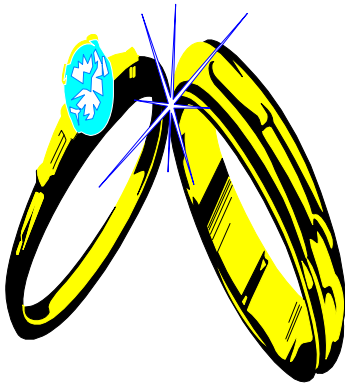


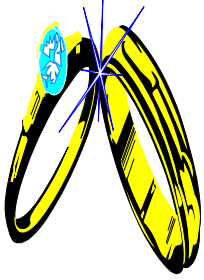
LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

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LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



1. WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MATE

Song of Solomon 2:8-14

Marriages today are in trouble! Fifty percent end in divorce. The statistic is even higher for second marriages. Of the ones who don't get divorced, few have what they would call mature, gratifying, satisfying, close personal relationships. Yet this isn't what we want or expect when entering into marriage. What is wrong? How can we avoid this? What can we change?

SONG OF SOLOMON - BACKGROUND

As with all else, God has given us the answer in the Bible. They are in an obscure, often over-looked book, the Song of Solomon. Written by Solomon as a young man, it takes the form of a love song (a lyric idyll). The speaker is Shulamith, Solomon's wife. It is composed of a series of flashbacks as she recalls her courtship, marriage, wedding night, and subsequent ups and downs. Between each reminiscence a chorus speaks: making transitions, giving warnings, adding brief commentaries or emphasizing a point. The events are not in chronological order.

In summary, the story is about a young country girl from the hills of Galilee whom Solomon meets while in the area on business (vineyards). He visits her often, courting her. He asks her to marry him. She considers, then says yes. Plans are made to be married. He sends a fine procession which brings her to him in Jerusalem, the capital and largest city. They have a fine, beautiful wedding in Jerusalem. Much detail is given about the wedding day and night. The marriage is a good one, but some problems arise and they work through them. After this is past she thinks back on it all, and that is the book Song of Solomon. First comes information about their courtship.

COURTSHIP OF SOLOMON & SHULAMITH (2:8-14)

8 *Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills* 9 *My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice.* 10 *My lover spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me.* 11 *See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.* 12 *Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land.* 13 *The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."* 14 *My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.*

Solomon is coming to visit in the spring, after a long absence. Shulamith is waiting and watching, and is very excited as he approaches. He gets closer, finally arriving and asking her to go for a walk for he has missed her and wants to spend time with her. That is one of the main purposes of the period before marriage called courtship or engagement, spending quality and

quantity time getting to know each other, developing a good close relationship and friendship. I think that's why Solomon was attracted to Shulamith instead of the fancy, sophisticated, charming ladies in the court in Jerusalem. There was something real and natural about her, something honest and basic, something pure and good. That's what he loved in her.

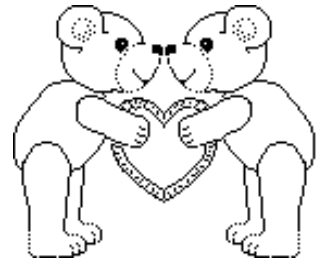
We don't know anything about their relationship before this period. Exactly how did they meet? What made them interested in getting to know each other better? When and how did they know God had them for each other? We don't know the answers here, but we can pretty well assume they weren't hitting some local singles scene ('meat market') seeing whom they could pick up. I can't imagine them using all the tricks and ways people use today to catch someone of the opposite sex (at last hold them until a better catch comes along). That is a self-centered, whats-in-it-for-me, what-do-I-get-out-of-it approach to relationships. We are to focus on the other person and what is best for them, laying aside ourselves to serve in love.

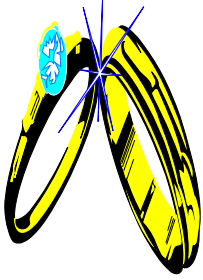
EMOTIONAL VIRGINITY UNTIL MARRIAGE

As Christians we emphasize physical virginity, saving our body for the one we marry, and rightly so! But then Christians go giving their heart away right and left, over and over again. They enter marriage with a pure body but with a heart that has been used, broken, dirtied, and abused. Emotional virginity is as important as physical virginity. Keeping your heart for the one God has for you is as important as keeping your body! There's a lot more to save for marriage than just sex! I'm convinced Solomon and Shulamith did just that. They show no symptoms of the modern dating phenomenon - give your heart away any number of times until you find the 'right' one, then check with God to see if it's the one He has for you! What a disaster! Dating (with the give-your-heart-away- attitude that accompanies it) just leads to breaking up multiple times. This prepares people for divorce, not marriage. Divorce today is just an extension of the old breaking up routine as done in dating.

Well then, what kind of relationships are we to have before God shows us the right one if it isn't trying to help him out by 'dating,' etc.? What kind of relationship did Solomon and Shulamith have before they knew God meant them to be together and they gave their hearts to each other? According to 1 Timothy 5:1-2, it was a brother-sister relationship. That means treating all those of the opposite sex equally, not making commitments or promises (verbally, by body language, by flirting, etc.). It means respecting the other's heart, as you would want your physical brother or sister to be treated. It means treating others the way you want your future mate to be treated by those he or she is with. It means being the same with the opposite sex as you would be were you married to someone else.

Granted, this is really a faith system. What if God doesn't provide? I'm getting older and my friends are all meeting people to be with or marry? I'll never meet anyone this way? Abraham and Sarah thought they had to help God out, and result is the Arab-Israeli conflict that lasts today. To Solomon it seemed impossible to find a pure, down-to-earth country girl. To Shulamith it seemed impossible to meet someone mature and caring like Solomon. How could ever get the king of Israel and a hill-country peasant girl together? But He did -- and He will do so today, too, if you let Him. Like everything else in life, it is a matter of faith. Since whom you will marry is the most important decision you will ever make (next to salvation), make sure you let God make it for you. Don't fall into the Devil's trap of doing things the world's way! Solomon, in all his wisdom didn't. Make sure you don't either.





LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



2. PROBLEMS TO SOLVE BEFORE MARRIAGE

Song of Solomon 2:15-17

I do lots of counseling with people having marriage problems. While the surface problems vary, the root problem is always the same. There is self-centeredness on one or both partner's part, usually with an unwillingness to admit it and change. This isn't new, though. Its as old as Solomon and Shulamith (and I'm sure older than that).

After Solomon came north to visit Shulamith Galilee in spring, they went for a walk to talk. They were using their pre-marriage time wisely: learn to communicate with each other. In remembering back to this time, Shulamith recalls her request of Solomon as they walked and talked: 15 *Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.* 16 *My lover is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies.* 17 *Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the rugged hills.* (Song Solomon 2:15-17).

"LITTLE FOXES" CAUSE THE MOST DAMAGE

What does she mean when she asks Solomon to *"catch the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards"*? In Palestine gardeners would but rock walls around their orchards to keep out wolves, bears, lions, deer, etc. They could cause lots of damage eating the crops. However there was a more subtle, more dangerous enemy to the vines -- young foxes. It was almost impossible to keep them out, for they could slip between cracks between the rocks. They would scratch the new buds forming on the vines as they started to grow, and that would ruin the new growth. Thus they caused more damage in the long run than the wolves, bears or lions.

Shulamith is well aware that in relationships (*"our vineyards that are in bloom"*) it is the little problems that can cause the most damage. Big problems must be faced and worked through, or the relationship will end. However little things can be left and ignored. In the long run they are even more damaging, though. What are big problems? Those which so major they must be faced. What are little problems? Any that can be swept under the rug and ignored. People incorrectly think that they will just resolve themselves. However problems that are not resolved before marriage are much harder to correctly resolve after marriage. Marriage magnifies problems, it doesn't solve them. Love and deep commitment are basic to working through these things (*"my love is mine and I am his"*) but love doesn't make them disappear.

PROBLEMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Problems to be resolved before marriage include temperament differences, background differences (values, priorities, motives, goals, etc.), and feelings about important matters. This includes work load (who does what around the house), children (how many, when, discipline, whose main responsibility they are), finances (charge cards, debt, standard of living, savings), in-laws (responsibilities, role, need of approval) and sex (attitude, birth control, other's needs).

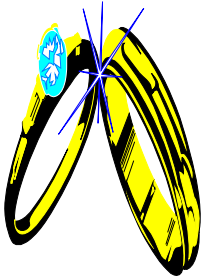
Shulamith wants to have these things worked out before marriage so they don't grow and ruin their relationship later. Notice she needs him to do this, for it is mainly the man's responsibility in the relationship. For the most part, though, men aren't big on working through problems, especially 'little' ones that can seemingly be ignored!

What problem was she specifically talking about? I don't know, but I do know she wanted and needed more time with him (*"turn, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the rugged hills"*). She wants him to hurry back! He is just too busy being king in Jerusalem to spend as much time with her as she needs! What woman doesn't want more time with her man than she gets? Its interesting to remember that Solomon, the richest man in the world, could have given her anything that money can buy. But what does she want from him more than anything? She wants his TIME. And not just this 'quality time' cop-out that is talked about today. All time together is quality time. There is no substitute for quantity time -- before or after marriage. That is the only way to work on the little things, to get to know each other, to learn to communicate with each other.

COMMUNICATION

The only way to prevent or cure these problems is by good communication. That's something that is talked about a lot today, but often not really understood. Ephesians 4:25-5:2 gives some good principles for communication. 1. Be honest and truthful (25): to yourself (identify your own feelings and find the main issue [why this bothers you]) and to your mate (in your talking and body language, also in your listening). 2. Be self-controlled (26a), don't let anger (yours or theirs) prevent communication. Handle your feelings of hurt and rejection as pain, don't let it turn to anger. 3. Keep it short (26b). Don't let negative feelings fester inside. Don't fight to win (or both loose) but work together to find the best solution for both. 4. Watch the timing (27). Don't bring up potentially explosive issues when either you or they are tired, distracted, burdened, busy, etc. Use the Golden Rule, approach sticky issues they way you would like to have them brought up to you. 5. Take positive actions (28) to prevent conflicts as well as to end current ones. 6. Build others up, don't tear them down (29). Don't fight the other person to win, instead along with the other person fight the problem to defeat it. 7. Keep close to God (30) for that is the only source of wisdom, love and patience. Pray together before starting a discussion, and stop and pray during a discussion if things start to get out of hand. 8. Develop constructive behavior (31). Don't focus on what is wrong with the other person, but what is right. 9. Be forgiving (32) of your mate as well as yourself. Pride is a real roadblock to good communication. 10. Live by love (5:1-2). Love is the grease, the oil that keeps friction from causing sparks. Make sure your love for your mate is greater than your love for yourself. Without love no relationship will grow.

