

Building a Lasting Marriage

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Text: Song of Solomon 8:1-14¹

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Series: Song of Solomon (Passion, Purity, & Fidelity)

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Song of Solomon 8:1-14**. We come to the end of our series of messages entitled “Passion, Purity, and Marital Fidelity”. We are considering the subject of “Building a Lasting Marriage”.

For the last nine weeks, we have really been looking at a theology of marriage. What you believe about God will be demonstrated in your family and in your community. If a culture rejects God, very soon the institutions that He has ordered will disintegrate, and the order of society will crumble. This is occurring at this time in our day. Two parent families comprise only 27% of the population of families in the United States. How many couples do you know that are growing old together?

All Christians are to relate to marriage—whether married, unmarried, soon to be married, or formerly married. The Song of Solomon is not just speaking to married people. It is written to all Christians as the profitable, sufficient Word of God as to how we are to relate to marriage on this earth.

God’s Word calls us to come together as one Bride that is to be married to Christ, not to divide the church into various special groups. One day all of us are intended to be married. We are betrothed to Jesus Christ. We listen for the trumpet that will call both the living and the dead in Christ to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We come to the Song of Solomon chapter 8, and we find a woman who is happily married. She feels safe and delighted with her husband. How does she display this security and happiness? She wants to show public affection toward her husband, and this sprouts right out of her security in her husband.

So what how is love for Christ displayed specifically in marriage? How should you approach marriage if you want a marriage that will last a lifetime?

- I. Give **Praise** for your mate (vs. 1-4). She is his cheerleader! She wants everyone to know that she loves him. The problem was only people in Israel who d
 - A. Look at this woman’s **public** devotion. She wanted to show public affection for her husband. She wanted everyone to know she belonged to him.

Verses 1, “Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother’s breasts! If I found you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me.”

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

The great joy of this woman's life is to be with her husband. She knows how to tease and how to be playful. Good friends in marriage are always great lovers.

Explanation: She says she wanted to show public affection as a sister instead of a wife, so that "none would despise me". This girl wants to show open affection for her husband, but this is not acceptable in her culture. Those in Ancient Israel did not allow public displays of intimate affection unless you were a near relative. It is that way even today in Israel. Brothers, family members, cousins can display affection, but not husband and wife. It is considered immodest. It was for this reason that the queen wished that Solomon was her brother. She wanted to openly display her love for Solomon. She wanted to lift him up and show him off in public!

Look at how safe and happy she is in this marriage to Solomon. She wants to show kindness to him with spiced wine. She desires his affection. It's palpable! It's strong. Even years later, looking back upon her time before marriage, the desires seem so strong.

B. Look at this woman's **private** devotion.

Verses 2-3, "I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother— she who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate. 3 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!"

Explanation: She wants to spend time with him. Notice children and career are not mentioned. Couples need to turn the mobile phones off, say no to the office, turn off the TV, put the kids to bed and spend time together.

Application: It is this way in our life with Christ. Do you know how many universes God controls? And yet we think we need to control our own lives. We need to slow down, tune in, and listen up to God. Spend time with Him. He said, "Without me, you can do nothing" (**John 15:5**). Christ's presence is satisfying and encouraging. All time spent with Him will be rewarded.

Martin Luther who almost single-handedly turned the world upside down, said:
"If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the Devil gets the victory through the day... I have so much business, I can not get on without spending three hours daily in prayer."

In the same way married couples, you need to spend time together. You are a living parable of Christ's love for His church. Talk with each other.

C. Look at this woman's careful **discipline**. Physical love is so precious it is reserved for marriage. Keep intimacy in marriage! If you have a great love life in

marriage, that is a virtue, but outside of marriage it is a shame and a reproach and a STAIN. We must not soil that which is precious and pure.

Solomon's wife recalls that there is always a time and a place for physical affection. It is after the vows are made before God and others. It is specially reserved for marriage. **Verse 4**, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." Solomon's wife remembers the days before she was married, and recalls how she reserved this for marriage. She has a healthy view of marital intimacy. She reserved herself for her husband so that she could give all that she was to him and him alone.

