift; it was being unmarried. Self control is expected of us all (Galatians 5:23). Besides, God promises to give us what we need to endure any temptation. If we claim a sin is beyond our ability to resist, we make God a liar.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Though the sin of fornication may be forgiven, once this purity is lost, the freshness can never be restored. There is a special closeness experienced between couples who have known no one else in this way and kept themselves for each other, a closeness of spirit that fleshly minded people cannot understand. Just ask godly couples who have this, and they'll tell you it's worth waiting for. Besides, this is God's plan for couples, and He knows what is best for us.

THE SHULAMITE:

16 Awake, O north wind, And come, O south! Blow upon my garden, That its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden And eat its pleasant fruits.

Waiting for the blowing of the north wind could be a poetic way of saying that she waits for the proper time, until bound in marriage. She longs for this day, but until then, he keeps her as "a garden enclosed... a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." We will see this description again in Song 7:11-13.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Four

1. Is all flattery vain? Explain the difference between praise or a complimentary remark and vain flattery.
2. What is the basis of flattery?
3. Is God ever seen in scripture as using flattery to draw men toward serving Him? What lesson for a husband is contained in this thought?
4. Does it make sense to try to flatter God when we pray?
5. Review Proverbs 27: 14 and explain how such a blessing can be a curse.
6. What is the inevitable end of a relationship built on physical beauty alone?
7. How is trust in a relationship related to closeness and affection?
8. Explain the difference between a calling and a command in the way God approaches us. How can this be applied in a marriage?
9. Is sex between consenting, single adults sinful, as long as no one is hurt over it? Validate your answer with scriptural reasoning.
10. What do you think is meant by the blowing of the north wind in verse 16?

5. Chapter Five

THE BELOVED:

1 I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

TO HIS FRIENDS:

Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!

5.1. Sexual Fulfillment

The shepherd speaks in poetic metaphor of what God desires men and women to enjoy without holding back (Colossians 2:18-23). However, God requires regulation of sexual intimacy within the bond of marriage (Hebrews 13:4). He is not permissive of those couples who rush into this garden before the "north wind" blows, trampling its tender fruit. You can't feel good about yourself if you know you're doing wrong.

Psalm 128: 1-3 A Song of Ascents. Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.

Proverbs 5: 15-23 Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

It is possible for a person to be married by civil law to someone to whom they are not bound by divine law. One such situation occurs when a woman marries someone to whom she has no lawful right. Paul explains in Romans 7:2, 3 that a woman who divorces her husband without just cause and marries another is an adulterer, being married to one yet bound to the other still living. It is also possible for a person to be bound by divine law to someone to whom they are not married by civil law. One such situation occurs when a man lawfully puts away his fornicating wife. Jesus explains in Matthew 19:9 that by so doing, the man does not commit adultery, indicating that he is loosed from the law regarding his ex-wife by her fornication. However, if the woman remarries, she is an adulterer, indicating that she is still bound to the law regarding her ex-husband. Having clarified this, a man has the right to the privilege of sexual intimacy only if he is both married by civil law and bound by divine law to his wife (John 4:16-18; Mark 6:17, 18).

THE SHULAMITE:

2 I sleep, but my heart is awake; It is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, "Open for me, my sister, my love, My dove, my perfect one; For my head is covered with dew, My locks with the drops of the night."

3 I have taken off my robe; How can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; How can I defile them?

4 My beloved put his hand By the latch of the door, And my heart yearned for him.

5 I arose to open for my beloved, And my hands dripped with myrrh, My fingers with liquid myrrh, On the handles of the lock.

6 I opened for my beloved, But my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

7 The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; The keepers of the walls Took my veil away from me.

8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, If you find my beloved, That you tell him I am lovesick!

5.2. Communication

The statement "I sleep, but my heart is awake" is a poetic way of saying she is dreaming about him.

Communication is vital in a relationship. For the husband and wife to share life and know how to please each other and learn to be happy, they will need to communicate. This means that each one will need to take turns not only speaking but also listening. We cannot expect our spouse to read our minds. Similarly, God does not expect us to read His mind; He openly reveals it to us (1 Corinthians 2:10-16), but we have to be willing to listen.

In her dream, he comes seeking her at home, but she puts him off with excuses (vs. 3). As a result of her indifference, he tires of waiting and leaves (vs. 6), and then problems arise (vs. 7). The scenario is presented with such imagery that her failure in response to him in the dream can almost go undetected. He asks for nothing more than for her to open the door; he is making no arduous demands nor requesting difficult favors. Yet this was too much of an inconvenience for her, as it would mean she would have to put on her robe again, which she had just taken off, and she might even have to wash her feet all over again. We hear sometimes husbands and wives putting each other off for silly things. Husbands and wives: you might be able to recall instances when you have done this very thing. It could be something small. He asks her to help take out the trash, but she complains that she will have to put on her shoes. She asks him to come see a thing she has done, but he says he is busy watching television. Such behavior telegraphs the message that one is not that interested in the other. Conversely, if she merely calls for him, consider the effect if he just gets up and goes to her, instead of shouting from a distance, "What do you want?" Going to her sends the message that devotion and concern rules the relationship, no matter what.

Look again at the dream and note what happens after she puts him off. She reconsiders and finally goes to the door, but it's too late. He has gone away, and she ends up out in the street getting mugged. The story is melodramatic for sure, but it's a dream; dreams are usually surreal. However, there is a simple message here. She would not have gotten mugged if she had just answered the door in the first place. Likewise, problems in a marriage can arise if such an air of unconcern is a consistent attribute of the relationship. After a while, many little problems spawned by indifference pile up to make one big problem with each party thinking there's nothing to salvage in the relationship. Apathy hurts a relationship. Take time for your spouse. Be devoted to one another; give each other first place and attention when needed. Learn how to listen to one another. Even though we know we are loved by the other, we still like to hear those words sincerely spoken. Don't wait until it's too late to act like you care.

Romans 12:10, 11 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

Ephesians 4:1 *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.*

There are some spiritual analogies to these points we should consider. In communicating with God, He speaks to us through His word, the Bible. When we hear God's voice in those pages, we do not hear an over-bearing, egotistical God (Psalm 86:15; 143:8). Nevertheless, we can become so preoccupied with mundane things that we give little time to the Lord to read His word or hear His preaching. When we think of all that God has done for us, we can hardly turn a dull ear to Him. Instead, we ought to get up and respond the moment He knocks at our heart's door (Psalm 95:7-11; Matthew 13:13-16, Revelation 13:9).

Revelation 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

In communicating with God, we speak to Him in prayer. Even though He knows our hearts, He longs to hear us express our feelings and concerns (Luke 18:1-8; Philippians 4:6). God is sovereign over the universe, yet He is never too busy to listen to our smallest petition. However, our prayers ought not be filled with self-interest or dissention (Luke 18:10-14; 1 Timothy 2:8).

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

James 4:1-3 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Things that hinder our communication in a marriage damage that relationship. Consider that these things will damage our relationship with God just the same. The Bible mentions several things specifically that hinder our prayers:

- unforgiveness (Mark 11:24-26)
- self-fullness (Matthew 6:5-8)
- lack of faith (James 5:13-18)
- evil deeds (1 Peter 3:7-12)

Sadly, in spite of the many ways God patiently beseeches His creation to serve Him, some men still put Him off and devote themselves to sin. The longer we remain away from God, the harder it becomes to find our way back to Him again. If we go for an extended time without consulting Him through His word or entreating Him in prayer, we will likely make all the more sinful decisions in life. For example, if we wait until after we unlawfully divorce, unlawfully remarry, or become drug addicted to open the door to the Lord, we may find a rough way to go.

Isaiah 26:9 With my soul I have desired You in the night, Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

If we continually reject God and refuse to listen to Him, He can eventually give up on us as well. As patient as He is, His patience has its limits. His dealing with the rebellious nations through history demonstrates this.

Romans 2:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness....

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 ...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Matthew 12:31, 32 Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

5.3. Emotional Involvement

In the King James Version, Song 5:4 is rendered "My bowels were moved for him." The translation is word-accurate, but changes in vernacular have made this a most unfortunate expression, as these words suggest a completely different connotation for us today. Furthermore, the original word for "move" also literally means to growl, roar, or make noise (BDB). Husbands: you will not charm your wife by telling her that your bowels growl for her. In all seriousness, the bowels were thought of by people in those days as the innermost part of man (Psalm 51:6). Though sometimes we might say we have a gut feeling about something, the metaphor we most often use regarding love is of the heart, so modern English translations use our vernacular for this and all occurrences of similar expressions in scripture. While we are amused with these words, we might miss

the point. This speaks of sincerity, not pretense: a strong emotion that wells up from deep within our soul with a profound effect. There are known cases where a young woman, smitten with love, becomes physically ill when her fiancé simply calls on the telephone. Emotionally overwhelmed, she is sick to her stomach in the bathroom before she can take the call. That's lovesickness, literally (vs. 8).

There are some additional spiritual analogies we can draw from these verses. For instance, don't make excuses for not serving God, and don't be indifferent toward the church.

Luke 14: 16-24 Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, '...none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

Furthermore, as the Shulamite is emotionally stirred by the voice of her beloved, we ought to take note whether the word of the Lord ever stirs us emotionally. If the gospel message never puts a lump in our throat or moves us in any way, perhaps we need our hearts checked. This is not to suggest that we force emotionalism in our service to God. Emotion wells up spontaneously, if the heart is tender, but spontaneity or emotionalism planned and orchestrated is insincere and not really spontaneous at all.

*Luke 24: 32 And they said to one another, "Did not our **heart burn** within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

Acts 2: 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Ephesians 4: 17-20 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ.

In the preceding passage, the original word for "blindness" ("hardness," NAB) is not from the usual Greek word for "blind" but from POROSIS {po'-ro-sis}, meaning "1) the covering with a callus 2) obtrusiveness of mental discernment, dulled perception 3) the mind of one has been blunted 3a) of stubbornness, obduracy" (JHT). According to Merriam-Webster, "obduracy" describes someone "stubbornly persistent in wrongdoing, hardened in feelings, resistant to persuasion or softening influences." A callus is a toughening and deadening of the skin formed by repeated pressure or friction over time. A callused heart forms when someone who manages to reject the truth the first time continues to reject repeated messages. After a while, the hearer becomes completely numb. If the death of Christ cannot touch our hearts, nothing can.

1 Timothy 4: 1, 2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

9 What is your beloved More than another beloved, O fairest among women? What is your beloved More than another beloved, That you so charge us?

The Daughters Of Jerusalem wonder what she sees in him. What does he have that Solomon doesn't have? They just don't get it.

There is nothing that physically attracts us to Christ (Isaiah 53:2); what do we see in Him? Not everyone sees the attractiveness of Christ.



THE SHULAMITE:

10 My beloved is white and ruddy, Chief among ten thousand.

11 His head is like the finest gold; His locks are wavy, And black as a raven.

12 His eyes are like doves By the rivers of waters, Washed with milk, And fitly set.

13 His cheeks are like a bed of spices, Banks of scented herbs. His lips are lilies, Dripping liquid myrrh.

14 His hands are rods of gold Set with beryl. His body is carved ivory Inlaid with sapphires.

15 His legs are pillars of marble Set on bases of fine gold. His countenance is like Lebanon, Excellent as the cedars.

16 His mouth is most sweet, Yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, And this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!

5.4. Friendship

"White" (verse 10) indicates dazzling, not to contradict "ruddy," meaning reddened by the sun.