Remember, you can't defeat the little foxes if you don't know what they are or where they are getting into your relationship. Where are your fences weak? What little things are unresolved in your relationship? What should you (not the other person) do about them now? If you aren't committed enough to keep out all the little foxes you won't have the kind of relationship you could have. If you aren't willing to pay the price to keep them out, sooner or later they'll destroy all you've been growing in your garden. Its up to you.



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

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3. DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUSBANDS & WIVES

Song of Solomon 3:1-5

I've been following the story of Robertson and Muriel McQuilkin for some time. He is the former president of Columbia Bible College. Robertson traveled and spoke, wrote books, and had a great impact for Christ on the world. Muriel developed Alzheimer's disease about 8 years ago. Before long she couldn't recognize anyone and became like a little child, totally dependent on others for her care. She was only content when her husband was around, but in no ways was she a wife to him. He had a decision to make: his ministry or his wife. He resigned all his work just to take care of her. He promised to be with her in "sickness and health, for better or worse" and he plans to keep his promise. He loves her and delights in her presence. He tells about how she was faithful to him for 40 years and he could never repay her. "I don't have to care for her, I get to! Its a high honor to care for so wonderful a person."

While this seems very admirable, is it expecting too much of a person in today's world? Would you expect your mate to do that for you? Would you do it for your mate? Is it expecting too much or not? I think this is at the heart and core of many marriage problems today -- what should we expect of ourselves? of our mates? Unless we know what God expects, we will either expect too much or too little from ourselves and others. Either way is disaster!

WILL HE HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR ME?

Shulamith had this very problem with expectations before marrying Solomon (Song of Solomon 3:1-5). She kept dreaming he would be gone too much taking care of his kingly duties after they were married. This was the "little fox" she was concerned about earlier (2:15). It wasn't a matter of if she loved him and wanted to marry him, but if she could accept him and his limits. This issue must be confronted and worked through in the courtship time before marriage, not after marriage. Expectations must be clearly defined or confusion will surely result. We can only have proper expectations by looking at God's word for the answer.

WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF HUSBANDS

God expects husbands to meet their wife's need for love and security. Following Jesus' example, he is to sacrificially love her (Ephesians 5:22-33). Man is to have *agape* love (unconditional love, love in spite of, love no matter what) for his wife, as Jesus has for us. Too often our love instead is *phileo* (better translated 'like' than 'love,' for it is dependent on the recipient, love "because" or "if"). A woman needs to feel secure, so a husband is commanded (note it is a command, not suggestion) to have the same kind of sacrificial, unselfish, humble love for his wife that Jesus has for him.

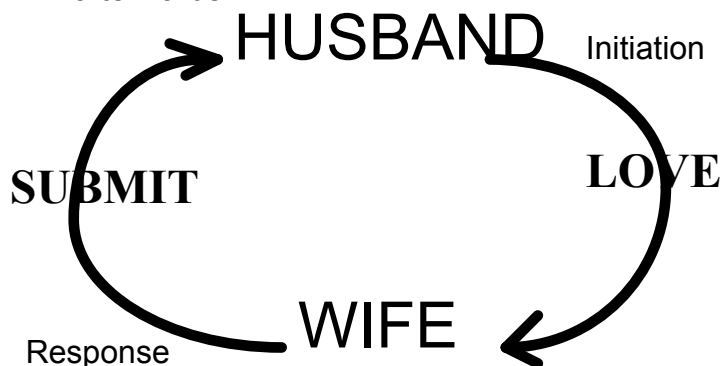
WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF WIVES

The Bible says God expects wives to be submissive to their husbands, as they submit to Jesus (Ephesians 5:22-33). The more a husband treats his wife as Jesus would, the better able she is to respond (the root meaning of the word 'submit') to him as she does to Jesus. Joseph sacrificially put Mary first, willing to take the financial loss and criticism himself rather than putting her up to public ridicule. No wonder she so willingly followed him! Abraham, however, put himself before Sarah (telling her to say she was his sister) and so she decided she was going to have to watch out for herself since Abraham wasn't going to sacrifice to take care of her -- and that's what she did from then on!

Just as a woman has an innate, built-in need for love and security, a man has a built-in need to provide and guide.

	MAN	WOMAN
NEED	PROVIDE GUIDE	SECURITY LOVE
DUTY	SACRIFICIAL LOVE	SUBMIT, RESPECT

By submitting a woman allows him to fill that. Besides, God says the man is to be the leader, not the woman (Gen 3:16; I Cor. 11:3-5; I Tim. 2:11-15). Thus the man is to initiate the love. It's his responsibility to reach out in sacrificial love first, so she can respond with submission. A man needs to provide, he needs to feel needed. Women must let their men know they need them and appreciate them. All of this is what was happening before marriage, it must continue afterwards.



Good advice for husbands and wives is to follow John Kennedy's slogan (with minor alterations): "Ask not what your mate can do for you, ask what you can do for your mate."

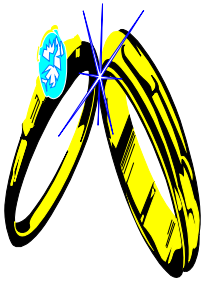
Women, don't expect too much of your husband. Men are basically little boys inside, trying to perform as they think men should perform. As Ruth Graham says, "Only Jesus can be Jesus." Love him

unconditionally. Realize men don't really understand the major differences between men and women. Help him understand your need to communicate, for romance, for time together, for his undivided attention when you talk, for long slow shopping trips, etc. Don't compare him to others. Don't assume he knows your mind (he doesn't), Don't focus on his weakness'. Don't criticize him. Your job is to build him up.

God created women to "fill up the empty spaces" in man (Genesis 2:18). Women are made to be completing men, not competing with them. A man isn't complete without the woman God has for him functioning as God wants her to. She finds her completion in helping him find his completion.

One final word about this subject. While God expects a man to sacrificially love his wife and a wife to let her man know he is needed, neither will ever totally do this as their mate needs. God will never let a woman meet all her husband's needs, or a man meet all his wife's needs. God is a jealous God and makes sure we ultimately come to Him for our needs. When your mate proves themselves to be less than perfect, go to God with your unmet needs. That's the only place to have them met.

So, is it expecting too much to have the kind of love Robertson McQuilkin had for his wife. I don't think so. This is what God wants us to expect. But when our expectations aren't met God wants us to come to Him, for He never disappoints us!



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



4. WHEN ARE PEOPLE MARRIED IN GOD'S SIGHT?

(HOW FAR, SEXUALLY, CAN PEOPLE GO BEFORE MARRIAGE?)
Song of Solomon 3:6-11

Is it all right for Christians to hug and kiss before marriage? What is all right sexually and what isn't? We know sexual intercourse is forbidden (Dt. 22:13-30; Ex. 22:16) because it creates a unique oneness in God's sight (Gen. 2:24; I Cor. 6:16). Does this in itself constitute marriage? Just what does God look for in a couple to consider them married in His sight? Just the sexual union? Must one have paperwork (wedding license)? Let's see what God says:

WHY GOD FORBIDS SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE

In her reminiscence Shulamith remembers when Solomon sent for her, to have her escorted to Jerusalem in splendor for their wedding (Song of Sol. 3:6-11). They obviously have not been living together before marriage, nor (as becomes very evident later) have they had sex for both are virgins. God's word commands that, and not just to take away our 'fun' but because it is for our benefit. God made sex to be His wedding gift to us. Just like a parachute only works from an airplane, not the roof of a house, so sex only performs its proper function within the bounds of marriage. God created sex to be a picture of our union with him (Eph. 5:22-31), the closest earthly experience to heaven. This can only follow a life-long commitment (salvation with God; marriage with mate). Sex is such a wonderful, powerful thing that it can only come AFTER a couple has grown to have a deep understanding and commitment culminating in marriage. When it enters before that it short-circuits further emotional growth and oneness in a couple. It will 'carry' a relationship for awhile, but substitutes for the rock-solid foundation of communication every relationship needs. That's why the divorce rate among those who first live together is much higher than among those who don't. As Christians God Himself lives in us, we are His temple (I Cor. 3:16-17). Thus Satan uses this powerful force to tempt to sin (Gal. 5:19). We are to live by self control, a fruit of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:12-13). Remember, God provides a way out of every temptation (I Cor. 10:13).

It's easy to know and believe that sex before marriage is forbidden, and for good reasons. But what other expressions of love, sexual or other? There's a lot of open space between shaking hands and sex -- where do we draw the line? How far did Shulamith and Solomon go before getting married?

DON'T AROUSE SEXUALLY IN ANY WAY

The Song of Solomon repeatedly says "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." (2:7; 3:5; 8:4). In other words, don't start anything you can't finish! Don't do ANYTHING to arouse the other person. Actually it's not so much what you do but how you do it. Hugging, kissing, holding hands, a caress of an arm or face, even talking -- all can be innocent ways of

showing love or done in such a way as to get a sensual response. It is the latter that is always and totally wrong! Sex is like nitro glycerin - don't play around with it in any way until marriage. In marriage it is safe, outside it seems innocent but is very dangerous!

We must remember that everything we do must be for God's glory (I Cor. 6:20) and we must be able to ask God to bless whatever we do (Col. 3:17). All we do should help us grow spiritually (Heb. 12:1). We are required to have a pure testimony to unbelievers (Col. 4:5) and believers (I Cor. 8:7-13). We are to be like Jesus, so ask yourself "Would Jesus do this?" Also, think of your future mate. What standards would you like her or him to keep? Keep the same standards yourself. How would like your brother or sister to act? Apply that yourself.

WHAT CONSTITUTES MARRIAGE IN GOD'S SIGHT?

