

May our relationships cause us to sing!

Song of Songs

Pressures surround us that will not bless us in relationships. While the ideas and examples around us will not build good relationships, **what a blessing it is to have a God-given record of such a positive example of a loving, healthy relationship between a man and woman in “the song of songs which is Solomon’s.”**

I certainly do not want to stay in the realm of my low thoughts or the emptiness and destructiveness of this world’s ideas of relationships. What a privilege to have my thinking lifted up to the perspective of my Creator who is entirely good!

As we understand the beauty woven into a genuine love relationship, it becomes obvious why the writing is a song of songs. The richness of the fellowship begs for vibrant expressions! **In this genuine relationship there is real interaction between the two, resulting in a song of many songs because the relationship is a living, active, abounding fellowship.**

An Outline of the Song of Songs which is Solomon's

Scene 1: He brings her to his banquet in grace (1:2-2:7)

Her misgivings give way to rest and joy by his kind compliments

“I have found such peace and pleasure in being his!”

End: Charge #1 – see joyful nearness; but do not go for a fake.

Scene 2: He calls her to enjoy life's abundance (2:8-17)

His joy in life spurs mutual desire to see their fellowship thrive.

“I am so excited to enjoy life's abundance with you, my love!”

End: She excitedly urges him to be excited to enjoy life with her.

“My beloved is mine, and I am his.”

Scene 3: She longs to have him with her (3:1-5)

Her fretful dream reveals her yearning to have him with her.

“I so much want him always with me!”

End: Charge #2 – see joy of united hearts; but do not push love.

Scene 4: He displays his gladness to marry her (3:6-5:1)

His expression of overwhelmed delight flows into holy intimacy.

“I am so thrilled to be the one so greatly privileged to know you!”

End: God blesses their deep delight in abounding life together.

Scene 5: Joy is restored after disrupted fellowship (5:2-6:10)

His solid person, pleasant ways, and rich praise restore intimacy.

“He is so admirable and enjoyable, so strong and gentle!”

End: His ravished heart overflows in praise for her awesome beauty.

“I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.”

Scene 6: They enjoy life's abundance together (6:11-8:4)

His deep desire for her spurs her to bless him with life's abundance.

“I am so excited to enjoy life's abundance with me, my Beloved!”

End: Charge #3 – see how love blesses, but wait for real love.

“I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.”

Scene 7: She rejoices that life has brought her to him (8:5-14)

Leaning on him, her mind reviews life and rejoices she is here now.

“I am so happy to be alive, because I can rejoice in life with you!”

End: She excitedly urges him to be excited to enjoy life with her.

Freshness

The last verse (8:14) of the Song of Songs is notable. It connects with the “wife of your youth” phrase (Prov 5:18). This phrase emphasizes a beauty in a relationship that has lasted for several years, such that the marriage is not new, and the married couple is not as young as they used to be. Yet to the husband, his wife is still “the wife of my youth.”

The last verse of the song is the heart of the Shulamite woman overflowing after some time has passed since they were married (which occurs at the end of chapter 3). “Make haste, my beloved,” she says with enthusiasm, “and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices!” (8:14) She had said this before, early in the relationship, even before they were married (2:17), yet the enthusiasm is still there!

She longs for her man to come with joy to visit with her. She had seen that joyful enthusiasm as he came to invite her to go out and enjoy the beauty of springtime! “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountings, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag” (2:8-9). His joy in her combined with her joy in him, and they had a wonderful time together enjoying God’s creation! As this time together came to an end, her joy was not so much in the event as in his loving interest in her. She overflows, “My beloved is mine and I am his,” and longs that he might come again in that joyful enthusiasm he had, longing to be with her, to see her beautiful face and hear her beautiful voice (2:14).

As the song goes on, the freshness is still a delight. She rejoices in his rejoicing in her. She looks forward to seeing his enthusiasm and joy in their relationship. She rejoices to see his excitement in having fellowship with her, and responds with excitement herself, calling on him to “be like a gazelle” in its joyful energy. May we know this freshness in our relationships!

Singing that begets singing

How beautiful to see that the song is the Song “which is Solomon’s” (1:1)! Though the bride may also sing, the spring and center of the song is Solomon. It is his song, and she sings in response to his heart’s singing. His excellence and his delight in having her as his own eventually captivate and overwhelm her heart, so that it overflows with song. But how marvelous to think of our Beloved, the Lord Jesus, having such joy in us that He overflows with song!

A Developing Relationship

Affection Desired

The song begins with a young lady's voice singing (Song 1:2), and in it we see some of the beauty of God making male and female different and yet intended to interact in a beautiful unity. "Male and female He created them" is the God-given record of how the Lord chose to create mankind (Gen 1:27). The good, all-wise Creator decided to make male and female. They are distinct and designed to be different, but they are complementary and designed to have such fellowship with one another that there is a beautiful unity in marriage. In the Lord's rich thoughts, He says it is not good for man to be alone and determines to make him a helper who is suited to him. What great thoughts our God has!

So she sings, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." (1:2) How wonderful! She desires his affection! And this desire is not some empty longing to just have someone kiss her. She emphasizes whose affection she desires: "him", "the kisses of his mouth". There is a rich fellowship in view. Let "him" kiss "me". And the kiss is personal and rich, being kisses of "his mouth." What a joy for a man to hear such words from a lovely young lady! She desires affection from me!

The expression of affection is appropriate to the state of their relationship, not expanded into other expressions of intimacy as are appropriate once married. This is seen clearly in this poem, consistent with the charge of Hebrews 13 that marriage be held in honor and the bed be undefiled, but that those engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage will be judged by God. How sad to see so many rob themselves of the Lord's excellent thoughts built into His wonderful creation. But here we see a beautiful, appropriate affection that will be blessed of God as it develops according to His excellent designs.

What has caused the heart and mind of this woman to desire affection from her man? She tells us, and in telling us, she shifts from speaking in the third person, to speaking in the first person. This gives some sense of how personal this was to her. She says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth – for your love is better than wine." Her rich desire for his rich affection was caused by the excellence of his love.