Listen to the way she speaks to her friends about her beloved. At no place in this story does the couple ever speak disparagingly of one another. They always praise each other and look for the best in each other, diminishing weaknesses and faults. It is disheartening to sometimes hear couples speak degradingly of their mates. Granted, it might sometimes be only in jest, as close friends are prone to do, but if it is constant, and serious words of admiration are never heard, the relationship will surely suffer. When family members speak harshly to one another, the excuse is sometimes offered that it is okay, because it is a close relative: as if harsh words do not cut if they come from a sibling or spouse. Remember, the person standing closest to you with a knife is the one who can most easily hurt you. Sometimes a chastisement indeed needs to be delivered, and a close relative is often the best candidate for this job, but even then, it should never be demeaning but in gentleness (Galatians 6:1, 2).

The maiden calls The Beloved her friend. The problem with familiarity is the tendency to take one another for granted after a while, forgetting how it all started. We when meet a stranger for the first time, our regard for them is with courtesy and politeness. This is AGAPE: rational love, of the mind. (Refer again to section 1.1 for definitions of this and the following Greek terms for love). As the relationship grows familiar, a bond of warm affection develops. This is PHILIA: emotional love, of the heart. The next step of a developing relationship between a man and a woman is a passionate desire. This is EROS: physical love, of the body. In marriage, a new institution is formed with natural affections among offspring. This is STORGE: family love. When married couples habitually speak harshly to one another, perhaps it is because the physical, sexual love has supplanted the emotional and rational love, which should never have ceased. Now as lovers, the warmth of friendship and even the dignity they share as fellow bearers of God's image are forgotten. Husbands and wives ought to see themselves as the very best of friends, and kindly words, such as "please" and "thank you," ought to continually be heard among them. We covered this somewhat previously in chapter 4 when discussing closeness and affection.

Ephesians 4:31, 32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

If each party is behaving toward the other as they ought, appreciation for one another is the inevitable result.

Ephesians 5:21-33 Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He

might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Proverbs 31:27-29 She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all."

In a spiritual analogy, Jesus describes the friendship He has with His disciples.

John 15:12-15 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Jesus demonstrates that open communication is the identifying feature of friendship. All things the Father delivers to Christ, He makes known to His disciples, because they are His friends. True friends know each other because they reveal their hearts to one another. As Christ has shared His heart with us who are His followers, so husbands and wives should share their thoughts, holding back no secrets. According to Christ's example, husbands and wives ought to have the attitude of willingness to sacrifice their own lives for one another.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Five

1. Has God ordained any class or office of His servants in the church who are not given the right to marry if they so desire?
2. Is it possible to be married but not bound? Is it possible to be bound but not married? Explain.
3. What are the two conditions which must be met for lawful participation in sexual intimacy?
4. Why is communication important in a relationship?
5. List some things in any relationship that hinder communication.
6. Does God ever lose patience as He awaits men to respond favorably to His call? If so, explain under what conditions.
7. List some things that sometimes cause people to harden their hearts against God.
8. What are some ways a man can soften his heart to God?
9. List some things that can cause the warmth of friendship to diminish in a marriage.
10. What are some identifying marks of friendship?

6. Chapter Six

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

1 *Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, That we may seek him with you?*

6.1. Meddling

The Daughters Of Jerusalem are busybodies. They have no business being interested in the Shulamite's beloved. The scriptures contain many warnings against nosiness (Proverbs 26:17; 1 Peter 4:15). It is the seedbed of quarrels, strife, and gossip.

1 *Thessalonians 4:9-12 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to **mind your own business**, and to **work with your own hands**, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.*

2 *Thessalonians 3:11-13 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, **not working at all, but are busybodies**. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.*

1 *Timothy 5:13-14 And besides they learn to be **idle**, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and **busybodies**, saying things which they ought not. Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.*

*John 21:17-22 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, **what about this man?**" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? **You follow Me.**"*

Remarkably, in each passage sighted above, the inspired writer presents a connection between meddling and idleness. Look again at John 21. After each time Jesus inquires about Peter's love for Him, He exhorts him to feed His sheep. Peter is agitated that Jesus asks him about love three times but seems oblivious to the fact that He tells him three times to get busy doing His work. Note that when Jesus foretells to Peter the kind of death he would endure, Peter gets nosy about his fellow apostle, John. If Peter is busy doing what the Lord wants him to do, he will not have time to think about what the Lord is doing with John. Therefore, the Lord admonishes him once more: "You follow me."

Notably, the Song nowhere reveals the vocations of the Daughters Of Jerusalem. The Shulamite is a vinedresser, and The Beloved is a shepherd. Several passages indicate their diligence in work (1:6-8; 2:16; 6:2, 3, 11). On the other hand, instead of being busy in their own work, the Daughters Of Jerusalem are either running after the Shulamite (1:4), running after the king (3:11), or running after The Beloved (6:1).

THE SHULAMITE:

2 *My beloved has gone to his garden, To the beds of spices, To feed his flock in the gardens, And to gather lilies.*

3 I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.

6.2. Belonging

She sets them straight, reminding them that he is already spoken for. She declares that he belongs to her and she belongs to him. Conversely, in Genesis 20, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, enter Gerar, but instead of advising the inhabitants that they are actually married, out of fear and prejudice, they deceive them with the partial truth that they are half siblings. Unaware, Abimelech, king of Gerar, is attracted to Sarah to take her as his wife. Consequently, God providentially intervenes and reveals the truth, so the sin is averted. If Abraham would have been forthright about the matter in the first place and trusted God for protection as he should have, the problem would have never occurred. Previously in Song 3, we discussed that we should openly declare to others the relationship we have with our spouse. However, we must first, ourselves, understand what it means to belong to one another in marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). Guard against unchaste familiarity (Genesis 39:6-12).

In a spiritual analogy, as Christians, we need to understand what it means to belong to Christ. This knowledge ought to control our every action (Mark 9:41; Romans 8:9-12; Galatians 3:26-29; 5:24, 25).

