

2010

Devotions from the Song of Solomon



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Necessary Food

Devotionals for couples

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Mine own vineyard have I not kept

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. (Song of Solomon 1:5-6)

Many have tried to make the Song of Solomon out to be an allegory of Christ and his church. There might be some application along these lines, but first and foremost this is a Song about Solomon and the love of his life. Yes, he had many wives. And, no, that is not what God wants. But here we have the girl he loved and here we see the wife of his youth. The Shulamite girl was a farm girl. She was not a city raised blue blood. As she sits in the presence of the king and looks around at all the fair-skinned women of Jerusalem she compares herself to the tents of Kedar which are covered with black goat skins.

She has grown up working and her brothers and sisters made her work in the vineyards. The sun has made her skin very dark. She has had to work all her life and she has not had the luxury of keeping her complexion beautiful like the city ladies. However, Solomon sees something very different.

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. (Song of Solomon 1:9-10)

Ladies today might not like being compared to a horse, but Solomon is saying he sees her as feminine and elegant. The Pharaoh would have had some of the finest horses in the world pulling his chariots. Her cheeks he compares to jewels and her neck to chains of gold.

Her dark complexion does not bother the king. He finds her absolutely beautiful!

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes. (Song of Solomon 1:15)

When the Bible uses the word 'fair' it means beautiful. What do we learn from this chapter? This is the love of a man and a woman. Although he is the king, the rugged beauty of a country girl draws him. She is intimidated by the fact that she has not had the upbringing that she thinks is important to the king and he is helping her to understand that does not matter to him.

Men, this helps us understand that our wives need to hear of their beauty. They need not compare themselves to the Hollywood models. God has made them for us and we see our ladies as fair. Let them know it! Tell your wife how beautiful she is! Love your wife as Christ loved the church.

His banner over me was love

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. (Song of Solomon 2:4)

Solomon was not ashamed of his love for the Shulamite. He brought her to his banqueting house and anyone who was invited to the royal banquet would have been able to see that he loved her. Like an army bearing their standard or banner, Solomon's love was evident to all.

Men, do your wives know the love that you have for them? When you are in public is there a banner of love over your bride? She needs it!

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (Ephesians 5:25)

She needs the security that comes from knowing that she is loved above all others by her husband.

This is still courtship for Solomon and the Shulamite. She is thinking ahead to her wedding night with him when she says:

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. (Song of Solomon 2:6-7)

She desires to be with him in marital intimacy, but she knows the time is not yet. Part of the man's banner over a woman in love is the promise that he will not put her in a compromising situation until they are married. She is vulnerable and he must protect and honor her vulnerability until they are wed. She speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem charging them not to stir up her love till he pleases. She wants two things. First, she wants to wait until they are married in order to honor God's Word concerning marriage. Second, she wants the commitment from him that he will be hers alone.

Men, realize that fornication is a sin. It is up to godly men of honor to spread their banner of love over a woman and protect her honor. That banner is a guarantee that you love her and are committed to her. It is a pledge of faithfulness and love. The banner brings assurance to her and to all that you belong to each other. The Shulamite knew this because she declares:

My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. (Song of Solomon 2:16)

It has almost become cliché to say 'true love waits', but it is true. Marital love is a wonderful thing that must be guarded as with an army and defended as a strong city!

I held him and would not let him go

It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. (Song of Solomon 3:4-5)

Here is the search the Shulamite goes on to find her beloved. He had invited her to come with him earlier and she had refused. Now she knows that he is the one she loves and she cannot find him. A desperate search through the city finally brings her to her beloved. This just prior to their wedding day and when she held him, she would not let him go.

You can hear the desperation in the Shulamite while she cannot find Solomon. This is a woman in courtship who says yes to the marriage proposal of her beau. She has made up her mind. She is not putting him off any more. She brings him to her mother's house, even to the very house where she was conceived. There is never a mention of the Shulamite's father in the Song, so he must have passed away. In her culture, a formal proposal of marriage would have been made by the groom to her father. Since no father is mentioned, Solomon would have had to make his proposal to her brothers.

Can you hear the expectation she has to be with her husband? Once again she charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up her love till he pleases. In other words she is ready to give herself completely to him, but she wants to wait until they are married. She even mentions the fact that while they are in her home it is the place where she was conceived. She is ready for marriage and she is ready to be with her husband all the time.

The rest of Chapter 3 is about the royal wedding. It was a big occasion with lots of attendants. What a special day for this Shulamite country girl who is marrying the king!