The word "love" here is in the plural. His "loves". These are the manifestations of the love he has for her; the ways by which she perceives his deep desire

towards her. To her these expressions of love that manifest his love are better than wine. So, certainly I can learn from this. Do I desire my wife to desire affection from me? If so, I should consider my expressions of love toward her. I should seek to show affection for her in such a way that she feels loved. As a woman she is created different from me. She needs to feel my love through expressions of love that make her long for more affection from me.

Let's not be like the stoic husband whose wife noted to him that he doesn't tell her he loves her, to which he replied, "I told you I love you the day we got married; I'll let you know if I ever change my mind." No! Here we have a God-given example of His design for male and female in a loving relationship. He has a love for her that she feels through his expressions of love.

This love is so delightful to her, that it is more attractive to her than other things that give a feeling of joy or pleasure. It is as if she is saying, "I love it when you show that you love me. Feeling your love for me is better to me than all other places I might turn to make me happy." May it be so in our relationships!

What pleasant thoughts come to mind when I think of you!

She is thrilled with his love (Song 1:2) and enamored with his person (1:3). "Your name is ointment poured forth" she declares with joy! (1:3) The mention of his name is to her like smelling a delightful aroma that floods her mind with pleasant thoughts!

The smell of a perfume is only made known when the ointment is poured forth. Like his cologne which gave off a wonderful fragrance because it was a good ointment, so was his name. As his name was introduced in a situation, as his name comes up in a conversation, as his name comes to mind, it brings wonderful thoughts to mind. His name excites the mind to the point that she can't resist wanting to be with him! "Draw me away!" (1:4) What respect she has for him! His name calls for this respect, for it is a good name.

Smell is such a powerful sense, and aromas are definitely connected with memories. There is a certain "green" smell that instantly causes my thoughts to go to my grandmother's back porch. Fragrances stir up thoughts. Christ's death brought rich thoughts to His Father's mind pictured in the sweet-aroma offerings of Leviticus 1-3 (cf. Eph. 5:2).

His name was like a good fragrance that stirred up rich thoughts. What a challenge! Am I that kind of a person? When my name is heard, what do people think? When my name is mentioned, what would a woman think? When my name comes to mind, what thoughts come to the mind of my bride? When thoughts about me arise, does it cause an excitement, a joy, a smile? When I am thought of, does it bring such a delight, that my bride will want to be together with me because I am to her, such a great person to be with?

His reputation, his character, his ways, his person was so pleasant, so refreshing, so desirable that the young ladies all loved him (1:3). They wished his interest was in them. But the writer of the song knew that his interest was in her! What a thrill! So her heart bubbles over – “draw me away.”

This kind of thing cannot be taught or commanded, can it? She just found him delightful. He was such a person that it brought joy to her heart when she thought of him. It certainly should be like this as a relationship is in the bud. As a loving relationship starts to develop, a woman should find a man very attractive. There should be something about him that makes her excited and makes her desire to be in his presence.

As the song develops, we sense more and more that it is not his riches or other such things that attracts her. It is his person. She finds him delightful! May I be such a person. May I carry myself in such a way that the woman the Lord has put into my life will find delight in me. May I be such a joy to her that she will so much want to be together with me! What a blessing to have Christ as our example in this! What rich thoughts come to mind as His Name is mentioned! May I be to my bride as the Lord Jesus is to us His bride.

He makes her feel very special

How her heart overflows with joy as a result of his interest in her! “The king has brought me into his chambers” (Song 1:5). She finds it absolutely awesome that the king should have thoughts towards her of love, and that this love towards her is such that he wants her to be with him. How privileged she feels! How honored!

Yet, she has a sense of inadequacy, an embarrassment that she has shortcomings. “Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept” (1:6). She does not feel like

she reaches the standard of a bride for a king. She had to work outdoors, so she does not have the fair appearance which she thinks she should have to be attractive to the king. Yet she longs so very much to be with him! She urges him to tell her where she can find him when he is feeding his flock (1:7).

How should a man respond to this one whom he loves and who loves him, yet she feels embarrassed about herself in some way? Compliments! Then more compliments! And then some more compliments!! (1:8-10) What words of kindness, honor, elevation, rich love and respect flow from his mouth! “O fairest among women” he calls her, the one who was concerned that she was not fair enough. No, my love, you are the fairest! You are supreme among women in your beauty!

Yes, he continues, I absolutely want you to know where to find me when I am out feeding my flocks. I love being able to enjoy your company. You are “my love.” What a beautiful term of endearment! You are personally the one that I love. You are the one for me. You are the one that my heart’s affections are fixed upon. My love.

What honor! May my lips speak this way, rather than the base words used in this degraded world to talk about one’s wife or bride. And may my mouth abound with compliments, telling her of her beauty, assuring her that I find her perfectly lovely! “Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold.” How the compliments abound! And they are specific. In the present state of their relationship before marriage, his compliments are appropriate – speaking of her cheeks and neck. Yet they are abundant and personal. So much so that her friends respond with excitement – “if he thinks you look good with ornaments of gold around your neck, we’ll make more of them for you!” (1:11) Even her friends are enthusiastic for his love for her as a result of his kind words of honor.

The whole song is packed with compliments. The honorable expressions of the one stirs up the other to respond with compliments. And so it continues and grows and abounds. No wonder they enjoyed each other’s company!

May I see the excellence of this example and obey that beautiful command that calls me to the privilege of uniquely, personally “giving honor” to my wife (1 Peter 3:7). May I “nourish and cherish” her with my words and actions (Ephesians 5:29), so she feels very, very special.

May our relationships abound with compliments towards each other. May our personal words of honor displace feelings of embarrassment. May we have the joyful fellowship God intended. May our words nurture the privilege of loving affection that gives rest and joy in our fellowship together!

Growing fellowship with different excellencies

As their fellowship continues, he speaks of her as excelling above other women, showing how he sees her as special, unique, holy in his thinking and desires (Song 2:2). This specialness is a major joy in their fellowship. "Though there are many women in the world, you stand out!" This should be the attitude of a man as the Lord draws his heart to a woman that he will marry.

They exchange compliments of what they see in one another. The difference is beautiful. She is like a lily. He is seen like a tree. She is beautiful like a delicate flower (2:2). What glory a lily has! But he is different. Like a tree, he brings her comfort and refreshment, making her be at peace and rest, protecting her (as a shadow from the hot sun) and nourishing her (as sweet fruit), so that she has joy in him and being his (2:3).

She is beautiful like a flower; he is beautiful like a tree. A tree is strong and solid in its beauty, and would not be easily injured. A flower is more fragile and sweet in its beauty, and should be valued for this different beauty (2:1-3). Both are excellent, and should be loved and valued in their different glories.

May we appreciate these excellencies which are different, rather than find them irritating. God's designs are wonderful, and we should rejoice in them as we see them in one another!

Overwhelmed with being loved and welcomed

His ways towards her give her rest. She could certainly feel out of place at the banqueting table of a king (Song 2:4). Yet she is comfortable in a situation and place where she does not otherwise belong. This is because he has brought her, and it is plain to everyone that her being there is based on his love for her. "His banner over me is love" (2:4). Thus, she is accepted because he has accepted her. She is "at home" for he has declared that she belongs (2:4-5). Her primary place of belonging is in his heart. He shows such grace and interest in her that it overwhelms her (2:5). What richness in this fellowship! In response to his kind, gracious ways, her heart rejoices that she is with him (2:6). "I am love-sick."

Then he comes to her and calls her to come with him to enjoy joyful life and the abundance of beauty of God's creation together (2:8-13). With great enthusiasm and excitement, he calls her to enjoy the beauty of life with him. Overflowing rich delight of heart shows in outward excitement (leaping). Vibrant and full of life, he delights in God's beautiful creation and longs to enjoy it with his love. "There is one thing missing from the beauty around. It is you my love! Show me your face!"

She loves the sound of his voice (2:8, 10) for it meant that he is near. He puts forth energy and expresses joy and pleasure through his mannerisms, such that she is attracted to want to be with him, to rejoice together (2:8-9, 2:17). Their relationship is in bloom like a vine.

He expresses his desire to have her with him, so he can see her face and hear her voice. In this expression, he tells her that he finds her appearance to be attractive and her voice to be sweet. Thus, in his words he shows that his desire is towards her, and that he rejoices in her (2:14). He uses names in talking to her, and these names compliment her, such as "my love", "my dove", "my fair one" (2:13-14). It all is very lovely and honorable and pure and rich and abounding; like God's glorious creation.

His heart-felt expression of delight in her stirs a response in her. She feels his love for her and is happy in it. "My beloved is mine and I am his" (2:16). His loving affection has nourished and cherished her (Eph. 5:29) causing her great joy and rest. He brings her health and causes her to abound. May our interactions stimulate joyful, vibrant fellowship!

Their relationship is like a young vine to be nurtured

"Our vines have tender grapes" (Song 2:15). May the Lord help us to see this simple, essential reality that a relationship is like a vine that needs to be given tender care. It needs to be nurtured and protected.

It can be trampled, but don't do it! Rather nurture it with words that build up and honor. Enjoy life together (2:10-15; 1 Peter 3:7). Nurture the relationship so that it can be healthy and abounding! How are we doing with nurturing our relationship? In every situation and every day it is essential to nurture and protect our relationship. How destructive is a grumpy word or rude action! But how invigorating is a kind word or thoughtful action!

Husbands are commanded to not be bitter with their wives (Colossians 3:19). Bitterness is pictured as being a root that springs up and causes trouble (Hebrews 12:15). That root must be removed to maintain a positive, healthy relationship. Similarly, a wife showing disrespect to her husband will be destructive.

Words can drag down or build up. Some are "unwholesome" (Eph. 4:29) like offering someone milk that has gone bad. It will make them sick rather than build them up in healthiness. In contrast, our words should be "good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear."

"Good" words are health-giving; ones that build up and strengthen. They give blessing. They encourage others to keep on in good things. They lift up the spirit. They point eyes to a loving, faithful God.

Nurturing shows in how we respond to negative words. Will we keep the destructive interaction going? Or will we aim to nurture through kind words, forgiveness, lowliness and love? (See Eph. 4; Col. 3)

The atmosphere of a relationship is so important. When I am around, do I bring pleasantness to the atmosphere? Do I have an uplifting effect on living? Or does the joy diminish as a result of my arrival? Does my influence cause heads to be lifted up to seeing a wonderful Father and His beautiful Son? Does life have more joy and harmony through my presence, or am I like a black cloud that takes the sunshine out of the moment?

Is our relationship growing upward? Is our effect on each other positive? Are we both growing to be more holy, more confident in Christ, more settled in His goodness, more happy to be loved of Him, more energized to live in fellowship with Him, more passionate to bless others, more invigorated to use our spiritual gifting in the body of Christ, more excited to live the life God has given us? In a marriage, does my wife become more beautiful through my influence? That is the case with Christ and His bride! (Eph. 5:25-27)

Wait for genuine love!

We see a young woman experiencing the true joy of a true love relationship with a young man, such that her soul longed to have him with her in a real, vital way. As a result, she felt the need urge other young ladies to not try to stir up love.

Others see how attractive this fellowship is, so they may try to make it happen. She urges them to wait on love, because the genuine love is so excellent and real. She fears they will be robbed if they try to work up a relationship that is not genuine love. Anything short of genuine love will be a façade (Song 3:1-5; 2:7; 8:4).

Charge 1 and 2 occur in this section of the song. The first charge seems to end the banquet scene of 1:2 to 2:7. Such joyful nearness is seen in development, that others may want to have such a relationship themselves, understandably so. But the bride urges them to not pursue a fake.

The second charge (3:5) follows her fretful dream that shows how much she desires him. One might summarize her feelings as “I so much want him always with me!” This is wonderful for they are going to marry. But others may see the joy of united hearts, so they should be cautioned to not push love, trying to force it to happen before its time.

The third charge (8:4) connects with the scene of the happily married couple enjoying life’s abundance together (6:11-8:4). His deep desire for her has spurred her desire to bless him with life’s abundance. The shared excitement of life together is so attractive. Hence, the caution that though you see how love blesses, be sure you wait for real love. May these warnings be taken to heart. “Do not arouse love before it desires.”