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

SOLOMON:

4 O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, Lovely as Jerusalem, Awesome as an army with banners!

5 Turn your eyes away from me, For they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats Going down from Gilead.

6 Your teeth are like a flock of sheep Which have come up from the washing; Every one bears twins, And none is barren among them.

7 Like a piece of pomegranate Are your temples behind your veil.

8 There are sixty queens And eighty concubines, And virgins without number.

9 My dove, my perfect one, Is the only one, The only one of her mother, The favorite of the one who bore her. The daughters saw her And called her blessed, The queens and the concubines, And they praised her.

10 Who is she who looks forth as the morning, Fair as the moon, Clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners?

6.3. The "Trophy Wife"

In Solomon's words, once again, no mention is made of affection, tenderness, sharing, devotion, or love toward her. His description is completely carnal, earthly, and vain. Solomon uses much of the same terminology to describe her as before, as if unable to find new, creative ways to speak. Sadly, it appears that by possessing now 60 wives, Solomon has completely lost the ability of having a spiritual, intimate, one flesh union with any woman, as God would desire it to be.

The Shulamite is to Solomon a challenge, a thing to be conquered, as an army (vs. 4, 10), and he wants to add this favored woman to his collection. The original Hebrew word translated "awesome" is AYOM {aw-yome'}. The Theological Word Book Of The Old Testament (TWOT) indicates this to be from an unused root meaning to frighten. BDB defines this as "terrible, dreadful." It is found in the Old Testament scriptures in only three places and is translated "terrible" in each case in the KJV. The other occurrence is in Habakkuk, where the prophet is describing the Chaldeans who will come and execute a hostile overtake of the nation of Judah:

Habakkuk 1:5-10 Look among the nations and watch -- Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess

*dwelling places that are not theirs. They are **terrible** [AYOM] and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it.*

Even though Solomon's symbolism throughout this passage is unexpected in our vernacular, still, it is incredible that Solomon uses such a phrase to describe the Shulamite: two times. It would be hard to imagine The Beloved using these terms in reference to her. Solomon clearly has issues. He is no doubt astonished that she, brazen before the king, cannot be moved away from her love of the beloved shepherd. Since he thinks of her as an army, then to gain her love would mean to defeat and plunder her. He either conquers her or is himself defeated. Adding her to his array of many wives would be to him as the spoils of war, like silver shields of defeated warriors hanging in his halls.

The reference to banners in this context is significant. A banner or a standard is a visible sign or symbol of national loyalty raised high to identify an army. We see the use of such when the nation of Israel organizes their military troops in Numbers 2 and 10. Even today, a nation's flag will identify an outpost, battalion, or warship. By this, an opposing army might know to what degree they ought to fear. Allegorically, Christians are in a spiritual military battle against sin (Ephesians 6:10-17), and we ought to prominently raise a standard, showing in our lives who we serve and where our allegiance lies.

Solomon is evidently assessing what degree of effort might be necessary to be victorious. This is a sick way of thinking. A husband ought not view his wife as a conquest trophy but as an equal and a well-suited helper by his side.

Genesis 2:18-23 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Often quoted at weddings, Matthew Henry suggests, "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

Think again about the spiritual analogy to this. Our Lord certainly does not view the church, His bride, as a body of people to be conquered and plundered. He does not make us His by hostile take-over. We are not defeated in dread by His power (Hebrews 12:18-24); we surrender in love to His peace (Ephesians 2:4-18; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; 1 John 4:14-19). Moreover, the Lord does not look down on us who are His disciples with contempt but treats us as if His equal, in a manner of speaking. To explain, we bear His divine likeness endowed upon us at creation (Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 82:6). Furthermore, Christ came to us in human form: as one of us (John 10:33-36; Philippians 2:1-8). He considers us His brethren (Mark 3:31-35) and if brethren, then fellow heirs (Romans 8:15-17). He brings us to glory (2 Thessalonians 2:14) and shares with us his throne (Revelation 3:21). If the Lord, the sovereign and majestic ruler of the universe, in humility can allow us to be one with Him, then He teaches us by example that we certainly ought to be able to treat our fellow man, and especially our spouses, with meekness in like manner.

Hebrews 2:6-18 ...⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You...."

John 17:6-26 ...²⁰ I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world...

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

1 John 4:17, 18 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Jesus explains that those in power in the world lord it over their subjects, but with God, the greatest is servant of all.

Mark 10:42-45 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Throughout John's epistles, he explains that God does not oppressively rule down over those who hold to Him through faith and obedience.

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The word "advocate" is translated from PARAKLETOS {par-ak'-lay-tos}, meaning "1) summoned, called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid 1a) one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate..." (JHT). The word depicts Jesus, not as a tyrant down over us, but as a close friend by our side, shoulder-to-shoulder, supporting and consoling us.



THE SHULAMITE:

11 I went down to the garden of nuts To see the verdure of the valley, To see whether the vine had budded And the pomegranates had bloomed.

12 Before I was even aware, My soul had made me As the chariots of my noble people.

6.4. Strength Of Character

Verdure means greenness. Some translations render it as "fruits" (KJV) or "blossoms" (NAB).

After having withstood Solomon's outrageous and audacious words, it seems that, as she was tending her garden, she found from within her heart a new strengthening of character. "Noble people" is from the original "Amminadib" (KJV), which means one who is known for the swiftness of his chariots. Perhaps the idea is that if we imagine ourselves strong in character and think noble thoughts, we can more readily become of strong, noble character in actuality. The attitude of the heart will affect the actions in the body. We will discuss the boldness of the righteous further in chapter seven.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.

In fact, the apostle Paul affirms that it is the very trials and challenges we face in life that produce godly character in us through Christ.

Romans 5: 1-5 ...And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope....

THE BELOVED'S COMPANIONS:

13 Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return, that we may look upon you!

THE BELOVED:

What would you see in the Shulamite -- As it were, the dance of the two camps?

The beloved's companions (or sons, as opposed to daughters, of Jerusalem) are considered to be the speakers in the first part of this verse. The daughters are the only other character in plural, and nowhere else in the dialog are they heard expressing a desire to look upon the Shulamite.

The dance of the two camps, or company of two armies (KJV), or Mahanaim (ASV), was perhaps a folk dance using two party groups that would come together and then separate. The origin of the dance is possibly a reenactment of one of David's victorious battles, found in 2 Samuel 2:12-17. It seems that little more than supposition is known about this dance. The notion of how it applies here therefore varies greatly among scholars. Besides, we must assume by opinion and conjecture even the one who is speaking here in the first place, so this is no place for dogmatism. Some consider the second part of this verse to be the words of the Shulamite, speaking of herself in the third person. Even if it were, we would probably not be able to derive a meaning any different than if it were spoken by some other character. At any rate, this writer thinks it more reasonable that this is spoken by The Beloved to his companions.

There is no reason to assume this was a provocative dance nor that their motive was to lust. Even if it were the case, a woman of the character described would not put it to open display for such men. Though the question is rhetorical, the answer is suggested anyway. Whatever the case, perhaps he is stating in poetic metaphor that they might not see what they think they would see, but a vision of grace and strength, modesty and honor (1 Timothy 2:9, 10).

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Six

1. What is the best way to safeguard against becoming a busybody?
2. What are some other sins into which meddling will lead us?
3. List as many attributes of husbands and wives belonging to one another as comes to mind as revealed in scripture.
4. Be prepared to explain and discuss the application of these attributes to our relationship with Christ as Christians in His church.
5. Explain how polygamy would contradict God's original purpose of unity in marriage.
6. In the expanded context of Ephesians 4 and 5, what effect would polygamy have on the analogy of the church as the bride of Christ?
7. Of what scriptural significance is the fact that God made Eve from one of the ribs in Adam's side?
8. What place does terror and dread have in a marriage? What place does it have in a Christian's relationship with God?
9. Can meditation build godly character? If so, be prepared to explain how.
10. Can temptation and trials build godly character? If so, likewise be prepared to explain how.

7. Chapter Seven

SOLOMON:

- 1 *How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, The work of the hands of a skillful workman.*
- 2 *Your navel is a rounded goblet; It lacks no blended beverage. Your waist is a heap of wheat Set about with lilies.*
- 3 *Your two breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle.*
- 4 *Your neck is like an ivory tower, Your eyes like the pools in Heshbon By the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon Which looks toward Damascus.*
- 5 *Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, And the hair of your head is like purple; A king is held captive by your tresses.*
- 6 *How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights!*
- 7 *This stature of yours is like a palm tree, And your breasts like its clusters.*
- 8 *I said, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches." Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, The fragrance of your breath like apples,*
- 9 *And the roof of your mouth like the best wine.*

7.1. Possessiveness

The dialog here is again attributed to Solomon, due to references to royalty (vs. 1, 5), towers (suggesting military power, v 4), and purple fabrics (v 5). Moreover, Solomon had employed many cunning workmen (KJV, vs. 1) in the construction of the temple and his palace, to which he now refers (2 Chronicles 2: 7-18). Again, love is not actually mentioned here, nor is devotion, caring, sharing, affection, or tenderness. Solomon praises only her physical beauty with similar language as before. Furthermore, he is accustomed to taking whatever he wants: all the best things for himself. He seems to have every intention of making her one of his own to his personal delight, almost as it were by force.

The Shulamite frequently says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (2:16; 6:3; 7:10). In this, there is a clear indication of a mutual belonging, but Solomon's words here suggest a more aggressive, controlling, possessive, and domineering attitude. This stands in direct contrast to the spirit of meekness God expects of us. Married couples ought not treat each other like a possession but as a partner.

Ephesians 4: 1, 2 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,...

Titus 3:1-3 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Solomon married many women from other nations to gain political alliances. (Kings don't normally go to war with their kin). Aside from the fact that these marriages were contrary to God's law for Israel (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4), they were not for the God-ordained purpose of companionship but for self advancement. Correspondingly, Solomon's expressions in these verses betray that he has not her best interest at heart but his own desires.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 "When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,'¹⁵ you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.¹⁶ But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives for himself,

lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. ¹⁸ Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

THE SHULAMITE TO SOLOMON:

The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved, Moving gently the lips of sleepers.

10 I am my beloved's, And his desire is toward me.

7.2. Faithfulness

As if to say, "That is enough," she interrupts Solomon and affirms to him that she is quite spoken for by someone else. The wine is not for Solomon's lips but "for my beloved," she says. In the Septuagint, the word for "awesome" (or "terrible," KJV) in Song 6:4, 10 is THAMBOS {tham'-bos}, which Friberg defines, "as an emotion in which awe and fear are mingled." However, Thayer expresses it also as "1) to render immovable...." The Shulamite's resistance to Solomon's advances stops him dead in his tracks. Spouses must understand the need to call for a stop to the inappropriate approaches of others. A double-minded man will think he is being loyal to his wife while at the same time relishing the inappropriate attention of another woman. This is a manifestation of unfaithfulness in a type, even if no fornication is actually committed.

In a spiritual analogy, James applies this in our relationship with Christ.

James 4:7, 8 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

In verse 4, James makes the clear comparison to a marriage relationship, characterizing a false allegiance as spiritual adultery. As the Shulamite is single-mindedly devoted to her Beloved, so also Christians, members of the bride of Christ, ought to be single-mindedly devoted to the Lord, not welcoming but resisting Satan's enticements (Matthew 6:24). Review Joshua 23:1-13 and observe how Joshua, nearing the end of his life, admonishes the nation of Israel to remain steadfast, not turning to the right or to the left but holding their ground against the lure of idolatry. Doing so, no other nation will be able to stand against them. The scriptures are filled with many exhortations for us to stand firm against temptation (Psalm 112; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 16:13; Ephesians 6:11-14; Philippians 4:1; Colossians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Hebrews 3:5-19).