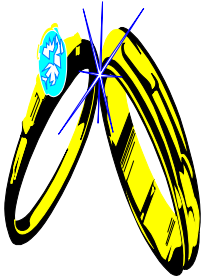
Sexual intercourse creates a special oneness in the people involved (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5-6). Paul goes so far to say that sex with a prostitute even creates this bond (I Cor. 6:15-16). But does this mean that everyone that has sex is married in God's eyes? While this is one ingredient that creates a marriage in God's sight, it is not the only one.

A public commitment is also necessary. We are to follow the governmental guidelines which our country sets down (Romans 13) and that entails legal paperwork and vows said before a legally authorized person. People cannot avoid this yet claim to be married. For the Christian it should be more than the minimum justice of the peace, it should be done with God's people, sharing the blessing with them and wanting their help and support. It must be public.

Before the "one flesh" passage in Gen. 2:24 comes a condition to be met first: "For this reason a man will **leave his father and mother and be united to his wife**, and they will become one flesh." "Leave" is a strong word, meaning to forsake or abandon. We must leave our relationship with our parents (but not our responsibility to help them and treat them with love and kindness). In my opinion the biggest cause of marriage problems comes from one or both people still needing their parent's approval and acceptance. Distance and even death do not break this pull. If basic emotional needs of love, acceptance and approval are not met by parents in childhood, children grow up to look for other ways of meeting them. Bringing them to Jesus is the only successful, healthy way. Substitutes include trying to earn approval by doing what the parent would want, going to the opposite extreme and doing the opposite of what the parent would want, looking for status and recognition in other ways (career, mate, children, sex, appearance, money, status, education, accomplishment, overwork, etc.). Admit these tendencies and needs to God, ask Him to forgive and heal from the past. Develop healthy, wholesome, positive relationships with true, open intimacy. Allow others to know the real you so you can feel this acceptance and love. Go for counseling if necessary. These things **MUST** be worked through before marriage. You can't 'give' yourself to your mate unless you 'have' yourself to give. These unmet needs are strings attaching you to the past and making you unable to truly give yourself to your mate. This **WILL** undermine any relationship!

After "leave" God says to "cleave" or "be united." This in Hebrew means to cling closely. Its used of skin to bone. This 100% total commitment is a must for a marriage to succeed, and God expects His children to make this kind of commitment to each other. **THEN** comes the "one flesh" - physically, emotionally and spiritually. Please note that this isn't an instant event, a once-and-done happening. "Shall be" is progressive. It takes **TIME** to truly be 'one flesh' in all its dimensions and implications.

Wherever you find yourself in the marriage process (single, engaged, newly married, long-time married) its never too late to get on God's path. Confess the past, ask for healing and restoration, and start applying what you now know to your present relationship. Forget the past and press ahead in Jesus (Philippians 3:13). He'll guide you each step of the way!



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

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5. WHY GOD CREATED SEX

Song of Solomon 1:1-8

With sex being so abused and misused today, its easy to forget that God Himself invented sex, created it for man and woman, and did this before there was any sin (while every one and every thing was perfectly holy). In order to get correct bearings in relationship to sex we must always keep this in mind. God created it special and holy, the perfect way to show, physically, the oneness that happens emotionally between husband and wife (Gen. 2:24). It pictures the oneness Jesus has with His bride, the church (Eph 5:22-31). No wonder Satan does all he can to confuse and undermine the correct use of this special gift! Where can we go to get the true, clear picture of the plan and purpose of sex? To the Bible, of course!

SHULAMITH ANTICIPATES HER WEDDING NIGHT WITH JOY

In the series of flashbacks which comprise the Song of Solomon, Shulamith reminisces on her marriage to Solomon. After the courtship time of getting to know each other better (2:8-3:5) Solomon brings her to Jerusalem for the wedding (3:6-11). As the wedding approaches her thoughts are on the wedding night (1:1-8), not the beautiful ceremony coming up, how she will be the center of attraction for the nation and the world, or the power and prestige that will be hers as queen. Her thoughts are on Solomon, not herself. That is one of the reasons he loves her. Men want a woman to love them for themselves, not for what they can provide.

She anticipates his kisses and caresses: *"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is more delightful than wine"* (1:2). The Hebrew word 'love' ('dodem') refers to sexual love, caresses and kisses, foreplay as we would call it. In anticipation of this, Shulamith is anxious to go *"into his chambers"* (v. 4) -- his bedroom. Even though she is darker than the Jerusalem beauties (v. 5) from working in the fields for her family (v. 6), she feels good about herself as a person and accepts her body and appearance as God made it (*"the tents of Kedar, the tent curtains of Solomon"* were dark but very beautiful). Shulamith wants to make sure that Solomon shares her interest in sex, so she doesn't have to chase after him like a prostitute (*"veiled woman"* v. 7).

Do you think less of Shulamith for her having this on her mind? Does it seem wrong for a 'good' woman to think such thoughts? Is 'holy lust' OK? Why DID God create sex anyway?

THE PURPOSE OF SEX

Propagation is one purpose of sex (Gen. 1:27-28; 9:1). That doesn't mean it is the only purpose, nor that there always has to be the chance of pregnancy. Birth control is an option for Christians. Such things as abortion or infanticide (Lev. 18:21; 20:2) are strictly out, though. Personally I don't feel right about sterilization (Dt. 23:11 Lev 21:20; 22:24) but I don't think that is a Biblical absolute. Just remember that conception is a GIFT from God (Gen. 4:1,13; 16:2; 17:19; 29:31; 30:22) and children are a blessing/reward from God (Psalm 127).

Pleasure is the other reason for sex. Unlike animals, sex for humans is "pleasure with a purpose." People continue to have sex after procreation is possible. There is a pleasure element added that animals don't have. God created sex to promote mutual love (*"one flesh"*). God told Eve He would give her a physical desire for her husband strong enough to overcome

the anticipation of labor and birth (Gen. 3:16). Isaac "caressed" his wife Rebekah (Gen 26:8) in a way that made Abimelech discover she was not his sister. The Bible often speaks of the joys of married love (Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Solomon 7:6-10).

CONDITIONS FOR SEXUAL LOVE

God gives three conditions for sexual love: **1. Not before marriage** (Dt. 22:13-23:2; 27:20f; II Sam 12:14). God clearly commands virginity until marriage and this includes emotional virginity. Not giving your heart away is as important as not giving your body away. The world's way is to have sex as long as nobody gets 'hurt,' but someone always does. Living together is accepted in many parts of society, but it is still sin.

2. Only with your mate after marriage, and this presumes the mate is of the opposite sex for homosexuality is sin (Rom. 1:26-32; I Cor. 6:9-10; Lev. 20:23). Sex with anyone other than your mate is adultery and is sin (Mt. 5:27-32; 19:9; I Cor. 5:9; 0, 18-20; Ex. 20:4; Dt. 5:18; 24:1-4; etc.).

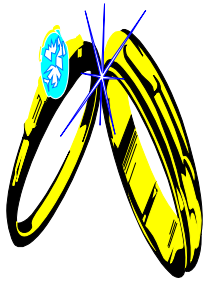
3. Put your mate's sexual needs before your own (Heb. 13:4; I Cor. 13; Eph. 5:22-31). Don't be self-centered, thinking of your own pleasure. Don't fantasize or let anything other than your love for your mate come into your mind. Sex is to GIVE pleasure, not GET pleasure, that's one reason why pornography is so damaging. If each person seeds only to give pleasure to their mate, each in turn will receive much more pleasure than if they looked out for their own needs. This can only truly happen where there is a deep foundation of love and commitment, understanding and respect, self-acceptance and maturity (as with Shulamith and Solomon). A good sex life in marriage is not optional, God commands it! (I Cor. 7:3-5). Without it our prayer and spiritual lives are hindered (I Peter 3:7).

DANGERS....

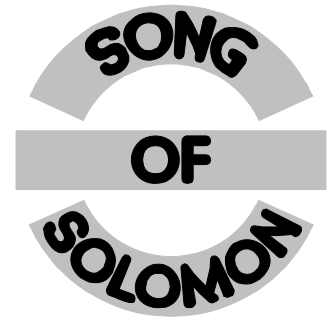
It's been my experience that Satan attacks men by popping improper thoughts into our minds any time, any place. If these thoughts are welcomed and allowed to remain they become sin (Mt. 5:27-30). Women lust isn't so much physical as emotional -- romance. Their biggest substitute is thoughts of romance, love, being needed & protected, etc. It can come in fantasy thoughts, watching soap operas, reading romance books, or gossiping about others' relationships. For men and women Satan loves to bring up past sins committed by us or against us. He undermines husband-wife relationships so their sex life is affected, too.

RECLAIMING THE GIFT

What's the solution? **1. Confess your sin** (I Jn. 1:9). This includes wrong sexual actions or thoughts, fantasies, putting your own pleasure before your mate's, or withholding pleasure from your mate. **2. Accept God's forgiveness** and forgive yourself or you will carry around false guilt. This can be hard and sometimes requires counseling (except pride keeps us from talking about it, which is why sexual sins are often hard to defeat). Remember, everyone in the Bible who ever repented of sexual sin was forgiven (David, Gomer, Solomon, Samson, Rahab, etc.). **3. Take a stand** against any thought or action that is sinful, no matter what the cost (as Vashti did in Esther). It takes courage to draw the line and stick to it (Phil. 4:8). Know your weak spots and flee before it gets too late (as Joseph did Gen 39:12; I Cor. 10:13). Be willing to do whatever is necessary to defeat the sin. **4. Become accountable to a godly person** other than your mate (they won't ask the tough questions, and you'll deceive to spare their feelings). Again, pride keeps us from sharing our sexual struggles, and that keeps us in defeat. God knows all about them anyway, at least go to Him with them. He understands.



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX



By Jerry Schmoyer

6. EMOTIONAL & SEXUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN & WOMEN

Song of Solomon 1:9-14

What are your favorite memories of your wedding day? Are they about the opulence, the attention paid you, the celebrity status you have for a day? Or are they about special moments of closeness between you and your mate, intimate words in stolen moments? These are the kind of memories Shulamith had as she thought back to her wedding day (Song of Sol. 1:9-14). She remembers sitting at the banquet table as the day wound down and people started drifting away. Solomon is speaking to her privately, commending her, flirting with her. She remembers every word he said, for things like that are very important to a woman!