Joy in Marriage

Joy in his wedding day

He was so glad in her! His heart was rejoicing at the thought that he would have her with him as his wife, his spouse. His wedding day was a day of great celebration, for it was the "day of the gladness of his heart" (Song 3:11). So it will be on the day the Lamb's wife is presented to Him! (Rev. 19:7-9; Eph. 5:27)

May we share this perspective of marriage, not the lowered view of marriage in the world. The man should be delighted that he is gaining this lovely woman as his wife! It is not the end of something, but the beginning of something wonderful and new.

Fellowship and Joy in Marriage

Having married her, he gives detailed compliments to her about her beauty, expressing his thoughts by comparisons, using poetic imagery that capture the

concepts of the beauty he sees in her. He not only says "you are fair" which is broad about her whole person and appearance, but he also speaks of particular aspects of that beauty – her eyes, hair, lips, etc. (Song 4:1-5)

He admires her beauty, speaking of her being full of life and youthful freshness, like pleasant, quiet, orderly, vibrant scenes in creation (4:1, 2, 5).

In addition to detailed compliments, he speaks comprehensively of her beauty. He uses broad sweeping terms both positively saying she is "all fair" and negatively declaring there is "no spot" in her (4:7).

He also tells how he feels in knowing her. He expresses how his heart is overwhelmed with how beautiful she is, how delighted he is to have her with him (4:8), how only a small part of her glory makes his heart overflow with joy, wonder and delight! (4:9)

His detailed compliments develop into larger spheres, increasing in what beauties he describes. His expressions are appropriate to the level of their relationship – for he only speaks of her eyes, checks, neck, countenance and voice until she has become his spouse (4:8) in the marriage covenant. These were beauties any could see, for she had not yet shared her covered glories with him, as was fitting. Having come to know her in marriage, he then speaks of more of the perfections of her beauty. Thus, the enjoyment and words are what is fitting (1:10, 15, 2:14; 4:1-11).

Holy Intimacy is Beautiful

Having married her, he delights to call her "my spouse", the "one women who is joined to me by covenant." He rejoices in the blessedness of their holy commitment to each other, delighting in the beauty of devoted love. His thoughts are occupied with how beautiful she is and how she is his. "This beautiful one is my wife!" The commitment by covenant makes the beauty infinitely more beautiful! (Song 4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

This holy covenant leads into his words of praise for her holiness a "garden enclosed... a fountain sealed." He alone now is the one who knows her and sees her beauty and enjoys her vibrant glory. She is pure, undefiled, unmarred by sharing her private pleasantness with anyone other than the one who now is her husband by covenant (4:12-15).

Thus, now in this covenant, her husband speaks of her pure beauty as a garden undefiled, and she responds with a desire that her beauty would attract him to herself as the aroma of spices waft from the garden by the wind (4:16). It is now the right time that "my garden" should become "his garden," and it is beautiful in its place, as the holy commitment allows holy fellowship.

The devotion and nearness of heart is celebrated in complete nearness. The nearness of heart in holy covenant overflows into enjoyment of pure nearness in every way. It is the heart-nearness that give the entire-nearness its appropriateness and beauty. As our wise and good God had designed, the covenant makes the closeness beautiful and delightful. Even as he is rejoicing in her now as "my garden" (5:1), his thoughts are on the blessedness that she is "my spouse" (5:1).

And thus, though she has shared herself with her husband, yet she is still "undefiled" (5:2) for she is his in holy covenant. Blessed purity! She is truly still a "garden enclosed" for she is his alone! He deeply respects her for her beauty as well as for her holiness. This respect shows in his ways and words towards her. It is in response to this honor shown that she responds with heartfelt desire that he would desire to enjoy her holy beauty. Thus, he delights in her and she delights in his delight in her (4:16).

Nothing less than this mutual joy in fellowship would suit the blessedness of holy marriage according to God's design. So God Himself is heard commending their delight in one another! (5:1b)

Hindered fellowship in a growing relationship

"The voice of my beloved!" (Song 5:2) How her heart rejoices to hear it! If his voice is heard, he must be near! She had rejoiced in that voice, exclaiming then, "Behold, he comes...!" (2:8) First his voice was heard, then she caught a glimpse of him coming with joy towards her! "My beloved spoke and said to me..." (2:10) Oh that our hearts would be quick to hear our Lord Jesus' voice, longing to see Him come, rejoicing to hear Him speak to us and call us to Himself - "rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

Here (5:2), she hears his voice again, and again he has come near; so near that "he knocks", calling to her to open to him. Her heart hears him, but sleep has control of her response, and she is slow to act in welcoming his presence and desiring his fellowship.

There are hindrances in her enjoying him. Encumbrances, weights, cares of life have crowded in – slowing her response to his love for her. Oh that our hearts would so delight in Christ that we would ever keep our communion clear of other things! Likewise in our earthly marriage relationships!

He puts forth effort ("my head is filled with dew") and endures discomfort in order to be near her and enjoy fellowship (5:2). However, she is dull and thus slow in her response to such desire. He knocks, but she seems reluctant to respond due to the effort and discomfort required if she is to welcome him so that they can enjoy being together (5:3). The result is that by the time she finally responds to his call, he has left (5:6).

Their enjoyment of one another is hindered by ease, slowness to respond, inattentiveness to the other's affection and desire. Their fellowship is hindered by not wanting to put out effort. However, his seeking of her (5:2) eventually caused her to seek him (5:6, 8) in a desire for fellowship.

Previously (in chapter 2) she is love-sick in the delight of his favor and love, as she rests in nearness to him (2:3-7). Now (in chapter 5) she is love-sick in the distress of missed opportunity and desire to restore nearness of fellowship to him (5:2-8). So the same love that gives pleasure and peace, also gives a disturbed heart and zeal to seek him to restore the fellowship.

Restored fellowship: what restores it?

"What is your beloved MORE than another beloved, THAT you SO charge us?" (Song 5:9) The perceived excellence of her beloved above all other objects of love is what caused her to urgently seek HIM. It was forgetfulness of his incomparable greatness and thus desire and concern for other things which had made her slow to seek him (5:2-3). Christ had been asked by a woman seeking well water, "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well?" (John 4) The failure to see Him as infinitely better resulted in supposing other men and objects had something to offer. Indeed she thought those other things were more real and significant than the fountain of living water Himself! But once she saw Christ's excellence, all others faded from her heart's eye and she left her waterpot and said, "Come see a man!" Oh my soul, Christ is sufficient and infinitely greater than all else! Seek Him alone!

This question that she was asked is a fundamental one, reaching to the very foundation of her view of who her beloved is. "What IS your beloved?" What is his character? What is he in his person?

Her heart was ready with an answer: "My beloved is..." How blessed a condition that her heart was ready with an answer overflowing from a heart filled to overflowing with her beloved! How blessed a condition when my heart is likewise ready with an answer overflowing from a heart filled to overflowing with my Beloved, the Lord Jesus! How beautiful when it is obviously true that "my heart is welling forth with a good matter" as a result of having been thinking on "the Beloved" (Ps 45:1 and title). What a wonderful state of spirit when "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" with abundance of thoughts just waiting for an opportunity to tell them forth! "My beloved is..."

Her description of him is one that shows an overflowing heart with personal delight in the one she is speaking of. She does not give a scientific description, but instead a poetic expression attempting to tell her feelings when she thinks of him. She was not asked, "What does your beloved look like?" but instead "what is your beloved more than another beloved that causes you to so charge us?" What makes him so special? What is it about him that causes you to so intensely desire him? So, her answer fits the question, and the question fit her heart's condition seen in her statement that she was "love-sick," desperately trying to find the one her soul loved. She had a heart overflowing with his excellence, his glory.

So, a seed to the restoration of their fellowship is her having good thoughts of him, based on his character and ways.

Have rich thoughts of him

Her rich thoughts of him help in restoring their fellowship. This illustrates the importance of the man having a consistent character as a solid, honorable man. "My beloved is white and ruddy; chief among ten thousand" (Song 5:10). "Ruddy" seems to carry the thought of his being full of life, similarly to how we speak of having "rosy" cheeks as a good indication of being healthy and vibrant. He was vibrant, active, lively; so much so that in his vitality he was like "one lifted up as a banner among ten thousand." (literal translation) He had the energy needed and expressed, such that others would rally around and to him in what he is urging. He was a leader with purpose and devotion and strength, ready to do what was needed, ready to put out effort to accomplish goals. She

saw him as a hero, a champion, one to rally around, one to place confidence in, a captain to lead the charge. He had boldness, determination, commitment. And she saw this as delightful!

"White and ruddy" (5:10). White carries the thought of untarnished; having no spot; clean. Yet in his purity, he was not like some object set in a corner in an enclosure to be kept undefiled. Such an object might be "white" but it would be untouched and lifeless and inactive. He was pure but also ruddy – full of color from life in Him; full of energy and vitality and thus activity. Yet in the energy and activity, he was pure, righteous, true, holy. How lovely indeed! To be actively righteous! To be doing and acting with much energy and effort, and in the actions to be pure and undefiled. What an excellent goal to aspire to!

Such was Christ here on earth – taking on sin and all that was corrupt and defiled about us in Adam, yet being entirely holy, righteous, true and undefiled through all of it. "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" and having completed a perfect work in that "white" character, He is "become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). Powerful yet pure. Mighty conqueror in holiness!

"His head is as the finest gold." He had pure, complete wisdom in evaluating and determining the best course of action, the wisest direction to take. There was no impurity in the thoughts, in the sense that there was nothing that he did not completely understand. (compare Revelation 1 of Christ's hair and head and eyes as a flame of fire that perfectly tests everything, seeing what it really is.) Thus, his course, his bearing was wisely governed and thus stable.

"His locks are flowing, black as the raven." She sees in his hair an example of his energy and life and vitality. As his head governed his course wisely, he leads out the "ten thousand" with strength and confidence, and thus smoothness and stability. She sees in him strength and gentleness. He is mighty and yet pleasant. Like a rock, yet soft. He is like a powerful leader, yet a pleasant companion. She rejoices in both aspects and in seeing them perfectly combined in him.

She sees him as full of life, a banner raised up as a king leading out ten thousand who rally around him in his energy and zeal (5:10-11). Yet his eyes and cheeks and lips are so pleasant and cheerful and gentle in their appearance that she pictures them as a quiet scene of gardens by a brook with doves (5:12-13) Her mind then turns back to his glory and brilliance and stability and force as she

sees his hands, belly and legs as a majestic structure like the temple with its gold and ivory and sapphire and pillars of marble in their apparent unmovable strength of character - which she summarizes as his "bearing" (direction, force, movement) being so firm that it is as the massive cedars of Lebanon (5:14-15). Then back her heart turns to his sweetness (5:16), such that her heart overflows in his perfection of grandeur and sweetness, exclaiming, "Yes, he is altogether lovely! This is my beloved, yes, this is my friend!" (5:16) Majestic sweetness!

Gentle strength; strong gentleness

His strength and grace are not distinct from each other. "His bearing is excellent as the cedars; his mouth is most sweet." The two are not separated. They are so smoothly connected, so fitly set, that the power is not even perceived as harsh. A monumental structure with jagged edges is harsh in appearance and can cause injury. He was rock solid but smooth. Thus she says that "he is ALTOGETHER lovely" (Song 5:16). The combination of his character is lovely.

Practical truth is seen here that dispels the false concept that considers manliness to mean "macho-ness." The world around us promotes this false view of being a man. Gentle strength is far superior to gruff toughness in many ways. Gentle strength shows self-control, true strength of character. It is also able to benefit others and is appreciated by others.

This also dispels the false concept that considers gentleness to mean one should not have force in his ways. If in the name of gentleness, one does not have direction and energy to go in that direction nor steadfast perseverance in going that direction (even to inspire others to do so likewise), then this supposed gentleness is merely weakness. The bride's delight was not that her husband was flimsy, but that he was mighty, yet in that power he was pleasant. A king surely needs conviction and confidence if he is going to be of any benefit and value.

Desire to seek him comes from appreciating what he is

"This is my beloved, yes, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. Where is your beloved gone?... and we will seek him with you" (Song 5:16; 6:1). The daughters had asked, "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" She had expressed his character of glory. Now the daughters, in response to her description, also see him as excelling above others, to the extent that they desire to seek him with her. Perhaps in their first question (5:9), there is a hint of being unimpressed with why he is so valuable and thus worth seeking so

diligently. But now, in their second questions (6:1), they show that they now see value in this one that has been described as altogether lovely.

Yes, and Christ IS of such a character!! May our words of Him be suited to His glory, such that others desire to be with Him as well! Do you have a relationship with Christ? Is He your beloved Savior? Have you rejected sin and turned to Him for eternal life? The desire to seek him (6:1) comes from an appreciation of what He is (5:9, 16).

"We will seek Him with you." Others were affected by her delight in him. Her abounding zeal for him and delight in him caused a wake that drew others to also want to seek after him. May it be so of us in our pursuit of Christ!

So glad to belong to the one I love!

Having described the excellence of her beloved, she exclaims "this is my beloved" (Song 5:16). The next thought that delights her heart is that this beautiful one whom she loves is the one to whom she belongs: "I am my beloved's" (Song 6:3). I belong to the one I love. We are united. She delights in him, and delights to be his. He who is the object of her love and rejoicing is the very one who has set his love upon her and taken her as his own. Here she finds wonderful rest and delight! The enjoyment of being his springs from appreciation of who he is, of what he is (in his person and character).

May I, as a husband, be of such a character that my wife would rejoice to think that she is mine. How that statement deserves a "Selah", as well as a prayer for help from the Lord Jesus to enable me to be like Him! This joy in her heart must find its source in my character and ways.

Christ our Beloved is an unending source! What ways! What glory! What excellence is forever richly seen in Him! So as my heart thinks of Him and His character, I will definitely have cause to rejoice greatly that "I am HIS!"

Holiness is the foundation of fellowship

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song 6:3). Holy devotion to a spouse leads to joy. Something that is "holy" is "set apart" as special. God has designed marriage to be an elevated, honorable, special union in which a man is set apart for one woman, and a woman who is set apart for that one man. Being unique, set-apart for one another is glorious!

Holiness is the foundation of fellowship. I am for him, and he is for me. I belong to him, and he belongs to me. This means I do not belong to someone or something else. And likewise he is singularly given over to me. Perfect communion.

Holiness is critical to enjoying marriage. Holiness is critical to fellowship with the Lord. Let there be nothing between, no one else that is the object of my affections nor whom I share myself with. Let me not turn to other so-called lovers, when I am bound in purity to "my beloved" (cf. 2 Corin. 11:2-4; Hosea 3).

Being with him where he is at work

"I am my beloved's... He feeds his flock among the lilies" (Song 6:3). It is very precious to her heart that she knows where her beloved spends his time and does his work. She had sought and not found him (chap 5). But now she remembers where he has gone (6:1). When she first began to know and love him, she desired to be near him, so her question was "where do you feed your flock?" (1:7-8) Now she knows where she can find him, for she has come to know his ways.

We might paraphrase her words as "I am my beloved's; he told me where I can find him." This reality brought great joy to her that she knew where to find him so she could be near him. And it was not only that she knew where to find him, but also that he had told her where to find him. Thus, he wanted her with him! It is good and right that my wife should be interested to know my schedule, my plans, even my habits. This enables nearness. We should welcome communicating with one another by whatever means we have available. However, there really is no communication as precious as face to face.

So with our fellowship with the Lord. We need to be learning His ways; how He thinks and therefore how He acts; where He is at work. As a result, our thinking and acting can be aligned with His. We can be where He is and thus have fellowship. A primary way is in taking care of "His flock", the church. All believers in Christ should have this love for the church. We should be present and observant, looking out for the well-being of God's people.

I want to be with You where You are working! "He feeds His flock among the lilies." (6:3) To have fellowship together with Christ, I must be aligned with His ways, His practices, His priorities, His goals, His methods, His work. Today He is still feeding His flock, the assembly (Acts 20:28), and desires us to feed the

saints with Him (Acts 20:28; John 21; 1 Pet 5) In our feeding them, we need to follow His ways so we are in fellowship with Him.

She knew his ways, his habits, his practices - and thus she knew where to find him, so she could enjoy being with her beloved. It is a great joy in marriage to work together, to serve the Lord together, to care for others together.

Gone but not gone

"Where has your beloved gone?" (Song 6:1) The fact that he has "gone" could concern and trouble her soul (cf. John 14:1). But the realization that she belongs to her beloved gives peace and joy, though he is gone for now (6:3).

If he has loved her and expended the effort to make her his own, then surely, he will not leave her permanently, for she is in his heart. (cf. John 14:2-3) He desires that where he is, she also would be.

Our Beloved has gone for a time. But He has gone within the veil "for us," for He intends to bring us there! (Hebrews 6:18-19) Thus we have strong, steadfast encouragement in our living Hope, a living Christ who has gone there for us! (1 Peter 1:3) What an anchor it is to see Him there and know the heart of our Beloved who loves us and desires that we be there with Him in glory! (John 17:23; 14:3)

No bitterness in seeing rich fellowship restored

He continues to address her with respect ("my love"; Song 6:4) and intimacy, and to compliment her even after she showed slowness in responding to him due to distraction (chap 5). Rather than being bitter towards her (Colossians 3:19), he let her be for a short time (chap 5), but when she sought him (6:1-3), he responds richly and with delight (6:4-9) showing there was no bitterness or coldness in his heart towards her.

Rather than bitterness or coldness, he speaks of how she is so balanced and complete in her beauty ("comely") to the point that he is overcome by her looking at him. How her appearance is so perfect! The perfection of her beauty has an effect on him like "troops with banners" - so vast, so forceful, so awe-inspiring, so gripping that he says he cannot take it any more: "turn away your eyes from me, for they overcome me!" It is blessed to have such pure fellowship that allows enjoying holy beauty.

He admires the orderliness and completeness in her – her hair as a flock of goats filling up the slopes of Gilead; her teeth all clean and in place and complete (6:5-6). There is life and vitality in her that causes completeness and fulness in her beauty.

"Comely as Jerusalem". "Rejoicing and seeing your order" (Col. 2:5) "God is not a God of disorder but of peace... let all things be done decently and with order" (1 Corin. 14:33, 40). He was amazed seeing how all about her fit together in proper order, nothing out of place, nothing out of balance, and nothing missing. He admired her beauty, seeing her "comeliness" as an orderly city, Jerusalem. Things were in place, and thus flowing smoothly like goats or sheep in a flock moving along a hill in smooth order and thus beauty. A city is valuable, useful, beneficial and pleasant to the degree to which it is in order.

God looks at assemblies of saints, and if they are in order, He enjoys what He sees. If He sees they are occupied with Christ alone by faith and their gatherings guided by the Spirit with order and submission to God's expressed design, then He finds it pleasant, and thus rejoices – just as God's servant Paul likewise rejoiced in the Colossian assembly, but exhorted change in the Corinthian gathering.

The thought of her being beautiful because "comely" (all at home, in order) is often on the beloved's mind and lips. Similarly, "troops with banners" are orderly and therefore are impressive to see. Troops in disarray during a battle are very unimpressive. But if they are marching in columns carrying banners, one stands in awe of the strength and stability seen in their consistent order. They are awesome because of their order, to the point of overwhelming the mind and emotions.

So she was to her beloved in how all was in perfect order with her, to the point that he says in view of her "awesomeness" - "turn away your eyes from me, for they overcome me." She did not have "wow," but instead consistent order that overcame.

Rejoice in uniqueness

It is healthy for a husband to see his wife as unique (Song 6:8-9). And to know that there are many other women, even notable women (queens) and even single women who do not yet have a husband (virgins) so in that sense are 'available' - and yet to view his wife as standing out from among them, above

them, singular in her significance. And to see her uniqueness especially connected with the fact that "she is mine", "my dove, my undefiled." My wife should be very special to me, honorable in my thoughts.

It is an awesome thing that Christ our heavenly bridegroom finds great delight in us, the assembly, His bride. In meditating on the Song of Solomon, we see the bride delighting in the excellence of her man, her bridegroom who is eventually her husband. This we can see and understand in relation to Christ – for He is indeed perfect in every possible way, and a delight to any heart that knows Him in truth.

But to think that Christ delights in us is not so easy to grasp – for we know ourselves to fall so short in so many ways! Yet He does rejoice in us, calling us "my undefiled" and rejoicing in us, even in details of beauty! After all, at its core, this is "the song of Solomon" not the song of the Shulamite. So also with Christ and us. It is at its core "the song of Christ" not so much "the song of the assembly." Awesome thought! Oh to be more pure and holy, to be more like His character, more beautiful to His all-seeing eyes – so that His infinite heart is overflowing with such joy in us that He sings!

Growing joy in her husband's love

One's wife ought to enjoy more and more having him as her husband and belonging to him, with the overflowing delight that "his desire is towards me" (Song 7:10). Both spouses are blessed as the husband has loving desire towards his wife that cares for her and rejoices in her. The husband has a proper place of affection (the woman who is uniquely his) and the wife has rest in his love for her. In a particular way, she will know "his desire is towards me" through what he says to her. She sees his desire as he compliments her, expressing how beautiful she is to him and how much he enjoys being with her. (7:1-9)

Her delight in him has grown. At first her focus was on the joy that he was hers. "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (2:16). The order shift after some time of the growing relationship such that she declares "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (6:3). Her focus has turned to the reality that she is his, with the thought of him being hers having become secondary. The fact that she belongs to him has grown to be very beautiful to her. In this there is a shift in the heart to be more occupied with him than with herself.

Then, after some more growth in the relationship, she overflows a third time, but this time exclaiming "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (7:10). She does not even mention that he belongs to her. All is occupied with the joy that she is his, and then explodes into the rich overflow of delight in his heart's desire towards her. It is not so much my desire towards him that gives me joy now; it is the wonder that his desire is towards me!

So it is as we grow in knowing the Lord Jesus. We come to rest more in what He is. We come to rejoice exceedingly in his heart towards us. How marvelous that the desire of the Son of God is towards us! My love for Him may increase and decrease one day to the next. But none of that changes that I belong to the One whom I love, and He has a deep heart of love and desire for me!

Seeing beauty in simple things she does

"How beautiful are your footsteps in sandals, O prince's daughter!" (Song 7:1) What a simple activity to see as beautiful – walking in sandals! Yet to a husband who is observing his wife and enjoying who she is, he will find the simple things she does to be beautiful. He will find delight in simply watching her feet as they walk.

Feet are very practical things, and not so much made for beauty. Yet to him, her footsteps in sandals are delightful and elegant – as a prince's daughter. She was not actually a prince's daughter, but in his view, she is exalted. A husband ought to have a high view of his wife. He ought to speak of her as royalty!

Of course, a believing wife is in fact royalty – she is a daughter of the King. And so, she ought to be treated as such, and addressed as such, especially by the man to whom the King entrusted her.

Honorable words telling her of her beauty to him

A husband ought to admire his wife's beauty and express this admiration to her in holy, honorable detail – speaking how she overwhelms his heart with how lovely she is to behold and be with (Song 7:1-9). His compliments should be thoughtful and hearty and rich in character – not trying to impress her so much as trying to express how beautiful she truly is to him.

The world uses blunt, base terms to speak of a woman's "beauty." Such terms do not give honor as is appropriate in the holy nearness of marriage. A husband's compliments should be honorable not gruff. He is telling a "prince's

daughter" of how beautiful she is, as skillfully made by the greatest Artist of all (7:1). Respectful, elevated words and pure, delightful expressions are in order. In every aspect of marriage, a husband should be "giving honor" to his wife (1 Peter 3:7).

The use of rich, honorable, respectful terms in speaking to and of his love is very notable. "Beautiful", "jewels", "artist", "round goblet", "wheat", "lilies", "fawns", "ivory", "pools", "tower", "purple." Pleasant words to describe her pleasantness (7:1-6). Nothing abrupt or rough or vile. All clean, beautiful, honorable thoughts and words. She is excellent, and his excellent words about her are therefore appropriate.

He not only uses adjectives like "beautiful", but also uses illustrations from royalty and creation to try to express the grandeur and glory and beauty and freshness and order and abundance and majesty he sees in his wife (7:1-9).

She delights in his delight in her

She delights in her husband's delight in her (Song 7:9-10). In response to his telling of her beauty and the intimate pleasure he has in her, she expresses her pleasure in his pleasure.

She rejoices in the quietness and simplicity and rest found in holy love of husband and wife and expresses this joy in response (7:9). She desires that he enjoy comfort and softness, like one sleeping peacefully.

There should not be harshness or rough, base words or actions associated with fellowship in marriage. This roughness is seen in fleshly lusts of the world, but not in the loving intimacy according to the holy God's design.

Love comes first and overflows into intimate delight

Holy intimate delight is not a source of love or desire. Rather intimate delight is an overflow from genuine inner love and desire towards one's spouse. Intimacy does not beget love and desire. Rather it expresses and enjoys the reality of that love and desire. (Song 7:10) This is the opposite of lust.

In God's design, He has provided for a means of rejoicing in one's spouse as a result of heart love for the one in whom your soul delights. The love and devotion need to be first. Thus, she speaks of giving him her "loves" (7:12) - expressions of the love she has. The love precedes the loves.

Similar to his actions in chapter 2, she now calls him to enjoy abundant life with her. She has found beauty and pleasantness, so she wants him to enjoy it with her. Her eyes are shining! She is full of life! "You are so precious. I just love doing nice things for you!" How attractive!

In our relationships, may we "outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10). His joyful ways stimulate her joyful ways, and so the richness of their fellowship increases as they back and forth bless each other. May we have such an effect on one another.

So glad life brought us together!

As she thinks back to where her life started, she rejoices how it has come to this place of pleasantness and abundance of life with him. She remembers someone telling her how she was born in such a pleasant place (Song 8:5) and she connects it now with her enjoyment of such abundance of life with her beloved. This overflows into expressed desire to be his for the rest of her life! (8:6-7)

She refers back to her brother's thoughts when she was a little girl, having concern whether she would be pure and admirable when she matured. (8:8-9) She brings that to the present in how she has grown into a pure young woman in whom her beloved delights (8:10-12).

She calls him to forever seal her as the one for whom he has affection including the expression of that affection in embracing her with his arm. "His desire is towards me." "May he forever desire me!" She desires his holiness. Enjoyed love desires holy love with perpetual commitment.

She has shared all of herself. She has shown holiness towards him. Her vineyard is for him alone.

Ongoing Joyful Intimacy

The ending verses of Song of Songs sound much like the excitement earlier in the Song (chap 2) before they were married, only richer. Praise the Lord for that! He desires that she share her voice with him (in 8:13 as in 2:14). She desires him to desire her (8:14 as 2:17). May we nurture healthy, happy, abounding relationships in marriage!

Brief exhortations for healthy relationships as seen in Song of Songs

Before Marriage (that continue into marriage)

Chapter 1

1. Have full-minded fellowship
2. Enjoy outdoor beauty of God's creation
3. Win one another's hearts (versus base ways of the world)
4. Use contagious complimenting

Chapter 2

5. Make her feel loved and comfortable
6. Honor your spouse before others
7. Exhort others to not try to stir up love artificially
8. Call to enjoy the pleasantness of life
9. Nurture relationship like a vine in bloom and address what ruins health
10. Express and maintain excitement with being with each other

Chapter 3

11. Do not try to force a relationship to happen
12. Honor the joining of spouses in marriage at a wedding

In Marriage

Chapter 4

13. Honor intimacy in marriage, for God made it honorable
14. Praise her beauties, rejoicing in how God has made her
15. Reserve yourself as a pure treasure for your spouse
16. Value your spouses' holiness

Chapter 5

17. When disruption happens, put patient effort into restoring nearness
18. "Do not be bitter towards her"
19. Have rich, attractive character and ways that help restore fellowship

Chapter 6

20. Be such that she is sure she can joyfully rest in you
21. Give lavish praise, telling how you find her overwhelmingly beautiful

Chapter 7

22. Rejoice when my blessing of my spouse stirs them up to do likewise
23. Appreciate their beauty as from a wonderful, skilled, abounding God
24. Desire to see them grow in their joy in you, such that they confidently rejoice in your desire towards them

Chapter 8

25. Share beautiful, pleasant things in order to bless each other
26. Let real love develop. When it is real, you will be glad you waited
27. A wife should be glad for abundance of life with her husband
28. The delight in one another can grow with time

Summary Exhortations from Song of Songs

1. Nurture fellowship
2. Be pleasant
3. Men, take the lead in developing a healthy relationship
4. Call each other to enjoy life together
5. Nurture your wife in knowing your love for and delight in her

Husbands: Be so considerate and reliable, so kind and confident, so pleasant and capable that your wife, in all her emotional character, FEELS that she can rest and rely on you, REJOICES that she has you as her companion, and ADMIRES your rock-solid, refreshingly-soft character. Love your wife; nourish and cherish her.

Wives: Think about what makes your man attractive, rejoice that he loves you, bless him by nurturing a pleasant life for him, and desire to be by his side. Respond to his expressions of delight by rejoicing to share your life with him. Respect your husband, and be affectionate towards him.

May we nurture healthy, happy, abounding relationships in marriage for the glory of our Creator and Redeemer God. May each marriage be a beautiful representation of the glorious calling of the assembly to Christ as our husband! (Eph. 5:25-33)



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Song of Songs Overview



"Our Vines" 2:15



Solomon's Song		
1:2-2:7	Contagious compliments and rich grace	△ 2:7
2:8-3:5	Abounding fellowship longs to be married	△ 3:5
3:6-5:1	Holy gladness in married oneness	
5:2-6:10	Disrupted fellowship and restored joy	
6:11-8:14	Ongoing vibrance of shared life	△ 8:4

He's mine 2:16

I'm His 6:3

I'm His! 7:10

■ Misgivings give way to rest and joy by his kind compliments
"I have found such peace and pleasure in being his"

■ His joy spurs mutual desire to see fellowship thrive
"I so much want to always be with you"

■ Expression of overwhelmed delight flows into holy intimacy
"I am so thrilled to be the one so privileged to know you!"

■ His solid person restores nearness and lavish praise
"He is so admirable and enjoyable!"

■ His ways spur her to bless him with life's abundance and rejoice that she is here with him
"I am so glad I can rejoice in life with you!"