1 Corinthians 15:57, 58 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Peter 5:8, 9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Righteousness makes one bold (Proverbs 28:1, Ephesians 3:12), even before kings. This is why the Shulamite has no fear to stand in opposition to king Solomon. Likewise, God declares to the prophet Ezekiel that He will cause him to stand firm as he preaches to the rebellious nation of Israel. Review the words of the Lord in Ezekiel chapters 2 and 3. As long as the word of God was dwelling within the prophet, he was given the boldness even to stand before the king of Egypt (Ezekiel 29, 31). This same assurance is for the New Testament apostles as well as for the faithful today who endeavor to stand for truth.

Luke 21:12-19 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents

will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives."

Philippians 1:27, 28 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents -- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.

In verse 9 of our context, "moving gently the lips of sleepers" is a poetic way of saying one is talking in their sleep. Love's influence can make you do that, as expressed in a quirky song from "Guys And Dolls," a 1950 musical play: "I love you... a barrel and a heap, and I'm talkin' in my sleep about you." Couples that are faithful to one another never have to worry about things they might unwittingly say in their sleep.



THE SHULAMITE TO HER BELOVED:

11 Come, my beloved, Let us go forth to the field; Let us lodge in the villages.

12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; Let us see if the vine has budded, Whether the grape blossoms are open, And the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.

13 The mandrakes give off a fragrance, And at our gates are pleasant fruits, All manner, new and old, Which I have laid up for you, my beloved.

7.3. Sharing

The language here is understood to be figurative. Although partaking in literal fruits of the field is applicable to a point, something more is inferred by the statement, "I will give you my love." Mandrakes are a Mediterranean herb of the nightshade family, which we will further discuss in the next chapter.

The words are here assumed to be spoken by the Shulamite to her Beloved, as they flow seamlessly into the first part of chapter 8, which is clearly from a feminine perspective. In stark contrast to Solomon's words, she does not merely revel in his physical beauty. Instead, she and her Beloved enjoy going places and doing things together. A spouse ought to be much more than a mere object of occasional physical gratification but a companion who shares and fulfills every facet of life's experiences. We covered this more deeply in previous chapters where we discussed closeness, compatibility, involvement, and friendship in a one flesh relationship.

The Shulamite has gone through the trial of Solomon's advances, but this trial has made her affection for her Beloved all the stronger. The fruits "laid up for you" are stored, saved, waiting for the proper time, yet to be discovered. These "pleasant fruits" are not laid up if they are rushed upon without hesitation. The proper time is not until the vine buds have opened, which is a poetic way of expressing that the time for sexual intimacy is not until after marriage. We discussed this more fully in chapter 4. The time has now arrived.

Note again the difference between these words and those of Solomon. The "pleasant fruit" was a thing he intended take for himself, as by climbing and over-powering a palm tree, taking hold of its branches and its clusters (verse 8). In contrast, sexual intimacy is shown here as a thing given to another, not taken from another.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Seven

1. List some behavior by which the problem of domination and possessiveness might be demonstrated in a marriage.
2. For what reasons did Solomon marry his many wives?
3. Explain the difference in the way a business partner and a subordinate is typically treated in everyday affairs.
4. How does this apply to the way husbands and wives ought to behave toward each other?
5. Is it wholesome for a husband to welcome and relish the inappropriate attention of another woman, as long as no fornication is committed?
6. If a husband favorably receives such inappropriate attention from another woman, does his wife have a right to divorce him?
7. Does a godly wife or a husband have the right or responsibility to stop the inappropriate attention from another man or woman? If so, when and why?
8. Why are evil men wary even when no one is challenging them?
9. What promise does God give those who preach and defend the gospel in truth?
10. What more than sexual fulfillment ought to be shared in a one flesh marriage relationship?

8. Chapter Eight

THE SHULAMITE TO HER BELOVED:

1 Oh, that you were like my brother, Who nursed at my mother's breasts! If I should find you outside, I would kiss you; I would not be despised.

2 I would lead you and bring you Into the house of my mother, She who used to instruct me. I would cause you to drink of spiced wine, Of the juice of my pomegranate.

THE SHULAMITE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

3 His left hand is under my head, And his right hand embraces me.

4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM:

5 Who is this coming up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?

8.1. Family

The phrase "Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases" (v 4) is a repeating refrain occurring in 2:7; 3:5, and 8:4. In each case, "stir up" and "awaken" are from the exact same original Hebrew word, except that the first is in the verb form meaning to cause to be aroused, and the second is an intentionally intensified or extended form of the verb. She has waited for this awakening of the "north wind" (4:16) "Until it pleases," that is, for the proper time in marriage, as we discussed at length in chapter 4. Their separation is over at last.

Closeness and tenderness are expressed in these verses again. The people see them together and observe their closeness. Verse one above was specifically cited when we earlier examined Song 4:8-11 where The Beloved speaks of the Shulamite as his "sister." This indicates the closeness the pair desires to share with each other, the same as would be with natural family members. When we previously discussed Song 5:16, we developed the stages of love between a man and a woman, as portrayed in Greek words. (Please refer again to discussions in chapter one for definitions of these terms):

- AGAPE: rational love, of the mind, as toward strangers
- PHILIA: emotional love, of the heart, as with friends
- EROS: physical love, of the body, as between spouses
- STORGE: natural love, of family, as among children and parents.

Note that family love is the logical end of this progress. In marriage, a new family is formed. Let us now consider further this aspect of family.

THE BELOVED:

I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; There she who bore you brought you forth.

If we maintain a figurative application of these words, as in the last verses of chapter 7, then we conclude that this awakening is not from literal sleep and that the Shulamite was not literally born under an apple tree. It rather seems reasonable that this awakening is the beginning of sharing sexual intimacy in marriage, poetically expressed as the blowing of the north wind (4:16), eating the honey with the honeycomb, drinking the wine with the milk (5:1), and partaking of the fruits laid up (7:13) when it pleases (8:4). This being the case, we need to understand the significance of the reference to the time and place of her birth in the same context. Insight to this will possibly come by observing the connection between marriage and childbearing revealed by the Holy Spirit in scripture and in the culture of early biblical times.

The time and place of one's birth was considered important. Birthdays were celebrated (Genesis 40:20; Matthew 14:6), and a person's name frequently indicated their place of birth (Matthew 26:14; 28:1). Likewise today, birthdays and wedding anniversaries are the days we most commonly commemorate. A day or place that is special to a wife becomes also special to her husband through their one flesh bond. Moreover, in ancient times, children were born not in hospitals but in homes: in the same place they were conceived. Every Jewish household desired many children (Genesis 24:60). To have none was considered a curse, as the family genealogy would end (2 Samuel 14:7). Mothers were described in simile as a fruitful vine and offspring as olive trees (Psalm 128:3). Incidentally, the roots of the mandrake, mentioned in Song 7:13, were thought to help produce fertility in barren women (Genesis 30:14-16).

The application is perhaps this: the apple tree represents the marriage institution through which God ordains both that sexual privileges are to be shared (1 Corinthians 7:2) and that children are to be produced (1 Corinthians 7:14). When Jesus is questioned about divorce, He quotes from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24:

Matthew 19:4, 5 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

Omitted from Jesus' quote is Genesis 1:28, since it has no bearing on the divorce question. However, it does have bearing on our discussion here. The text states:

Genesis 1:27, 28 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...."

A homosexual marriage, which some people today are shamefully lobbying to make legal in the United States, flies in the face of the divine plan for procreation. Homosexuality is not viable in principle for a self-regenerating family unit and is therefore contrary to the will of God and furthermore sinful. Many people today will think this is bigoted or narrow-minded, but it is nothing more than what the Bible says. The true problem lies with those who are not willing to surrender their own desires to the will of Jehovah God revealed in scripture.

In a spiritual analogy, the church is the family of God (Ephesians 2:12-22). Note that we cannot actually bear fruit for God unless we are by faith in His family, the church, bearing His name as His bride (Ephesians 3:8-21; in John 15:4, 5 the metaphor is a vine, not a bride). No matter how much good we may think we are accomplishing in life, if it does not bring glory to the church, it benefits us nothing. If we claim to be one with Christ, then the things that are special to Him ought to be special to us. Christ died for His bride; that makes it special (Ephesians 5:25-27). Christ and His bride, the church, are indivisible; we must not deceive ourselves into thinking we can honor God apart from His church. As God has ordained marriage as the institution through which children are to be born, then so is the Lord's church through which Christians are born (Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:22, 23).

2 Peter 1:5-8 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame.

7 Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love All the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised.

8.2. Fervor

As in Greek, Hebrew also has two words for "man." One is gender-specific (a male), 'YSH {eesh} (Genesis 2:24); the other is non-gender-specific (a human being), 'ADAM {aw-dawm'} (Genesis 1:27). The word in verse 7 is gender-specific, so the continuing dialog here is attributed to The Beloved.

A seal finalizes and authenticates a matter by the impression stamped (Nehemiah 9:38; 10:1; Matthew 27:66; Revelation 5:1). An edict sealed by the king could not be changed or revoked (Esther 3:12; 8:8, 10).

In chapter 3 we discussed briefly the subject of jealousy and envy, noting that there are possible wholesome and unwholesome senses of both. Jealousy and envy involve fervent desire. The wrong kind of envy is a desire to deprive someone of something that is rightfully theirs (Acts 7:9). The wrong kind of jealousy is an inordinate desire for the same thing as another (2 Corinthians 12:20). However, the right kind of envy is as God desires that we take away our loyalty to Satan and give it to Him who rightfully deserves it (James 4:5). The right kind of jealousy is a zealous desire for some good thing (Galatians 4:18).

Examining verse 6 of our context, we contemplate whether the jealousy mentioned is the righteous or the unrighteous kind. The original Hebrew word here is QIN'AH {kin-aw'}, and the BDB definition reveals both the wholesome and unwholesome senses: "1) ardour, zeal, jealousy 1a) ardour, jealousy, jealous disposition (of husband) 1a1) sexual passion 1b) ardour of zeal (of religious zeal) 1b1) of men for God 1b2) of men for the house of God 1b3) of God for his people 1c) ardour of anger 1c1) of men against adversaries 1c2) of God against men 1d) envy (of man) 1e) jealousy (resulting in the wrath of God)." Hermeneutical methods indicate that we should look for the context to reveal the sense when a word has multiple meanings. However, closer examination will show that this is still not easily deciphered.

Our inclination might be to consider this jealousy the unrighteous kind, since cruelty, the grave, and vehement flames are the additional NKJ descriptors. It is true that the wrong kind of jealousy in a marriage leads to cruelty, however, the word "cruel" is translated from QASHEH {kaw-sheh'} meaning "1) hard, cruel, severe, obstinate 1a) ...difficult 1b) ... 1c) fierce, intense, vehement 1d) stubborn,... stiff-necked 1e) rigorous (of battle)" (BDB), hence rendered "severe" in the NAB. Simply because we have an arduous or passionate desire about something or someone does not necessarily mean it is wrong. Moreover, the phrase "a most vehement flame" is from SHALHEBETH {shal-heh'-beth}, which is derived from LAHAB {lah'-hab} meaning "1) flame, blade 1a) flame 1b) of flashing point of spear or blade of sword" (BDB). This word or the kindred form appears only 13 times in the Old Testament and most frequently indicates the righteous indignation of God (Isaiah 29:6; 30:30; 66:15). Thus the NAB here renders it, "The very flame of the LORD."

If the unwholesome kind jealousy is assumed here, consider what might be the implications. For example, this jealousy can occur when one spouse is displeased that the other enjoys success or the rightful appreciation of others. If the jealous spouse assumes the other will use those benefits against him, he might then begin invoking doubt in their relationship. He might also work to deprive his wife of those benefits by making unfair accusations of unfaithfulness. This behavior is obstinate and cruel and will generate heated disputations and misery. This kind of jealousy is founded upon a lack of trust. It is a marriage killer, and it has no place in a godly relationship (Galatians 5:19-21). Though these important lessons are true and in harmony with scripture, they might not be the best explanation for the verse.

Instead, perhaps it better fits the context to consider this to be the wholesome kind of jealousy. In this case, we conclude that this kind of love is full of zeal, unyielding, and persistent; it endures every trial. This attribute tenaciously keeps a marriage strong and even makes it stronger through the most severe adversities in health or prosperity that a couple can experience in life. Here is the power of true, pure, and changeless love which cannot be bought or sold at any price: a flame which no circumstance or outside influence can extinguish, not even the grave itself.

Consider the spiritual analogy that applies here. As Christians, members of the bride of Christ, we ought to be on fire for the Lord, magnifying His name openly with the gospel message burning within us. When we hear others speaking irreverently of God, we should be filled with righteous indignation and be prepared to speak out in His defense.

Jeremiah 20:7-9 O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me. ⁸ For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. ⁹ Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.

Titus 2:13, 14 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

The word translated "zealous" above is from ZELOTES {dzay-lo-tace'} meaning "1) one burning with zeal, a zealot 2) used of God as jealous of any rival and sternly vindicating his control 3) most eagerly desirous of, zealous for, a thing 3a) to acquire a thing, (zealous of) 3b) to defend and uphold a thing, vehemently contending for a thing" (JHT). This is the word which in the Septuagint translates QIN'AH mentioned earlier. Such zeal will preclude us from ever selling out our allegiance to God to any man or any thing at any cost, no matter what our situation might be, even if death is the result. Doing this, the Lord places His seal upon us.

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Ephesians 1:13, 14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

HER BROTHERS:

8 We have a little sister, And she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister In the day when she is spoken for?

9 If she is a wall, We will build upon her A battlement of silver; And if she is a door, We will enclose her With boards of cedar.

8.3. Integrity

Her brothers note that there are two kinds of girls: a wall and a door. A wall is not easily traversed. This is a girl who knows how to possess herself and guards against those who would trample the garden (Song 4:12). Comparitively, a door is easily entered. This is a loose, promiscuous woman, not waiting or saving herself to share with just one man. The brothers are protective and still think of her as an innocent child.

THE SHULAMITE:

10 I am a wall, And my breasts like towers; Then I became in his eyes As one who found peace.

She is a wall or a fortress. The reference to towers more likely indicates a stronghold rather than physical endowment. She knows how to possess herself in honor, taking care of her vineyard (1Thessalonians 4:3-7).

1 Corinthians 6:12, 13 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.¹³ Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

2 Timothy 3:2-6 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts.

Honor and purity generates trust in a marriage. The peace the Shulamite finds is in the eyes of her beloved. In his estimation of her character, he knows he can trust that she will always reject Solomon's advances. Her peace comes by knowing that he never doubts her faithfulness to him.

Allegorically, when we come to realize Christ's love demonstrated in its highest degree, we truly know peace, joy, happiness, hope, and trust (Romans 5:1-12; Ephesians 5:25-29). Though we, for our part, might forsake the Lord, one thing we know with certainty: if we are true to Him, He will never forsake us (2 Corinthians 4:9).

Hebrews 13:5, 20, 21 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."... ²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

NARRATOR:

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; He leased the vineyard to keepers; Everyone was to bring for its fruit A thousand silver coins.

THE SHULAMITE, TO SOLOMON:

12 My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have a thousand, And those who tend its fruit two hundred.

The maiden recognizes that Solomon has acquired his fill of vineyards as his heart desires, but she affirms that hers will not be one of his. In his quest for happiness, an intimate and exclusive relationship with a soul-mate has eluded him. The keepers are Solomon's wives, each one bringing a dowry, a payment required to become his wife. The 1000 silver pieces are almost prophetic, as Solomon ultimately had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

THE BELOVED:

13 You who dwell in the gardens, The companions listen for your voice -- Let me hear it!

THE SHULAMITE:

14 Make haste, my beloved, And be like a gazelle Or a young stag On the mountains of spices.

The lovers long to be together always.

Questions And Thoughts For Discussion And Review, Chapter Eight

1. In Song 8:4, the one speaking says, "Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases." Explain in your own words what you think this means.
2. List the progressive steps of love through which a couple develops from complete strangers to a family unit.
3. In Song 8:5, the speaker says, "I awakened you under the apple tree." What do you think is the meaning of the apple tree?
4. Of what significance is God's plan for the home regarding homosexuality?
5. Is it possible for us to truly honor God but not honor His church?
6. Explain the difference between the wholesome kind and the unwholesome kind of jealousy.
7. Describe the effect of the right and wrong kinds of jealousy in a marriage.
8. How should the right kind of jealousy affect our life with respect to our relationship with Christ and His church?
9. How do faithful spouses bring peace to one another?
10. Explain by comparison how peace in a marriage relationship is related to our peace with God through Christ in His church.

Conclusion

Psalm 128: A Song of Ascents.

¹ *Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.*

² *When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.*

³ *Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.*

⁴ *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.*

⁵ *The LORD bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life.*

⁶ *Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!*

Some material in this study is derived or directly quoted from the following texts, which are suggested for further study and additional information:

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ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
NKJ: New King James Version (1982)
NAB: New American Standard Bible (1977, 1995)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
NET: New English Translation (2005)