The natural joy of sexual awakening is ruined by premature experimentation. Satisfying sexual passions outside of God's covenant of marriage is like a person who enjoys stolen money.

In **Proverbs 9**, there is a woman called Folly. It is said in **verse 13** that "she is seductive and knows nothing. 14 She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, 15 calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, 16 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" And to him who lacks sense she says, 17 "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." 18 But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol."

A wise woman realizes that she can lead a man straight to hell by tempting him, and so she looks forward to marriage, but keeps herself pure.

Application: There is a danger that we speak of marital love as the most beautiful, free relationship that a human being can have. But something this sacred must be reserved for marriage.

Regardless, this is a woman who is at home with her husband. She loves spending time with him. She feels safe. She knows him. She wants to display her affection publically for him. She is his cheerleader!

Transition: You want to build a lasting marriage? The first thing Solomon's queen demonstrated is a playfulness that was really the fruit of her security. She was happily married. There were no other men on her mind. She gave herself wholly and completely to one man.

- II. Be a **Parent** (vs. 5). This is a strange verse if you don't understand the context. After many years, and many days of wilderness trials, Solomon still has his queen leaning on him, intoxicated with love. They pass by an apple tree near Solomon's childhood home.

A. The secret to great parenting is investing in your **married** life. You can't have a great family if you don't have a great marriage! You are rarely going to have godly kids if you don't have godly parents who love each other.

Verse 5a, "Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?"

"Who is that girl?" She's special. She's noticeable. The "wilderness" is a reminder of Israel's 40 years of trials to the Jewish mind. The couple had emerged from their trials successfully as well.

This couple (and every couple) had to overcome the curse of disharmony that began at the fall of man into sin (Genesis 3:16). They've come up out of the wilderness after going through so many minefields, but they are arm and arm. She is leaning on him.

Explanation: She comes out of years of marriage, and she is nourished, secure, safe, happy, and leaning on Solomon's arm. Men, our wives out to be closer to Christ because of us!

B. Another secret to great parenting is investing in your **family** life.

Verse 5b, "<SHE> Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor."

This may refer to their first meeting. Apparently their love was sparked under this tree. Solomon was sleeping there, and she awakened him. Solomon's mother Bathsheba seems to have spent some time under the tree when she was in labor. This may seem strange, but this is a reference to fruitfulness in marriage. The implication of the apple tree is symbolic of the "family tree" that bears the fruit of marital love, namely children. The desire is to carry on the family by having children.

Listen, a marriage is more than companionship. It's more than romance and intimacy and fun together. It is all that. But it's about building a family tree.

Deuteronomy 6 is my roadmap for family life. Some people ask me "How do you do devotions with the children?" My wife and I do have formal devotions with the children. We share that responsibility. But whenever I am home, we are having devotions. All day at all times is devotions. The children are to be taught in every situation.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7, "these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

III. Be **Present** (vs. 6-7). The Shulammitte talks about how she wants to be a seal on Solomon's heart and arm. Listen to Solomon's wife. **Verse 6a**, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm" A seal is a permanent marking. It doesn't go away. Seals in ancient times were used to show ownership and permanence.

A. Your love ought to be the **permanent** kind. You are going to stick around till you die. Love is not a feeling, but a choice to sacrifice yourself for another, whether they are worthy or not. Verse 6 describes the Velcro of a long lasting marriage relationship.

Are you plugged in, totally committed to marriage? It means you forsake ALL others and love only her. It means you always answer her phone calls. The biggest insult you can give a wife is to make her talk to your voice mail. The only way that ought to happen is if you lose your phone. It ought to be so rare that if your wife has to talk to voice mail, the next thing she feels compelled to do is file a missing person's report.

Be plugged in. You ought to be like a seal on your wife's heart. Like a permanent marking on her arm. You are one flesh. Know your wife. Talk to her. Listen to her. She needs you to be engaged.

Application: For men, it is easy to ignore their wife. Show her attention. Have a rule when you get home. I'm told that you need to give her a ten second kiss when you walk in the door! Don't ignore your wife. She probably feels ignored at times. Listen to her. Love her. She'll want to lean on you. If you want a long lasting marriage, be friends. Be plugged in to her life!

B. Realize your loving presence is **powerful**.

Verse 6b, "for love is strong as death". No is "half dead". You are either dead or you are not! Death is so strong that once you die you can never come back. That's the kind of commitment godly love gives. Men are to love their lives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it through the DEATH of the Cross. Love is as strong as death.

C. Love is also **possessive**.

Verse 6c, "jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire" The grave never gives up it's people. It has an eternal hold on everyone who goes there. That's how strong godly love is! It never let's go!

1 Cor. 13 says, "love does not envy"—It's not jealous in a selfish way. But this jealousy is the kind that mirrors God. **Exodus 20:5**, "I the LORD your God am a jealous God".

D. This kind of love is **possible** only through the LORD. It is called in **verse 6d**, “the very flame of the LORD.” This is the only place in the entire Song of Solomon that the Lord’s covenant name “Yahweh” is used. You can only love like this if you are walking with Christ. It finds its very origin in God!

E. Love is **persevering**.

Verse 7a, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”

Many tests will come to your love, but love from God will overcome it all. Your love cannot be based on fleeting emotion, but on covenant commitment to God!

F. Love is **priceless**.

Verse 7b, “If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.”

This kind of love is so priceless. We often play with the worthless toilet water when God has a beautiful ocean for us.

IV. Be **Pure** (vs. 8-10). – ***Keep the fires of marriage within marriage.*** God says they are pure and holy in the marriage union! The Shulamite queen now tells the story of her life long integrity from the time she was a little girl. She says she was a wall, not a door. She was not an easy woman that men could walk through like a door. She was a secure wall.

She recalls her brothers wanting to **protect** her before she was a woman. They were looking out for her—they were guarding her for her wedding day.

The brothers were taking the responsibility of the father. The father is not on the scene. Listen to them.

Verse 8, “<BROTHERS> We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? 9 If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.”

Do you see the imagery? Basically if she seemed to want to be promiscuous, they were going to protect her from herself. If she seemed to be pure they would trust her.

Verse 10, “<SHE> I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace.”

She looked at her body as a place of peace and security. She was not a violated castle. She was not compromised.

V. Be **Patient** (vs. 11-14).

A. God is **faithful** in controlling all circumstances related to marriage.

Verses 11-12, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.”

Solomon owned the vineyard. He “let out the vineyard to keepers” (vs. 11). And who were these keepers? They were the Shulammitte’s brothers.

They were to bring Solomon the profit of what they sold. “Each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.” (vs. 11).

But Solomon got something more than the price of the vineyard. He got these brother’s little sister!

B. We can **trust** God for marriage. The Shulammitte’s eyes were not on marriage, but on being faithful!

Verse 12, “My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.” Solomon can have the profit, and the her brothers get some of the profit too, but Solomon got her!

C. A good marriage is worthy of **celebrating**!

Verse 13, “<HE> O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it.”

This is a verse that speaks of celebration! Solomon is saying to his friends, “celebrate with me!”

D. A good marriage is something to run to as an **oasis**!

Verse 14, “<SHE> Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.”

Conclusion: How do you build a lasting marriage? All this is vain if you only see the surface of marriage. This is not meant to be a “self-help” message. Moralism helps no one. This message is a clarion call to know your God.

This is a picture of Christ and the church. Christ is our oasis. Married people, you need to communicate that in your marriage. Single people, you need to give single hearted devotion to Christ.

Let His flame burn in you, and your marriages will burn brightly. Draw near to Him single and married people as we await our marriage to our Sinless Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.