SOLOMON COMPLIMENTS SHULAMITH

First he tells her she is more important to him than anything he has (even his favorite Egyptian horse, v. 9). He compliments her for how beautiful she looks in the new jewelry he gave her (v. 10) and promises her he will give her more in the near future (v. 11). It's not her greed for more and more expensive jewelry, but her need for the little expressions of love to continue after marriage. He is assuring her that he wasn't just romancing her to catch her, but that it will continue. As they talk the love just flows between them, like the fragrance of their perfume (v. 12). Shulamith responds to these words with more love for Solomon. His words of acclaim bring love out of her like her body heat brings fragrance out of the myrrh she wears around her neck (v. 13). Her love for him grows as he tells of his admiration of her (v. 14). The next stop for them is the bedroom, and that is what her memories move on to (1:15-2:7).

Why is it so important for women to be told, over and over again, that they are loved and special? Why do they need to hear it so often in so many different ways? Why don't men understand this? What ARE the basic differences between men and women?

MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT

When God created Adam he was perfect, sinless. Still, something was missing so God created woman to "fill the empty spaces" in man (Genesis 2:20). He was missing something that she provided, thus she was different than him. He had something she didn't and she had something he didn't. Together there was a completeness that was missing alone. It has nothing to do with right or wrong, superior or inferior. It is just that they are different.

In boiling down the difference to its basic quality we can say that women tend to be more rational and men tend to be more emotional. Could this be why Satan picked on Eve first and used her to get Adam to sin, and why God says men are to lead in areas of rational decision-making (II Tim. 2:11-15)?

Men are more compartmentalized, focused on one thing at a time. What happens at the store has no connection to what happens in the bedroom. Women, on the other hand, are connected, comprehensive. What happens in the morning has everything to do with what happens in the evening. Men focus on tasks, accomplishing, crossing items off a list. Women

focus more on relationships, developing intimacy and closeness. It is the interplay between these that make programs such as *Home Improvements* so popular, because they are so easy to identify with.

Men don't naturally understand women. Often they don't have a clue! During courtship it may seem a man understands his mate, but that's just because he has radar on high all the time, and because she sends such obvious signals they are hard to miss. After marriage, when she assumes he's got it down and cuts back on the signals, things fall apart. Men just don't understand. Mothers don't teach their sons, and they don't see it taught in how their fathers treated their mothers.

BASIC EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Women have some basic emotional needs. These include needing tenderness and affection to feel loved and secure. They need intimacy, contact, honesty and openness with no secrets. They need to feel secure in their relationships. Men, too, need to be loved and accepted, but for them it is shown by being the ones doing the protecting and providing. Men need to know they are important, respected, and are meeting the needs of their loved ones.

The first stage for women in developing intimacy is talking. It doesn't matter so much what is being said, just that her man cares enough to listen, to give of his time and attention. Men talk in memo's, direct & to the point, problem-solution. Women instead go into great detail of superfluous information, don't just give information for problem-solving, and when are given a solution by their husband often resent it. They just want him to listen and care. Female-male communication is light years different from male-male communication! Men must understand this or there will be bad problems in the relationship.

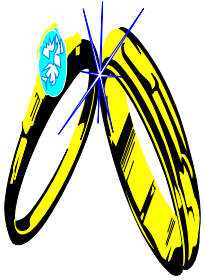
Each must understand how the other feels and communicates. If not, they will assume their mate feels and thinks just the same way they do and judge the response (or lack of it) accordingly. This guarantees hurt feelings, misunderstanding, and problems in the relationship.

HANDLING MALE-FEMALE DIFFERENCES

What's the solution? Mainly, its to communicate openly with your mate. Honestly and patiently say what needs to be said (nothing more, nothing less). Men: get in touch with your feelings, don't let things build, lovingly and gently say what you are feeling. Women: don't make him guess or read your mind. Be as open in your communication as during courtship. Each must listen to what the other is saying, listen between the lines, listen as you want to be listened to. Be patient with your mate as they, and God, are patient with you.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MATE'S SEXUAL DIFFERENCES

One final area to cover to complete this subject, and that has to do with sexual differences. Men and women are wired differently this way, too. Women need time talking and developing intimacy before lovemaking. It is literally an all-day process for them to feel close and secure enough to really respond sexually as God created them to respond. After lovemaking, it takes them time of intimacy to come down, too. Men turn on and then come down very quickly. If men don't understand this about women they won't meet her needs first. If women don't understand this about men they will think he is just being selfish and not caring about her needs. Too often the saying is true: men give love to get sex and women give sex to get love. This isn't God's way, and is far short of the richness God has for His people. Talk, think, be sensitive, learn to understand each other. It'll be well worth it in your marriage and life.



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX



By Jerry Schmoyer

7. SEX IN MARRIAGE: WHAT'S OK & WHAT ISN'T

Song of Solomon 1:15 - 2:7

The banquet is over. All the guests have departed. Solomon and Shulamith are husband and wife. Now comes the time they have both been waiting for with love and anticipation. As Shulamith continues her series of reminiscences which compose the Song of Solomon she thinks of the wedding night and what went on then. What she thinks would shock many Christians today, not were it on TV or in a library book (its tame for that) but because its in the Bible. Daily we overlook sexual comments and remarks in society that, in the church, would appall us, and not because of their content but because of sex being mentioned. It seems we've made sex a taboo subject in church and given the whole area up to Satan and the world to influence us and our children in wrong ways. As a result we seem to have come to regard anything having to do with sex as dirty and to be rejected. WE have been so influenced by worldly values and slang that sex has lost its pureness and specialness. Instead it has come to be seen as evil and sinful. Even though we know this isn't true in marriage, it still affects us deeply, making us unable to read what God has to say about it in an open way.

Picture in your minds two young people who haven't grown up in our culture, who were taught that sex was fine and special, a gift from God to show married love. Remember they have never been taught negative thoughts about sex, and it has been kept in balance their whole lives. This is the way God created it, and the way it is to be. It's the way we want our children to be, isn't it? Keep this in mind as you read on. If the things expressed in this or the next article shock or surprise you, remember it isn't the Bible that is at fault but our society and its effect on us. God created sex. He created it and gave it to man before there was any sin. He inspired the Bible, including Song of Solomon. He chose to have this book as part of His Holy Word for all time. There is nothing wrong with its words, the problem lies within us. Satan has succeeded in corruption that which God created to show the oneness we have with Him (Ephesians 5:21-33). He wanted to spoil and corrupt God's pure gift and has done so.

WEDDING NIGHT MEMORIES As Shulamith remembers her wedding night, she remembers Solomon continuing to complement and romance her (see article 6.). He complements her as they lay in bed, talking and touching each other. He is glad for her purity and innocence (Song of Solomon 1:15). She thanks him for his thoughtfulness in the luxurious bed (v. 16) and bedroom (v. 17) he has made just for her. He even used wood from her home area to make her feel at home. It seems to have been a special room, a retreat, a 'world apart' for them. That's what a bedroom should be -- not a place for unfolded wash, piled up mending, storage and clutter of all kinds. It should be a specially made room for romance and relaxation.

As the conversation continues Shulamith compares herself to the beautiful but humble rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley (v. 2:1). She is feeling like a common country girl around all the opulence and painted beauty of the big city women. Solomon reassures her that she is like a lily among thorns compared to them (they are the thorns!).

Communication during physical love is very important. It is especially important for a woman to communicate to her husband her needs and desires, as Shulamith did with Solomon. If not a man may assume his wife responds like he does, and her needs won't be met.

Meanwhile they continue to caress and touch ("embrace," v. 6, in Hebrew refers to fondling, stimulating - we'd call it foreplay). Then she says, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste" (2:3). The apple tree was a symbol of sexual love. As the tempo of their lovemaking increases she praises him for what he is doing to her. It's not that he has learned a skill and technique, for he, too, is a virgin. It's his love that motivates him to want to please her. He is thinking only of her pleasure, not his own. In fact, the Hebrew for the last part of the verse refers to oral intercourse ("fruit sweet to my taste").

Does it surprise you that the Bible refers to this, and in a context of love and approval? The Bible has more to say than we think about these things, but they are usually translated in such a way as to be so general that we often miss the specific sexual reference.

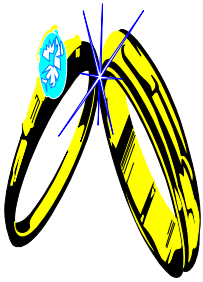
JUST WHAT IS OK IN MARRIAGE? It certainly seems this has God's approval. That brings up the question: what, if anything, is forbidden sexually to married people? Leviticus 20:10-21 gives some limits: adultery (v. 10; Gal 5:19), incest (11-12), homosexuality/lesbianism (13; Rom 1:26-32), bestiality (14-16), exhibitionism (17), with close relatives (19-21), and during menstruation (18). This later was because anything having to do with childbirth was a reminder of the fall and entrance of sin, thus the law was established to remind the Jews of the difference sin makes. We are no longer under the law.

If these are forbidden, does that mean anything else is all right? Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." This could also be translated "the marriage bed is pure," meaning everything in marriage is all right. The Bible does say that "everything is permissible" (I Cor. 6:12), but this isn't a license to indulge in selfish sex. God makes it very clear (I Cor. 7:1-6) that sex in marriage is giving, not getting. One mate is not to withhold their body from their mate, for it belongs to their mate and not themselves, and the only excuse to deny a mate sex is that one is fasting and praying (but even so only for a short time).

The Bible sets down some principles for each couple to decide what is acceptable for them. First, unselfish love must be the motive (I Cor. 13:4-7). When sex is more important than love, it is lust! Anything that both people do not see as an expression of love is out! Second, both must agree (Phil 2:1-4). Just because Solomon & Shulamith agreed to something doesn't mean you have to, and it certainly is nothing to use to force a mate into something they feel uncomfortable with. The key element is mutual submission to each other (Eph 5:21).

In a day and age like ours, it is important for each person to pray for God to remove wrong ideas and impressions created by experiences or exposures in the past and to renew their minds (Rom. 12:1-2). Pray together before beginning any expression of physical love.

Shulamith concludes this part of her reminiscence remembering how safe and secure she felt in her sexual relationship with Solomon (Song of Sol 2:4). In terms familiar to them then she remembers being completely overcome with sexual desire for Solomon and wanting him to satisfy her without delay (v. 5). She even remembers step by step all that happened (v. 6). The section concludes with an application by the chorus and Shulamith to remember to save every part of this wonderful gift of sexual love for marriage (v. 7). This is an especially important reminder for those in this day and age, and the key to keeping everything pure and innocent for marriage. Ask God to restore that to you, reject the world's filth, enjoy God's gift!



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



8. SEXUAL FULFILLMENT IN MARRIAGE

Song of Solomon 4:1 - 5:1

In the last article we looked at Shulamith's recollections of her wedding night. We saw that sex is a beautiful wedding gift from God to seal the love of a husband and wife, but that the world today has so misused and abused it that it is sometimes hard to see it in that light. That's not how it was for Solomon and Shulamith. She continues her reminiscence of her wedding night in Song of Solomon 4:1 - 5:1.

SOLOMON TAKES THE LEAD As God intended, Solomon takes the lead in this as well as other areas of married life. He complements her hair (v 1) and eyes (v 1), then her teeth (v 2), lips and mouth (v 3) and temples (v 3). Working his way down he marvels over her stately neck (v 4) and breasts (v 5) and then down to her "mountain of myrrh and hill of incense" (v 6). He sums her all up by telling her she is beautiful and flawless (v 7). She feels totally loved and accepted, so she can respond in an uninhibited manner. There are no fat jokes, no critical comments, no uncomplimentary remarks about her body. That would ruin it for her, as it would for all women.

The conversation takes an abrupt change here, though, for Solomon starts talking to her about taking a trip back to her home (v 8). Why talk about this now? Put yourself in her shoes. In the last 48 hours she's gone from a bare-foot country girl to queen of one of the greatest countries in the world. She's culture shocked, drained, homesick and feeling out of place. As a result she's distracted mentally from their lovemaking. Solomon could have pushed on, pretending he didn't notice. She would have felt guilty to 'deny' him and would have gone along as best she could. But that's not the way it should be. When each one puts their mate first that means being sensitive to the other's needs, not your own. Solomon's talking about the honeymoon for awhile relax her and make her feel even closer to him.

It seems she starts sending signals to him with her eyes to continue their lovemaking (v 9) and he reassures her of his love (v 9). Then he complements her on her lovemaking ("love" here is the Hebrew word for "caresses" saying they are the greatest thing he's ever experienced. He encourages her in her kissing (v 11). Her knows she is a virgin (v 12) and that makes it all even more special for him.

This is in symbolic/poetic language, but that's the nicest way to refer to sexual things. Street slang is too crude and lacking in love. Medical terms are cold and impersonal. A husband and wife often develop their own language to talk about these things, and it is usually symbolic. The locked garden and spring enclosed refer to the same thing: a special, refreshing place reserved only for the owner to enjoy. Proverbs 5:15-23 clearly shows this meaning.

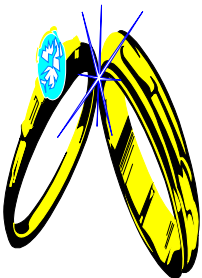
Solomon continues in this vein, focusing on her sexual organs and their fragrance (v 13-14). Her fluids show him she is as excited as he is (v 15). Shulamith responds by encouraging Solomon to fully enjoy her sexually (v 16) and he does so (v 5:1a).

Of great interest is the final comment of 5:1 "Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers." God Himself, the only spectator to this, is giving His full approval. He is pleased when

we enjoy this gift He created for us. Just like we enjoy watching our children enjoy a special present we give them, so God enjoys seeing us like His gift of sex.

HOW TO HAVE SEXUAL FULFILLMENT IN MARRIAGE Now that we are done with the wedding night accounts, let's gleam from them several principles of how to have sexual fulfillment in marriage.

1. **DEVELOP A CLOSE, STRONG FRIENDSHIP** during courtship and afterwards. Learn to communicate, to know each other thoroughly and completely. Keep your emotional virginity until you know for sure whom God wants you to marry, then give your heart away completely.
2. **STAY A VIRGIN UNTIL MARRIAGE.** That means don't get sexually involved in ANY way. Don't do anything you wouldn't want your future mate to do, or anything Jesus wouldn't do!
3. **MAKE THE FOCUS OF YOUR WEDDING THE WEDDING CEREMONY AND NIGHT,** not the 'show' you are putting on for the guests. They are coming for the privilege of watching the ceremony, not to be fed and entertained. Put your time and energy into planning the ceremony and wedding night (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31). Make it a special memory.
4. **KEEP YOUR BEDROOM NEAT, PLEASING AND ROMANTIC.** Don't let it become a bed in a store/junk/work room. Decorate and keep it as a special retreat from the busy world around you, the nicest and most welcoming room in the house.
5. **START SEX WITH LOTS OF HEART-TO-HEART TALKING.** Share, complement each other, speak of your love. Go slow until both are relaxed and ready emotionally, then start things physically. Often the physical comes first and the emotions have to rush to try and catch up. Sex at bedtime starts when you get up in the morning by talking, listening and touching.
6. **IT TAKES MORE TIME FOR A WOMAN TO GET READY PHYSICALLY THAN A MAN.** Take your time, talk about little things going on in her life, listen, laugh, let the conversation take any turn it wishes. Men can't hurry for their own selfish fulfillment, but must put his wife's pleasure first. Take your time and learn to enjoy each step, not just the end.
7. **ANYTHING BETWEEN A HUSBAND AND WIFE IS OK IF IT'S DONE IN LOVE** and is pleasurable to both. God doesn't set off anything as wrong in itself. It is up to each to decide what is mutually respectful and pleasurable to both.
8. **COMMUNICATE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING SEXUALLY.** By words, actions, etc. learn to communicate what you like, don't like, and so forth. Don't be afraid to communicate. That includes communicating with God, too.
9. **EMBARRASSMENT, FEAR, INHIBITION AND GUILT DESTROY GOOD SEX.** Do everything possible to help your mate remove those things. Remember, your body belongs to her and hers to you (I Cor. 7:3-6). Don't withhold your body from your mate. Don't use it to manipulate, punish or reward your mate. Don't say or do anything that in any way is critical of them.
10. **REMEMBER GOD IS WATCHING AND APPROVING.** There is no guilt if He is watching. He created sex, and that was before sin entered the world. It is pleasing in God's sight. Pray before (and even after) to ask for God's blessing, help, patience, wisdom, clean mind, etc.



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



9. ROMANCE, REJECTION, REALITY & RETRIBUTION IN MARRIAGE

Song of Solomon 5:2-8

Until recently the typical story we read or watched would end up with the man and woman getting married and riding off into the sunset to “live happily ever after.” It got so we actually believed that was what would happen when we got married. Then reality struck! At first we thought it was just us, that everyone else lived happily ever after (except our parents, but we always knew our marriage would be better than theirs anyway). Upon closer examination we realized that we weren’t alone, that no one was “living happily ever after.” Friend after friends announced their divorce. What was happening? What went wrong? More importantly, what could be done? What was the magic secret to being able to live happily ever after?

Some claimed to have the answer so we read their books or went to their seminars. No change, except we felt guilty that their simple solution didn’t work for us. Sermons made it sound so simple: the man leads, the woman submits, and they live happily ever after. The church’s approach often was to hide marriage problems, refer to a secular counselor, or to subtly discourage those with marriage problems from being visible in church. The great cover-up didn’t work, either. Now what? Where to turn? Since God created mankind and marriage, perhaps He has something to say about it. So we turn to the Bible and Bingo!

SOLOMON & SHULAMITH: AFTER THE WEDDING The wedding night was pure utopia and all indications were that it was all improvement from there. They were married and could spend nights as well as days together, they could legally live together and spend all their time with each other. It was what they looked forward to their whole lives! However it didn’t turn out that way. Reality hit them (it’s nothing new today).

Shulamith was homesick, shell-shocked by culture change, and without friends or duties other than Solomon. He, as she knew before getting married, was gone on business a lot. Naturally she missed him, but instead of realizing she had counted the cost and felt not having him as much as she wanted was better than not having him at all she started feeling sorry for herself and taking his being gone as personal rejection, as if he was purposely avoiding her. An introvert with time on their hands can do all kinds of dangerous things in their minds!

To make things worse, when Solomon did get home late at night after being gone all day he still wanted to have sex, but her self pity and feelings of rejection made her to want to avoid any kind of intimacy with him. This hurting others when we feel they have hurt us is sin. It goes totally against the Golden Rule and all the Bible says about putting others first. Shulamith knew that and felt guilty about her rejection responses but wasn’t able to resolve her conflict by giving up her self-pity (the only cure to her dilemma).

THE DREAM: It seems this unresolved conflict pushed itself to the forefront when she slept and, in the form of a dream, caused her to face her problem. Song of Solomon 5:2-8 records the dream. It was a dream, but so real she wasn’t at first sure (v. 2). Solomon comes to their bedroom late at night (early morning? - dew is forming). For safety purposes the door is locked from the inside and he wants to come in to be close to her. She hears him knock but pretends to be asleep (other ways of avoiding intimacy could have included having a headache, staying

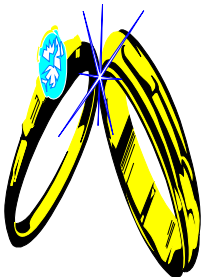
up together too late, or picking/allowing an argument before going to bed). I Corinthians 7:35 clearly says the only reason to deny your mate sex is because both of you have agreed to fast and pray that day, but to not even do this long or often.

Of course Shulamith justifies her refusal to let him in (v. 3). She's have to get up and put a robe on (modesty from not feeling close to Solomon) and then he feet would get dirty from the floor and she's have to clean them before getting back into her clean bed. Solomon, the way he'd been treating her, just wasn't worth the trouble!

Solomon tries to reach through and open the door himself (v. 3), but Shulamith had moved the latch-string to the side so he couldn't reach it or the bar holding the door closed. In her anger/hurt she made sure he couldn't get in. When she realizes how badly he wants to come in she starts to relent and respond, so she gets up to open for him. By that time however he had given up and only his memory remained (v. 5). By now its totally reversed. Solomon is gone and Shulamith is seeking for him (v. 6). Her wounded pride is replaced by her love, but too late. In her dream she ran looking for him (v. 7) and her guilty conscience punished her severely (watchmen beating her - figuratively not literally). She awakens and realizes what the dream was showing her and is anxious for Solomon to come to her, no matter what time the night, for she has focused on him and her love for him, not on herself and her assumed rejection (v. 8).

REJECTION IN MARRIAGE Marriage is powerful. There is no one who can make you any happier than your mate, nor is there anyone who can hurt you more (or whom you can hurt more) than your mate. Rejection is the most painful way of hurting another. It doesn't just apply to the woman who subtly withholds sex, it just as strongly applies to the man who withholds love. For a man to withhold what his wife needs (love, attention, sensitivity, touches, romance, communication, time together, etc.) and then criticize her for withholding sex is totally wrong. After all, it is up to the man to set the mood, to bring a loving response from his wife (see article 3). A man withholding love is just as bad as a woman withholding sex. Women withhold sex much quicker than love. For men it is the opposite. There is an old saying that a man gives love to get sex and a woman gives sex to get love. Both are wrong!

WHAT THE SOLUTION? Remember, any kind of intimacy in marriage takes **time**. When one or both are busy it is much harder for the intimacy to continue, much less grow. Intimacy also takes **timing**. Each mate must be sensitive to the other's needs and patterns of the other. The goal is to think only of a mate's needs and do everything possible to meet them. When we forget our own needs and focus only on the other's needs we find our needs are met much better than if we tried meeting them ourselves! Hurting another to punish them for perceived hurts to us is totally wrong. Another ingredient for intimacy is **talking**. That's important to women, for it is the first stage of connecting and without that deeper stages of closeness don't come. Its interesting the King James translated our word "intercourse" to refer to communication. **Trust** also must be present for intimacy to develop. That is a basic need in any relationship. Finally, **time away** is important: weekly dates and annual vacations without the children are a real MUST for intimacy to grow. Its as simple (and as hard) as that!



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



10. HAVING A 'SUCCESSFUL' MARRIAGE

Song of Solomon 5:9 - 6:3

It seems nothing brings out a person's selfishness and self-centered in life more than having to share life with another person. We assume marriage will solve all our problems when in reality it just adds another layer of problems to be worked through. Like children, we do fine when we get what we want when we want it, but try putting our needs on hold so we can put someone else first, and sinful attitudes we didn't realize we had raise their ugly heads. God uses marriage to make us more like Jesus by first showing us how little like Jesus we really are!

SHULAMITH'S SELF-CENTEREDNESS Shulamith wasn't doing too well accepting Solomon gone working so many hours (see previous article in this series, No. 9). After being convicted in a dream of purposely hurting him (rejection) because she allowed herself to think he was purposefully hurting her (rejection), she awakes to feel guilt and remorse about how she has been treating him. What made the difference? It was how she saw her husband. Would she focus and dwell on his weakness' and imperfections, on his failings and shortcomings and take them as personal rejection? Or would she instead keep foremost in her mind the fact that he loved her and wouldn't really reject or hurt her, remembering why she married him in the first place? Like most things in life, our mental attitude determines our emotions and actions.

When I counsel people who are having marriage problems, especially very severe ones, I ask them two questions: 1) Do you love your mate? and 2) What attracted you to your mate in the first place? By focusing on this and remembering the good things, the problems can be put in better perspective. By renewing the friendship and enjoying each other as they are (without all the later expectations we add) a relationship can have a foundation to start working through problems and pain that have damaged it. This is what Shulamith is doing.

REMEMBERING THE GOOD The current passage, Song of Solomon 5:9-6:3, starts with the chorus posing a question (v. 9) to get Shulamith thinking about Solomon's good points: Why do you love him? What are his good points? Shulamith pictures Solomon in her mind, thinking of his appearance (v. 10-16). The visual image, however, stands for the total person, inside and out.

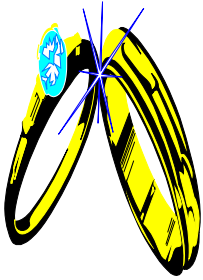
To Shulamith, Solomon is handsome and rugged (v. 10), with excellent hair ('gold' v. 11) that is wavy and black (v. 11). His eyes are like doves bathing in milk (v. 12), His cheeks and lips are associated with the spices he wore (v. 13). His arms are strong and well-formed (v. 14) and his entire body is beautiful and smooth, flat and firm (v. 14). His legs are also strong and well-formed, very masculine to her (v. 15). The words from his mouth are tender and loving. He isn't just strong, but also gentle. A man must be both strong (to be the head of the wife) and tender (to make the wife feel loved and secure). A man must be strong enough to be gentle. Strength alone is cold, gentleness alone is weak. both are necessary. God is both strong (sovereign) and tender (loving) (Romans 8:28-39) and in that combination alone we find all we desire, the balance that meets every need.

The chorus has another question (6:1), to take things to the next step. Now that she sees him back in proper perspective, they ask why he isn't with her. Is it because he doesn't care and is rejecting her? Or is it because he would love to be with her but has other things that must be done at the moment, then he will spend all the time with her he can? Shulamith realizes he is busy with affairs of state, something he warned her about before they were married (1:7; 2:16). She can't pity herself, she knew the cost and was willing to pay it to be married to him. She can't change her mind or the circumstances now. She knows you can't marry someone then expect to change them! She knows he loves her (v. 3) and, while she still misses him greatly, she doesn't take her pain out in anger on Solomon. If she doesn't make this mental adjustment she will keep hurting him back and long term damage will be done to the relationship and their intimacy with each other.

LET YOUR MIND EXPLAIN REALITY TO YOUR EMOTIONS When you think about the change in her, it becomes obvious that now she is rationally considering all the facts while before she was reacting emotionally. She is letting her mind explain reality to her emotions, something especially important for a woman since the time of Eve when Satan used her emotions to derail and mislead her (I Timothy 2:11-15). That is why men are to be the leaders. Men, too, get their emotions involved, especially in conflict with their wives.

PAST HURTS MAGNIFY PRESENT PROBLEMS Remember Shulamith's background? She spent years working in the orchards with her brothers (becoming dark tanned) who seemed to be responsible for her upbringing (1:5-6). Was her father also busy and gone a lot when she needed him as a little girl? Or was he gone because he had already died? Were her brothers, who took the place of her father, working so long and hard they weren't available when she needed them? Could these past hurts of seeming rejection make Solomon's being gone all the worse? Is this a sensitive area that she over-reacts to? I'm sure it is. We all have them, don't we. They make things much worse, and turn our minds off and emotions on without us even realizing it is happening. We must all be aware of unresolved hurts from the past which make us super-sensitive to anything that seems like the same hurt from our mate. We must know what to watch out for in our own life as well as our mate's life. For women it is usually a hurt (rejection, criticism, etc.) from their father. When the husband does something similar they quickly over-react, usually without even realizing they are doing so. For men it is often their pride being hit, their wife treating them like their mother did, stepping on a weak and sensitive ego. The solution is to keep our mind in control of our emotions, to remember our mate loves us and isn't purposely rejecting or hurting us, and to not take out past hurts on them.

ON BEING A SERVANT These wrong attitudes in marriage are made much worse when we focus on what we think we deserve, where our mate fails to meet our needs, and when our self-centeredness dominates. Jesus says we are to be servants of each other (Matthew 20:26-28), loving our mate unconditionally (I Corinthians 13). "Ask not what your mate can do for you, but what you can do for your mate." Treat your mate as you want your mate to treat you (the Golden Rule applies to marriage, too). Make meeting your mate's needs your goal and forget your own needs. God will take care of them if you do, usually through you mate. Then the relationship will grow and mature into what God wants it to be and you won't be hurting each other but helping each other. Learn from Shulamith. Watch your self-centeredness!



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



11. SOLVING MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

Song of Solomon 6:4-10

One evening a wife was reading her newspaper: "It says here that in some parts of India a man doesn't know his wife until after the marriage." The husband replied: "Why do they single out India?" How many married people can say they REALLY knew their mate before marriage? If love is blind, marriage can be a real eye-opener!

SETTING THE STAGE. We are up to the point in the chronological development of Song of Solomon where Shulamith is angry at Solomon for being gone so much in his kingly business. She took it as personal rejection and handled her hurt by hurting him back. This makes her feel guilty and she starts realizing what she is doing. She remembers the good about him instead of focusing on his weakness'. She dwells on why she married him. Her mind explains reality to her emotions. She knew he'd be gone a lot and agreed to marry him anyway. She remembers her commitment to love him unconditionally (I Cor. 13) and realizes he doesn't love her less but is still devoted and committed to her, serving her in any way she can (Mt 20:26-28).

SOLOMON'S RESPONSE. Shulamith's next memory in this series of reminiscences is of when Solomon returns after she has been rejecting him. He doesn't make her apologize. He doesn't pile on guilt. He doesn't manipulate her. He doesn't 'forgive' in a self-righteous, wounded, withdrawn way. Instead he does what every husband should do: he reaches out in love! He praises and reassures her of his love no matter what. Solomon isn't the perfect husband, but he certainly did the right thing this time!

He starts off praising her for her beauty (v. 4). Tirzah and Jerusalem were among the most beautiful cities of their day, and he says she is as beautiful as they. He also tells her she is as awesome, as majestic as his army in full parade (v. 4). In fact, he says she is too much for him to look at, that one penetrating glance from her eyes makes his heart melt (v. 5a). Next he compliments her hair, teeth and temples (v. 5b-7). What is interesting about this is that he uses the same words he used on their wedding night (5:1 - 5:1). This isn't because he stumbled on something that works and is sticking with it, but because he wants her to know he still loves her the same now as he did then! In fact, he loves her more! She is the greatest woman he has ever met (v. 8-10).

Thus before she can even apologize for her rejection of him, he reassures her of his total and unconditional love. What a magnificent way to keep a relationship growing!

ALL MARRIAGES STRUGGLE. There is no such thing as a perfect marriage. God uses marriage to stretch us. Any time you take two selfish, self-centered individuals (a husband and a wife) and put them in a situation where they have to sacrifice and put someone else first, rough edges are bound to crop up. God allows that to rub them smooth. In addition, opposites attract in marriage, and that makes the mix all the more interesting! Adam and Eve certainly were stretched with Cain. Abraham and Sarah had their times (Gen 16; 21), as did Isaac and

Rebecca (Gen 27) and Jacob and Rachel (Gen 30, 31). Moses and Zipporah separated and never could work it out (Ex 4). David and Michal's marriage fell apart, too (II Sam 6) and Hosea had all he could handle with Gomer (Hosea).