This portion of the Song of Solomon helps us realize that love and romance are real and good. However, they are designed by God for the covenant of marriage. The Bible tells us:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

Those who do not know God live lustful lives. Those who do know how to possess their vessel (body) in sanctification and honor. Men honor women by waiting until they are joined in marriage to let loose their passionate love.

Thou art all fair my love

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. (Song of Solomon 4:6-7)

Chapter 4 of the Song of Solomon is about the royal couple's wedding night. The first part is Solomon's description of his wife. It is filled with Middle Eastern rural imagery from nature. It would seem that he is rehearsing her beauty as he gets more intimate with her on their wedding night. This is for married couples only! The great tragedy of our day is that many couples have experience prior to their wedding night with someone other than their spouse. We see here a man who is totally enthralled with his wife. He tells her how beautiful she is. They spend this night in each other's arms and Solomon's conclusion is that there is no spot in her. He now knows her intimately as no other man does.

Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. (Song of Solomon 4:9)

Notice how Solomon calls her his sister and his spouse. What a beautiful declaration of the relationship between them. A husband and wife should work hard to cultivate a close friendship in their marriage. They should also realize the blessings of marital intimacy. Solomon calls her a garden and a fountain.

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. (Song of Solomon 4:12)

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. (Song of Solomon 4:15)

She is his garden and his fountain. This is something that is not to be shared with anyone. Solomon also writes in another place:

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? (Proverbs 5:15-20)

God designed marriage and the intimacy of the relationship is his idea. It is to be between one man and one woman in the bonds of covenant marriage. Just as much as the Shulamite ravished Solomon on his wedding night, she is to have his heart all of their life. The Bible says to rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let God build this kind of relationship in your marriage.

What is thy beloved more than another?

What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? (Song of Solomon 5:9)

The virgins of Israel want to know why the Shulamite is so in love with her beloved. The Shulamite was looking frantically for her beloved and charged the daughters of Jerusalem to tell him that she was sick with love for him. Why is he so special? What is different about him from all other men? These are the questions they are asking her. She then begins to talk of her beloved.

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (Song of Solomon 5:10-16)

Listen to the way she speaks of her husband. She lets everyone know how much she respects him and she sings his praises. She thinks he is handsome.

Many times in public I have heard a woman mock her husband. Sometimes she puts him down because of his negligence with things around the house or his poor handling of money. Sometimes a woman speaks curtly to her man in public. Ladies, learn the lesson from the Shulamite – she speaks highly of her husband in public. He is HER beloved and she loves him.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

A wife should reverence her husband. She should show him respect and speak highly of him when talking with others. He is the man that God has given to her. He has become one flesh with her and his body is her body. Not only that, but the Shulamite reminds the daughters of Jerusalem that that he is her friend.

Is your husband your friend? He should be. What if you and your husband are not good friends, what should you do?

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

If you want your husband to be your friend, be a friend to him. Show yourself friendly. Give him praises and speak highly of him.

Like the chariots of Amminadib

*Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.
(Song of Solomon 6:12)*

The Shulamite had not answered the door for her beloved and he had gone. She ran out looking for him and was mistreated by the watchmen of the city. However, as she thought about it a minute, she knew exactly where to find him. She went to the garden. If we go back to God's original design for marriage, we find the very first one in a garden. There God made the woman from the rib of Adam and brought her to the man. There they became one flesh. Marriage should be like a garden.

Garden's don't grow by themselves. They have to be cultivated, planted, watered and weeded. How many weeds have grown up in your garden that need to be tended to? What are you sowing into your marriage? Since marriage is a spiritual thing, you should consider this from the Bible:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Galatians 6:7-9)

When she gets to the garden she finds Solomon there. When she sees him he begins once again to talk of her beauty. Not only does Solomon praise her beauty, but the other women do too. When she sees her husband, she says that her soul was stirred. Does your soul stir within you when you see your spouse?

Her description is that her soul is like the chariots of Amminadib. We are not sure exactly who Amminadib is, but apparently he was renowned for his chariot-driving skills. Maybe he was fast and reckless. Do you remember the feeling of riding in the back of a pick-up or on a

motorcycle and feeling the wind rush in your face? Exhilarating! This is how she feels when she sees her beloved husband.

If you don't get that sensation sometimes when you have been away from your spouse, it is time to start weeding and sowing in that garden of marriage. Plant some beautiful things that will bloom with time and bring back the fresh love of marriage. This is God's will for your marriage!

I am my beloved's

I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. (Song of Solomon 7:10)

The Shulamite declared that she belonged to her beloved. She was his and none other. This is one of the marriage vows that a couple takes when they are joined as husband and wife. They promise faithfulness to each other as long as they live. The key to marital longevity is faithfulness and love. A husband and wife that trust each other can last a life time together.

Not only that, but she knew his desire was toward her. Solomon made it very plain that he loved her and that he desired her. He wanted to be with her and spend time with her. She was pleasing to him and he got excited when they were together. A husband and wife should work to keep this kind of desire in their marriage. One of the ways to do this is laid out her in Solomon and the Shulamite's life. She suggests a weekend get-away.

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. (Song of Solomon 7:11)

Getting out of the normal work-a-day life and staying in 'the villages' was her suggestion. Do you do that sometimes with your spouse? Do you plan a time that you can be together and stay at a bed and breakfast or something? It does not have to be a long vacation. Just a little time focusing one hundred percent upon each other is good for a relationship. One of the things that they share is a love for nature and being outdoors, so she suggests they get up early and inspect the vineyards and gardens. Not only that, but she has promises him that she will give him her loves.

Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved. (Song of Solomon 7:12-13)

She entices Solomon with the promise of 'all manner of pleasant fruits'. Throughout the Song the use of garden and vegetable metaphors is for the purpose of relating to marital intimacy. She says she has some new things for him to try and some old favorites in mind. How could he not be excited about this weekend away with his wife?

Set aside some time to get away with your beloved. Sample the pomegranates and grapes together. Intimacy in marriage is God's idea. He designed you to desire your spouse. Make sure that your spouse can trust you by being faithful and work to create desire in your marriage!

Love is strong as death

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. (Song of Solomon 8:6)

As Solomon and the Shulamite return from their village getaway she is sitting beside him and leaning on his arm in the chariot. He asks her to set him as a seal upon his heart and his arm. A seal is a sign of ownership and she is asking for unending love and faithfulness. Is this too much for a husband to ask of his wife? Is this too much for a wife to ask of her husband? No, it is necessary for the marriage to last.

Solomon declares that love is strong as death. Death is final and irreversible. Love is that strong. Love lasts. It is not something that you 'fall' into. The love of a husband and wife is strong and will last a lifetime therefore there is great jealousy that goes along with it. There is nothing wrong with a husband being jealous of his wife's affection; nor of a wife being jealous of her husband. Jealousy is cruel as the grave and if it is aroused will burn hot like coals of fire. If a husband doubts the faithfulness of his wife, this jealousy will burn. The same goes for a wife who doubts her husband's faithfulness.

The king is bringing up an important point about the marriage relationship. The husband and wife actually belong to each other. There can be no wavering affections in the relationship. For this reason, a man should not spend alone time with any other woman than his wife. The wife should not be alone with another man other than her husband. There should be no cause for jealousy to burn in the relationship.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. (Song of Solomon 8:7)

You cannot quench love nor can you buy it. The love of a man and a wife is a powerful thing. It should be cultivated and the promises

revisited from time to time. A man and his wife must let nothing come between them. A beautiful thing is to see a young bride leaning on the arm of her husband. An even more beautiful thing is to see a wife of forty or fifty years leaning on the arm of hers! If love is like a fire that cannot be quenched, then stoke the fire and fan the flames!

Husbands need to show and tell their wives that they love them. Wives need to do the same. Jesus said it best:

*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.
(Mark 10:9)*

In the day when she shall be spoken for

We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar. (Song of Solomon 8:8-9)

The Shulamite's brothers were looking out for their sister. She was their little sister and she was not yet mature. There would come the day that someone would court her and desire to marry her. Apparently, she had no father, so her brothers were acting as her guardians. Men, we must protect the chastity of our girls! Either fathers or brothers must do this. In our day, there are so many unprotected women who are prey to unworthy men!

The Shulamite's brothers lay out a course of action and give two scenarios for how they will treat their sister. They compare her to a wall and to a door. These two metaphors describe the ways a girl can act before marriage. If she is a wall (a virgin) they will build upon her a palace of silver. In other words she is chaste and they can present her to a husband as a beautiful palace. The Psalmist says it like this:

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: (Psalms 144:12)

This is what we want for our girls. However, she might be a door. A door swings on it's hinges and allows others to enter. This is a girl who is experienced before marriage. Her brothers say they will enclose her if this be the case. They will keep a very close eye on her and make sure she is not in a position to give in to the temptation of fornication.

This is a serious matter that we should be constantly vigilant in. Our daughters are precious and we should protect their chastity and guard it closely. When it comes time for marriage the Shulamite declares that she is a wall.

I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. (Song of Solomon 8:10)

Not only has she kept herself pure for her husband, but she is now mature and ready for marriage. Men should protect the chastity of the women under their care. Let's build polished palaces with solid cornerstones of our girls so they can say gladly on their wedding day that they are like a wall!