

From the Garden to Glory

Song of Solomon

Author: Solomon

Timeline: c. 953 B.C.

Location: Israel

Category: Poetical

Theme: Marital Love

Overview:

Song of Solomon is a love song, most likely written about an actual romance of King Solomon and the Shulamite. It speaks of the wooing, the wedding and the joys and heartaches of marital love.

Allegorically, it illustrates God's passionate love for His people and Christ's love for His bride, the Church.

Introduction:

Before you begin your study of the Song of Solomon, consider the following questions and write your answers:

- 1.** Make a list of the things you love about the Lord. Make time to get alone with Him and tell Him how much you love Him.
- 2.** Jesus is the lover of your soul. Sit at His feet and tell Him how much you appreciate His love. Tell Him what it means to you to be His beloved.

3. Read John 21:7. John describes himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Does this express your true feeling about the Lord's love for you? Why or why not? Ask Him to make His love a reality in your life.

4. Allegorically, the Song of Solomon can be a picture of Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as the bride of Christ. What does it mean to you to be the bride of Christ? In what ways are you living your life in anticipation and expectation of your Bridegroom's return?

5. Taken literally, the Song of Solomon is a love story, a historical record of Solomon's romance and marriage to the Shulamite.
 - What do you think are the most important aspects of a successful Christian marriage?
 - What virtues are necessary for the Christian wife?
 - What are some aspects of our culture which have caused the breakdown of marriages?
 - What can you do to combat these negative influences?

Falling in Love

Read Song of Solomon 1:1-3:5

1. In 1:9 and 1:15, the Beloved calls the Shulamite "my love". The Hebrew word is *raah* and the primary emphasis is on friendship. The root word means "to guard, care for, tend." According to David and Carole Hocking, "(The Beloved's) friendship is controlled by deep concern for (the Shulamite's) protection and well being...When a man truly loves a woman, he expresses his desire to be a loving friend who will care for her and her needs." List the essential characteristics of a good friendship. Why is friendship a necessary characteristic of a godly marriage?

2. Look at 1:5-6. The Shulamite *acknowledged* the facts about her appearance and *accepted* them. How do you feel about your appearance? Both pride and insecurity are equally self-focused. According to Amy Carmichael, "In acceptance lieth peace." Make a list of those aspects of your appearance that you dislike. Ask the Lord if there is a change He would like you to make. If so, write it down and begin today. If He directs you instead to acknowledge and accept this aspect of your appearance, do so. Read Psalm 139:13-16 to the Lord as your prayer of praise to Him.

3. Look at 2:4. The words "banqueting house" literally mean "house of wine." In the Bible, wine is associated with joy and gladness (see Judges 9:13, Psalm 4:7, Psalm 104:15). Read Ephesians 5:18. According to Beth Moore, "Jesus came to bring the new wine of the Spirit! Something from which we can drink our fill without the negative side effects of wine and the emptiness it leaves in the wake of its temporary fix...Beloved, did you realize that joy and gladness are among the many gifts and services Christ brought His Holy Spirit to grant?" How is your house one which is filled with joy and gladness? What can you do this week to make it even more so?

4. Look at 2:15. According to Franz Delitzsch, "The vineyards, beautiful with fragrant blossoms, point to (the Shulamite's) covenant of love; and the little foxes, which might destroy these united vineyards, point out all the great and the little enemies and adverse circumstances which threaten to gnaw and destroy love in the blossom, before it has reached the ripeness of full enjoyment." What are some "little foxes" that threaten to destroy your love? What are you doing to "catch them" before they begin their destructive work?

United in Love

Read Song of Solomon 3:6-5:1

1. Verses 3:6-11 detail the wedding procession of the Shulamite and her Beloved. Look at the following sections of Scripture, and list everything you learn about God's definition of marriage: Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:6-9, Romans 7:2-3, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

and Hebrews 13:4. Make a note of any ways in which God's thoughts about marriage differ from the world's thoughts.

2. Look at the following verses and note what you learn about God's union with His people: Isaiah 54:5, Isaiah 62:5, Hosea 2:19-20, and Revelation 19:7.

3. Look up the following verses and write everything you learn about Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His bride: Matthew 25:1-13, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7-9, Revelation 21:2, and Revelation 22:17. What does it mean to you to know that you are the bride of Christ? What are you doing *today* to prepare yourself for the "wedding day"?

4. Look at 3:11. According to Joseph P. Dillow, "The crown here is not a symbol of royalty but of happiness. In ancient times garlands were worn on festive occasions, especially marriages." Consider the most important relationships in your life. What can you do to show those you love that they bring you happiness?

5. Look at 4:10-11. There are three references in these verses to fragrance. Why is fragrance important? What do you do to make yourself and your home aromatically appealing? Look up the following verses: 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, Ephesians 5:2, and Philippians 4:18. What do you learn from these verses about the spiritual significance of fragrance?