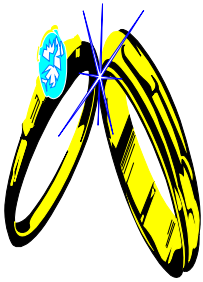
LESS THAN TOTAL HONESTY often starts marriages off wrong. We show our mate our strengths and put our best foot forward. We are sacrificial and put the other first before marriage. That doesn't last after marriage. One or two fights, seeing the sinful side of the other (and knowing they have seen our sinful side) can make it hard to be as open and trusting as before. The man starts (unconsciously at first) seeing his wife like his mother (in good as well as bad ways) and resents it for it makes him feel like a little boy. The wife has a hard time totally trusting a man because of the example of her own father and poor experiences she's had with men in the past. Thus the honeymoon ends and reality sets in, as with Shulamith & Solomon.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS that aren't adjusted to reality can throw us into a tailspin. At first husband and wife are lovers, romantic, idealize each other, and assume it will always be that way. Then unexpected conflict comes, either open or just below the surface. Children, finances, use of time, responsibility to in-laws, etc. make husband and wife seem more like antagonists than lovers. Romance is replaced by resentment. The pendulum has gone full to the opposite extreme. Often this causes couples to separate: physically or at least emotionally. Divorce or physical separation occur. If they stay together, a wall builds and the intense, loving, growing relationship dies. It is replaced by a functioning, team-work, brother-and-sister arrangement. A truce is signed and the fighting stops, individual responsibilities and freedoms are negotiated, and two separate individuals live and function in one household. But they are no longer one.

The better alternative is to grow through this second stage, learn from it, and keep the commitment and love new and strong. Resolve the conflicts, feed the love, stay open and vulnerable. No one can make us happier, or more miserable, than our mate. Work on the 'making happier' part.

RENEWED COMMITMENT (daily, sometimes hourly) is necessary in marriage. Genesis 2:24 says: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." LEAVE (Gen. 2:24) anything that in any way meets needs that your mate should be meeting (love, attention, security, acceptance). CLEAVE (the Hebrew word means "as skin to bone") means to turn to your mate only to have those needs met. ONE FLESH is the ultimate goal: physical, spiritual and emotional oneness. SHALL BE means this is a process, not something attained quickly or easily.

Marriage takes a commitment as strong as our commitment to Jesus. In fact, by committing to Jesus we are committing to our marriage. Put the other first. Follow Solomon's example of sacrificially loving and serving your mate (Mt 20:26-28). Remember, the marriages which are the most successful and happiest are those in which each of the partners believes that he or she got the best of it! Are you doing all you can to make sure your mate thinks they got the best of it? Solomon did, so can you!



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX

By Jerry Schmoyer



12. MAKING A MARRIAGE GROW

Song of Solomon 6:11-13a

Marriage is serious business. It is also difficult business. God takes two self-centered people and tells them to sacrifice, serve and put the other first. He tells them to treat each other like He treats them, saying their union is a picture of His union with them. At first a marriage goes great: each partner is giving, forgiving, sacrificial and loving. Conflict is avoided and strengths are focused on. But something always changes, and two people who were perfect for each other and totally in love find themselves seeing only the other person's faults and weakness.' Impatience, what's-in-it-for-me, and resentment replace the perfect love. At this point many marriages end. Some divorce, others stay living under the same roof. Either way, the intensity and intimate dynamics that make a marriage a marriage end. No one wants that. No one believes that will happen to their marriage, but it does. Often we miss the warning signs and don't realize how bad things are until much damage has been done.

WARNING SIGNS There are some warning signs that can help reverse the process soon enough to keep the pain to a minimum. One warning sign is that you find yourself looking for alternatives to being with your spouse. Instead of trying to spend every possible minute together, you find legitimate demands on your time -- work, church, community, children, extended family, etc. Other relationships are meeting needs that your marriage used to meet.

Another warning sign is that you feel increasingly irritated at your mate's behavior. Little things that you overlooked before not get magnified out of proportion. Also, you don't ask your spouse to do things for you as much as you used to. Mutual dependency is replaced by independence, you don't want to be dependent on them. Walls go up and intimacy goes down. As a result you stop sharing details of your life like you used to. Your sexual interest wanes. You argue before going to bed, go to bed before (or after) your mate, etc. to avoid intimacy.

The most dangerous sign is when another person of the opposite sex catches your notice. The spark that used to be lit only by your mate now is lit by another. You think of them more than you should, and are too aware of their presence when around you.

What can be done to keep a marriage growing? Remember your commitment to your mate. Remember what God expects of you -- be a servant and meet their needs, forgetting about your own. Put your mate first. This is what Shulamith did with Solomon.

MARRIAGE ONENESS Shulamith had problems after marriage adjusting to Solomon's being gone so much and so long. Although she counted the cost and knew to expect it, she starts taking it personally and feeling personal rejection. She handled this hurt by hurting Solomon back and rejecting him. Then she felt guilty and regretted it. Solomon reassured her of his unconditional love, even before she could apologize. They were restored. After this Shulamith thinks back on what happened a little later. She went to her garden (6:11). It was spring. She remembered her home in spring and the longing to return became greater and greater in her. She heard some chariots going by outside the garden wall (12) and imagines being in one heading back home. She still loves Solomon and doesn't want to leave him, but she feels pulled to what now seems like a more peaceful, serene time in her life. She feels the need to get away and get home for a bit. What should she do? How should she handle these thoughts and desires? The chorus quickly supplies the answer (13) calling her back to the present and away

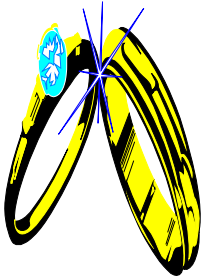
from any fantasy and mental escape. They call her “Shulammite,” from whence we get her name. While this is the title of a person from a place called Shulamith, it is also the feminine form of Solomon. She is being reminded that she is Solomon’s counterpart, and they are one. She remembers her commitment to count the cost and stay no matter what. She must stop indulging in selfish and self-pitying thoughts. That doesn’t mean there isn’t a time or place to think of our legitimate needs and pray about how best to have them met, but it does mean that our mate’s needs come before our own.

Its time for her to have a good talk with Solomon so together they can come up with some answers. Is she expecting too much of Solomon wanting him around more? Is he expecting too much of her by assuming she gets enough of him? Are their expectations of themselves and each other realistic or not? Is her loneliness legitimate? What should be done about it? These things need to be addressed and worked on together. Real communication must take place. This means no fighting, but it also means not using any of a number of devices we resort to when we want to ‘win’

DANGEROUS FIGHTING STYLES These include things like apologizing prematurely just to end things (this shuts down communication), refusing to take the disagreement seriously or avoiding any kind of confrontation. Using intimate knowledge of the partner to ‘hit below the belt’ (cheap character attacks) can ‘win’ an argument but not solve the root problem. Its easy to hurt someone you know so well and who trusts you so much. No one can hurt your mate easier or deeper than you, and vice versa. Using unrelated issues to help you win also brings no good conclusion (“what bout the time when you...”). When you fight to win everyone loses. The opponent is the problem, and husband and wife together must identify and then attack the problem, not each other! Your mate is your best help in overcoming your common enemy.

Other dangerous fighting styles, things that interfere with real communication that helps a marriage grow, include picking to undermine the person (attacking them indirectly by criticizing a favorite idea, activity, value or object of theirs). Character analysis is also wrong when its done to win (“you’re really angry because and you’re just taking it out on me!”). Withholding affection, approval, recognition, privileges, love or sex is also dirty fighting. Undermining the person by arousing their insecurities is also no way to come to a true solution. This includes things like hinting about the marriage ending, leaving, dying, harm to the children, etc.). Getting outsiders involved to take your side in wrong (parent, child, friend, pastor, coworker, etc.). Watch for these and other things, they just make things worse.

MAKING YOUR MARRIAGE GROW How, then, can we help our marriages grow? By heeding the warning signs and making sure we communicate (and avoid dangerous fighting styles)... Also by following some directions given in Ephesians 5:15-21. Lean on God’s wisdom (v. 15). Follow God’s wisdom, not the world’s, in all areas, especially danger areas of money, sex, children, relatives, use of spare time, and who is responsible for what chores. Then use your time correctly (v. 16). Marriage has to be the number one priority. Do things together, like shop, clean, etc. Read the Bible and pray together. Make sacrifices for each other regularly and consistently. Develop common interests. Blend your recreation programs. Have regular time together: a date-night each week and a few days away alone together each year. This is a must, especially when children are young. Then, too, be understanding and sensitive (v. 17). Men: listen to your wife. Women: watch how you talk (no gossip, criticism, nagging, mothering). finally, submit to God and mate (v. 19-21). Put your mate first.



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX



By Jerry Schmoyer

13. OVERCOMING INHIBITIONS

Song of Solomon 6:13b - 8:4

Everyone likes a happy ending. We especially like happy endings to love stories. Song of Solomon is a love story about Solomon and Shulamith. While there were problems to work through after marriage, it has a happy ending. Shulamith felt guilty for rejecting Solomon because he wasn't giving her enough time. He loved her unconditionally and reassured her of his love no matter what. She renewed her commitment to Solomon. In her reminiscences Shulamith thinks of how their relationship grew even closer following that. As she became more and more secure in his love and acceptance, her own inhibitions melted away. In fact, she fondly remembers a time she danced for him, and the special memory it made.

SHULAMITH DANCES Evidently Shulamith was being coy. Solomon loved watching her dance (6:13). The dance was one of love, beauty and sensuality. She is doing the dance to arouse and please Solomon, and it does both of them quite well! She knows her body does not belong to her alone, but to Solomon, too. She is not withholding it from him (1 Cor 7:4).

SOLOMON ADMIRES Starting at her feet and working his way upward, Solomon complements her on her body. It seems all she had on was sandals (7:1), for practical reasons (floor cold or dirty). He admires her graceful legs and the sway of her hips (Hebrew says literally: "vibration of thighs"). He moves up (7:2) to her "navel," which is translated "garden" everywhere else (4:12,15,16,16;5:1;6:2). It was her genitals he was referring to. "Rounded goblet" refers to the same. This area never lacks "blended wine" (7:2). Wine was a symbol of sexual pleasure, and she brought that to him. Blended wine refers to their mutual pleasure mixed together.

Next his gaze and comments move up to her waist (7:2b) with its pale (not sunburnt) and smooth skin. It is the color of wheat. Her breasts draw his complements, too (7:3), like "twins of a gazelle" (also in 4:5). This refers to their youthful freshness, lightness and grace, perfect match and the joy and gaiety they produce. Gazelle was a delicacy to eat. As he continues his upper progress he refers to her smooth neck, soft & beautiful eyes, and stately nose (7:4). Solomon concludes by praising her head and hair, saying it all has a royal beauty and queenly bearing about it (7:5).

"Beauty is in the sight of the beholder." Solomon summarizes by telling her how beautiful and pleasing she is (7:6). Think about it for a minute, though. Was she really beautiful or did she just seem that way to Solomon? Did others then think she was beautiful? If we had seen her would we have thought she was beautiful? Does it really matter if anyone else thought she was beautiful, or if she really was, as long as she was beautiful to Solomon? We say "love is blind," as if that explains it. I think the opposite isn't true. Love doesn't blind us to our mate's shortcomings, what it does is really open our eyes to their many other, more important assets. Love isn't blind, it just focuses on what is REALLY important, and minor physical imperfections aren't important when you love someone! When a man loves a woman he sees her in totality,

the inner beauty as well as the outer, and therein lies the real beauty. That's how Solomon saw Shulamith. That's how husbands see wives today.

The difference, though, is that many wives, unlike Shulamith, have a hard time accepting the fact that their mate thinks they are beautiful. They don't believe it is true, and don't feel their men can think it is true. They fear rejection, being mocked, or falling short. Girls today grow up in constant competition with the 'perfect female' in ads, TV and even pornography. All this contributes to their being inhibited physically, while men usually have far fewer inhibitions.

It must be noted, though, that women are not inhibited emotionally, while men often are. Perhaps if men think about why they are emotionally inhibited they can better understand their wife's physical inhibitions, and learn lessons about how to help her over it.

Back to Solomon and Shulamith. Watching her dance makes Solomon desire her sexually. He wants to touch and caress (7:7) and then totally enjoy her sexual pleasures (7:8). (Palm trees were artificially fertilized by climbing a female tree with a male flower and tying it there. This is Solomon's way of expressing his desire for Shulamith.) He even sees her mouth as bringing sensual pleasure (7:9a).

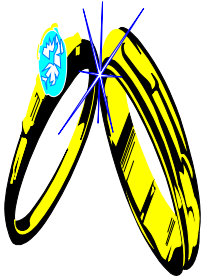
SHULAMITH SUGGESTS All this attention from Solomon is just the result Shulamith wanted to get from Solomon. She wants to grant his sexual desires (79b). She is thrilled that he desires her (7:10) just as she desires him (Gen 3:16).

Later, lying together and talking, she fantasizes about spending the night with him back in her home area (7:11). During their courtship they spent much time in the vineyards, talking and getting to know each other. Nothing sexual happened then, but now she'd like to go on their promised honeymoon back home and have sex in those same vineyards (7:12), and even in her childhood home (8:2). She sees that as very sexually stimulating ("mandrakes," 7:13, were aphrodisiacs in the ancient world). She promises "both new and old" sexual experiences (7:13). She's not referring to anything kinky or extreme, but nice, creative love-making.

Shulamith feels so close to Solomon she wishes she could hug or kiss him any time she wants, even in public. That was only allowed by brothers and sisters, though (8:1). She concludes with remembering their plans for a spring honeymoon back in her home area (8:2). As her memory fades she thinks of lying with her left arm around her and his right arm embracing (caressing) her (8:3).

CHORUS CONCLUDES The concluding statement is very revealing. The chorus says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires" (8:4). This pleasant time of sex now and thinking of their time back in her home area, where they never experienced sex, makes them glad they waited! They agree that sex is so much better after marriage because they didn't have any sex (or do anything more than a brother and sister would do) before marriage. They have no guilt, no memories of sex with others, no wondering about their mate's physical involvements with others before marriage. Their emotional and physical virginity until marriage is something they do not regret, but now see more clearly as being very important.

Sexual enjoyment in marriage is God-ordained and God-blessed. Inhibition (physical or emotional) cuts back on that enjoyment. Initiating sex in creative ways helps overcome those inhibitions and bring the original joy and meaning back to sex. It works that way today, too.



LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX



By Jerry Schmoyer

14. A MARRIAGE TO LAST A LIFETIME

Song of Solomon 8:5-14

The Song of Solomon starts on a high note of love and expectation. The middle is a reality of difficulties encountered. The end is of highness attained and problems worked through. Previously Shulamith has danced for Solomon and that resulted in a great time of love and closeness. Afterwards they lay and planned their anniversary honeymoon back to her home area (8:1-4). Now, in this last flash-back which Shulamith recalls, they are on that honeymoon. She had promised him sexual pleasures outside in their favorite vineyards (7:11-12), some old experiences and some new ones, too (7:13).

SECOND HONEYMOON Evidently the second honeymoon was a great success. Shulamith had promised some surprises for Solomon (8:1-4) and it seems they had a great time. Away from the distractions and pressures of Jerusalem they could focus more on their love and meeting each others' needs, both physical and emotional. The problem of not enough time and rejection is a million miles away. They are at peace.

Shulamith's memory starts with picturing them returning to her home from a special time together outside (8:5a). She is thinking of the physical closeness they have just shared (8:5), and of how strong her love is for Solomon at this time. She feels very secure in the fact that he is hers ("seal" shows ownership, v. 6). She feels protected by him ("arm" v. 6). Her love is final and irreversible, something that cannot be changed (like "death" and the "grave" - v. 6). It is an unquenchable fire, burning so intently (v. 6) even a river could not put it out (v. 7).

This kind of love, she realizes, can not be purchased with all the money in the world (v. 7). Actually, trying to buy love fails for that love is scorned and doesn't last. Shulamith basks in the fact that she doesn't have to do anything or be anything to earn or keep Solomon's love. Therefore there is nothing she can do to lose it! Today we try to 'buy' love in many ways: money, possessions, flattery, appearance, doing things, etc. Love just can't be bought. Sex, physical attention, external actions can be bought, but not real, deep love. Often people settle for the lesser, though, because they don't feel they can ever have the real thing. Shulamith is glad she was raised to know the difference, and to await the real thing. She remembers when she was first taught these truths.

IMPACT OF FATHERS & OLDER BROTHERS ON A YOUNG GIRL Evidently Shulamith's father was dead, for it seems her brothers raised her (v. 8). Even before puberty they prepared a strategy to help her grow into a fine, godly woman (v. 8). They decided that if she showed an inclination to use her body to get male attention, if she seemed easily seduced ("door", v. 9) they will step in and protect her from anything like that. If she wasn't inclined in that direction all the better ("wall" v. 9). Either way, they would build into her a sense of value and specialness ("towers of silver on her," "panels of cedar" v. 9). They would let her, and those who knew her, be aware of fine traits and inner qualities. They would accept her for herself, the real person inside, and unconditionally love her. They wouldn't indulge and spoil her, but would make sure

she always knew, by word and action, that she was valuable and special for who she was. With this good self esteem she would know her value as a person and act accordingly. This makes a GREAT difference in a young woman!

Too many females in the twentieth century use their looks and appearance to get male attention, feeling that is the only (or best) thing they have to offer. They haven't been assured of their internal value, and thus don't treat themselves as worthy people, or expect others to treat them that way, either. Too typical is the young female who uses her body to get male attention and, when she is used or abused, feels that somehow it is her fault and what she deserves in life. Girls seem to marry men like their fathers. If they had a good, loving, accepting father they will look for that in a husband. If they didn't they will look for a male similar to their father (often with the same weakness) and try anything to get his affirmation of their femininity as a father substitute. Fathers and older brothers have a tremendous impact on a young girl reaching and going through puberty!

To some extent the same is true of boys and their mothers, but it seems especially serious in father-daughter relationships. Both are greatly influenced by how they are raised. Still, each one has his or her own free will choice to make, no matter how they are raised. Shulamith was raised to be pure in all ways, and chose to follow that course when older and the choice was up to her ("wall" v. 10).

FREE WILL CHOICE Shulamith, when of age to make her own choices ("breasts like towers" v. 10), chose the path of virtue and purity ("wall" v. 10). She lives for her future mate. Her choices then were with her coming husband in mind. That is rare, both then and now. Solomon recognized that rarity and appreciated it. *"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies"* (Prov 31:10). Shulamith brought him contentment (v. 10).

Shulamith tells a parable to explain this same truth. Her brothers took care of Solomon's vineyard for him, producing good fruit which benefited him (v. 11). They also took care of Solomon's future bride (although they didn't know that at the time) and with her produced even better fruit (v. 12). From the vineyard Solomon got 20% profit, from Shulamith he got 100% profit! Not only did they keep her pure, but they built value into her. If she wouldn't have had security and self confidence, she would have shied away from Solomon. People often marry the mate they feel they deserve. If a person doesn't feel they deserve the best in life they will settle for a mate who is less than the best to them. Feelings of inferiority affect all areas of life!

SECOND HONEYMOON ENDS The second honeymoon ends, as always must happen. Solomon tells Shulamith to say good bye to her childhood friends who have seen her off (v. 13), but he also asks to "hear your voice (v. 13)," evidently with a specific idea in mind. She responds (v. 14) by inviting him to one more time of sexual pleasure before leaving.

THE REST OF THE STORY ... The relationship between Solomon and Shulamith started out idealistically, assuming all would be fine when married. Reality and selfishness brought problems that had to be worked through or the relationship would have withered and died. They did work them through with unconditional love and patience for each other. Now they have the rest of their lives to enjoy the fruits of this. Times of difficulties surely continued to come, but with love and commitment, with learning to communicate and put the other first, the relationship became what God wanted it to be. Can you say that of your marriage? With God's help, that can be true of any and every marriage, but it must be done His way and with His help.