6. Look at 4:12 and Hebrews 13:4. This verse emphasizes the fact that the Shulamite is a virgin. According to David and Carole Hocking, "When a couple decides to wait until marriage before they engage in sexual intercourse, they are building strength into their marriage. Saying no to your sexual desires is a critically important matter...You must refuse to have sex with anyone other than your marital partner...(The Shulamite) has protected her sexual fruits and delicious waters from others and saved them for the one she would marry." How would you explain the importance of sexual purity to someone

who is considering becoming sexually involved outside of marriage? What encouragement could you give to the woman who has *already* lost her virginity?

Struggling in Love

Read Song of Solomon 5:2-7:9a

1. Look at 5:2 and 6:9. In these verses, the Beloved calls the Shulamite "my dove." The dove is a symbol of purity, peace and gentleness. In what ways do these words describe you? How could you grow in these areas?
2. Look at 5:3. Commenting on this verse, Joseph C. Dillow says, "Now both of these statements are excuses! 'I'll have to put my bathrobe on, and I'll get my feet dirty.' What she is trying to convey to her late-night lover is that she is tired, already in bed, and just not in the mood." It appears that the Shulamite was just being selfish. Ask the Lord to search your heart. Ask Him to reveal any areas of selfishness in your life. Write Philippians 2:3-4 in your own words. List one thing you will do this week to "consider others better than yourself."
3. Look at the first two lines of 6:3 (see also Song of Solomon 2:16 and 7:10). This verse refers to the exclusivity and commitment in the relationship between the Shulamite and her Beloved. Define *commitment*. Why is commitment essential in a marriage? In what way(s) are you a woman who honors her commitments? How could you improve in this area?
4. Look at the last line of 6:3. The word "feeds" comes from a Hebrew word which means "to tend a flock." The Shulamite viewed her husband as a shepherd who cared for his flock. Write out a "job description" for a good shepherd; what characteristics and qualities would be important for this position? How could a wife encourage her husband in his role as a shepherd? What might she do that would discourage or hinder him? Why would the ability to be a shepherd be important for a godly husband? Read and meditate on Psalm 23.

Write down anything the Lord reveals to you about *your* Good Shepherd.

Growing in Love

Read Song of Solomon 7:9b-8:14

- 1.** Look at 7:11. New Believer's Bible translates this verse thusly, "Come my love, let us go into the fields and spend the night among the wild-flowers." Everyone needs times of rest, recreation and refreshment, times to "get away." What do you do for refreshment? How do you balance the need for rest with the need to be busy about the Lord's business?
- 2.** What is said about love in 8:4 (also Song of Solomon 2:7 and 3:5)? Why is this dangerous? Read Titus 2:5. What is the admonishment found in this verse? What specific standards have you set in your own life to assure that you are discreet and chaste in your behavior, your speech and your dress? Be specific.
- 3.** Look at 8:13. The Beloved desired to hear the voice of the Shulamite. Read Proverbs 12:18. Think about how you speak and the tone of your voice. Is your speech like "the piercings of a sword" or does it "promote health"? Martha Peace says, "How you communicate is a reflection of your commitment to Christ. Certainly, these are skills that need to be fine tuned." List at least one way you can "fine tune" your speech this week.
- 4.** Look at 8:14. The Shulamite encourages the Beloved to "make haste". The word literally means "flee." What is one thing the Lord is calling you to do quickly or something from which he is calling you to flee? Do it today!!

Four "Assignments" For Married Women

1. Look at 1:13. According to David and Carole Hocking, "When she says that (her beloved) is a 'bundle of myrrh', she is regarding him as something very special...(She) pictures (him) like that bag of myrrh around her neck--close to her heart and sweet to her nostrils." Let your husband know that he is "something special" to you. Write him a love letter admiring him and thanking him; let him know he is "one in a million" in your eyes.
2. Look at 1:14. The word *beloved* in this verse carries with it the idea of sexual and romantic love as well as friendship. Initiate an intimate time of romance with your husband this week. Let him know how much you enjoy the sexual aspect of your marriage.
3. Look at 1:16-17. These verses describe the bedroom. Bedrooms are meant to be places set aside for intimacy and sleep. Do one thing this week to make your bedroom a "romantic retreat" for you and your husband.
4. The Song of Solomon makes many references to the importance of food in relationship to intimate love. Make your husband's favorite meal or dessert this week. Enjoy it with him.

Summary

As you conclude your study of the Song of Solomon consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most important lesson you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?
2. What "new insights" did you learn about the Lord and yourself from your study?

- 3.** List one way in which your study caused you to do each of the following:

Praise and worship the Lord:

Confess an area of sin to the Lord:

Thank the Lord:

Ask for something from the Lord: