



SONG  
OF  
SOLOMON

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## INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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**Biography:**

Russell Haffner currently serves as the director of the WVBS Online Bible School. He graduated from the Southwest School of Bible Studies in 1993. He is also an alumnus of Texas A&M University where he majored in Architecture. He has served as a minister of the gospel for over 30 years. He has spoken on various lectureships and has held several gospel meetings. He has also published articles in numerous lectureship books.

Russell and his wife Dee are blessed with three children - Ross, John and Kati. Ross and John are both graduates of the Southwest School of Bible Studies and currently serve as ministers in the Lord's church. Kati is married to Tony Lopez who is also currently serving as a minister in the Lord's church.

These Course Notes were developed from the original WVBS Course Notes.

## INTRODUCTION

### I. GENERAL

- A. The Hebrew name for the book (SHIR HASHIRIM) means, "Song of Songs." In other words, it is the best of all songs.
1. The Greek title for the book (ASMA ASMATON) means, "Song of Songs."
  2. The Latin title for the book (CANTICUM CANTICORUM) also means, "Song of Songs." The name "Canticles" (songs) comes from this Latin title.
- B. In some translations the Song of Solomon has the speakers listed in the footnotes of the text. This is provided to help the reader to know if it is the bride, the groom or the daughters of Jerusalem speaking. The groom is most likely Solomon himself (as discussed below), and the bride a Shulamite maiden who gained his love. It should be remembered that the notes added to the text by the translators are not inspired.
- C. Some have questioned whether Solomon with his 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3) could be capable of such commitment and love for one woman.

While this argument is made by some commentators it should be rejected on the following grounds:

1. If the book was written later in Solomon's life it certainly could reflect feelings Solomon had earlier.
2. Or, one might reason that late in Solomon's life he found the true greatness of monogamy, a point that is emphasized in the book of Ecclesiastes. "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun..." (Ecclesiastes 9:9).
3. In addition, no compelling evidence exists, within the book, to introduce another character.
4. In the book the husband is treating his bride like royalty with a royal ceremony and a honeymoon which only the wealthiest could afford.

## II. WRITER

The writer God used to reveal the words of this book is most likely Solomon. However, we want to make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

2 Peter 1:20-21, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Inspiration means that the information in the book can be relied on and is completely accurate and trustworthy. Solomon is most likely the writer of this book because:

- A. It is claimed to have been written by him (1:1) and no satisfactory reason has been given to reject Solomon as the author.
- B. There is a love of nature that is consistent with other writings of Solomon (i.e. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes).
- C. There is an accurate knowledge of different locations in Israel. A king would certainly know very well the various places in his kingdom.
- D. There are various indications of the king's authorship and royalty, i.e.:
  - 1. Song of Solomon 1:12, "While the **king** is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance."
  - 2. Song of Solomon 3:7, "Behold, it is **Solomon's couch**, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel."
  - 3. Song of Solomon 3:9, "Of the wood of Lebanon **Solomon the King** made himself a palanquin."
  - 4. Song of Solomon 3:11, "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see **King Solomon** with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart."

## III. DATE

If we accept that Solomon was the writer, then the logical date for the writing would be early in his reign (around 960 B.C.). There were only sixty queens and eighty concubines at the time of this writing (6:8); later, Solomon would have seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

## IV. THEME

The theme of the book is the nature of true love. This book illustrates the intimate feelings and commitment between a husband and his wife.

A. Key words or phrases.

1. Beloved (34 times).
2. Love (30 times).

B. Key verses.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised."

## V. UNIQUE FEATURES

A. This is the only book of the Bible entirely made up of speeches composed mostly of monologues with practically no dialogue.

1. It is more easily understood when it is read as if it were an opera.
2. The dramatic scenes composed of speeches should be considered as songs that reveal the story being told.
3. The cast of characters include:
  - a. "Solomon" (meaning "prince of peace") who is the wise king seeking his true love.
  - b. The "Shulamite" maiden (SHÛLAMMÎYTH meaning "princess of peace" 6:13) who kept her brother's sheep and was courted by the king.
  - c. The daughters of Jerusalem who serve as the maiden's attendants.

B. The name of God never appears in the book (see notes for 8:6).

C. The book is nowhere explicitly quoted in the New Testament.

## VI. LESSONS TO LEARN

- A. The most important lesson to learn from this book is the nature of true love.
  - 1. It is not surprising to find this book celebrating love within the holy Scriptures when we consider the nature of God.
  - 2. 1 John 4:7-8 explains, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**"
- B. Man is made in the image of God, and He made us capable of feeling the emotion of love and being loved.
- C. Marriage was created by God to provide man with a holy state for the sexual expression of love (Hebrews 13:4).
- D. Love is everlasting. Solomon wrote, "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it" (Song of Solomon 8:7).

## VII. FOUR MAIN INTERPRETATIONS TO THE SONG OF SOLOMON

- A. **ALLEGORICAL** - This interpretation considers the Song of Solomon to be an extended allegory. An allegory is defined as, "a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning." Those who adopt the allegorical approach consider the events in this book to be representative of God's dealing with Israel or as a prophecy refers to Christ's relationship to the church.

While the Bible does contain some allegories (cf. Galatians 4:24), there are several reasons to reject this approach to the book:

- 1. The allegorical approach must be rejected because of the absurdities it produces trying to explain some of the more explicit romantic passages.
  - a. The book contains many verses that describe in detail the passionate relationship between a husband and wife that are much too vivid to assume that it depicts God's dealing with Israel or the relationship between Christ and His church.
  - b. Even though Ephesians 5:23-27 talks about "the bride of Christ" this book is simply too explicit to be used in this way.

2. This inspired book is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament let alone is it applied to Israel, Christ or the church.
3. Works that are allegorical usually give some indication or hint that they are allegories. The Song of Solomon gives no indication that an allegory is being made.

Galatians 4:23-24, "But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic ("an allegory" KJV). For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—"

- B. **TYOLOGY** - Some people do not make a distinction between this and allegory. However, an allegory does not recognize any historical value to a work. It does not consider it to be a factual account. Typology, on the other hand, considers there to be some historical value to the work. Then they look for a type or pattern in the Bible.

For example, Jewish interpreters would look to the Song of Solomon as a parallel to Hosea and Gomer and how their relationship illustrated the spiritual adultery committed by Israel against God.

Again, while it is not denied that the Bible does have types and antitypes (cf. Romans 5:14) there are some difficulties with this viewpoint:

1. It, like the Allegorical position, strains the text with its vivid sexual references.
2. There is no New Testament application of the book in this way.
3. Even the Jewish scholars are divided on this approach and those who adopt it differ broadly on what the various types might represent. Therefore, any reasonable application is lost.

- C. **LITERAL** - This approach interprets the book just as it appears to be on the surface: the simple story about the feelings and desires of two young lovers. This approach frees one from the impossible task of finding logical allegories or types from the text. It also relieves one of the difficulties of explaining the purpose for the sexually explicit sections of the book. However, as with the other approaches, this one also has its problems:

1. The foremost weakness is finding a reason to include such a sensual book as part of God's inspired word.
2. How does it fit into the inspired Scriptures in this case?

3. What value does it have since it does not have one reference to God or godliness or righteousness?

D. **DIDACTIC MORAL** - This approach is similar to the literal view but the idea is that the book was written to teach certain moral principles. "Didactic" means, "intended to teach." This is why the Jews would read it at the Passover - because most women would be present at this feast. This would be an excellent time to teach the husband and wife how they should feel about each other despite their individual imperfections.

This is the most logical view as it provides God's children with some directions about the relationship between the husband and the wife. The book's purpose is to teach some very important principles about marriage.

1. This puts to rest the idea that the sexual relationship in marriage is sinful.
2. It is clear, that only prohibited sexual relations are condemned in the Scriptures.
  - a. God made mankind to be sexual beings.
  - b. The sexual relationship between the man and the woman was a gift from God for couples to enjoy within the marriage bonds.

Consider the comments of one commentator:

"A frequent Old Testament term for the sexual union of a man and a woman is the verb 'know' (e.g., Genesis 4:1, etc.). It is worthy to note that the most intimate knowledge of another person is not on the basis of intellectual exchange or the discussion of theological ideas, but in the intimate, sexual union of male and female. In this light it should not be considered obscene that at least one book of the Bible be dedicated to the celebration of one of the central realities of our being. The song does celebrate the dignity and purity of human love. This is a fact that has not always been sufficiently stressed. The Song, therefore, is didactic and moral in its purpose. It comes to us in this world of sin, where lust and passion are on every hand, where fierce temptations assail us and try to turn us aside from the God-given standard of marriage. And it reminds us, in particularly beautiful fashion, how pure and noble true love is." (Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, IVP, p. 34)

If "God is love," and He is (1 John 4:8), then we are not surprised to find a book in the Bible that teaches us the nature of true love.

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON

## BASIC OUTLINE

Title .....	1:1
I. The Mutual Love of the Bride and Groom .....	1:2-2:7
II. The Mutual Seeking of the Bride and Groom .....	2:8-3:5
III. The Wedding and Marriage Celebration.....	3:6-5:1
IV. Love Separated and then Reconciled .....	5:2-6:9
V. The Husband Praises His Wife .....	6:10-8:4
VI. The Maturity of Love .....	8:5-14

## EXPANDED OUTLINE

Title .....	1:1
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### ACT ONE

Scene One - In the women's chamber of the royal palace.

I. The Mutual Love of the Bride and Groom .....	1:2-2:7
A. The Bride to Herself .....	1:2-4a
B. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride .....	1:4b
C. The Bride's Humility .....	1:5-7
D. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride .....	1:8

Scene Two - In the royal banquet room.

A. The Groom to His Bride .....	1:9-10
B. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride .....	1:11
C. The Bride .....	1:12-14
D. The Groom to His Bride .....	1:15
E. The Bride to Her Groom.....	1:16-2:1
F. The Groom to His Bride .....	2:2
G. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....	2:3-7

### ACT TWO

Scene One - In the bride's private chamber

II. The Mutual Seeking of the Bride and Groom .....	2:8-3:5
A. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....	2:8-14
B. The Bride's Words to Her Groom.....	2:15-17

Scene Two - The brides bad dream.

- A. The Bride to Herself ..... 3:1-4
- B. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 3:5

ACT THREE

Scene One - Song of the daughters of Jerusalem.

- III. The Wedding and Marriage Celebration..... 3:6-5:1
  - A. The Daughters of Jerusalem Sing of the Approaching Groom..... 3:6-10
  - B. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 3:11

Scene Two - In the bridal chamber.

- A. The Husband to His Wife ..... 4:1-15
- B. The Wife to Her Husband ..... 4:16
- C. The Husband to His Wife..... 5:1a
- D. The Husband to the Guests..... 5:1b

ACT FOUR

Scene One - The bride's bad dream.

- IV. Love Separated and then Reconciled ..... 5:2-6:9
  - A. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem..... 5:2-8
  - B. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife..... 5:9
  - C. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 5:10-16
  - D. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife ..... 6:1
  - E. The Wife to Daughters of Jerusalem..... 6:2-3

Scene Two - The Husband and Wife Together

- A. The Husband to His Wife ..... 6:4-9

ACT FIVE

Scene One - The daughters of Jerusalem exalt the wife's beauty.

- V. The Husband Praises His Wife ..... 6:10-8:4
  - A. The Daughters of Jerusalem Praise the Wife ..... 6:10
  - B. The Wife Responds to their Praise ..... 6:11-12
  - C. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife ..... 6:13a
  - D. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 6:13b
  - E. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife..... 7:1-5
  - F. The Husband to His Wife ..... 7:6-9

G.	The Wife to Her Husband .....	7:10-13
H.	The Wife to Her Husband .....	8:1-3
I.	The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....	8:4

## ACT SIX

Scene One - Set at the wife's home in the county.

VI.	The Maturity of Love .....	8:5-14
A.	The Song of the Daughters of Jerusalem .....	8:5a
B.	The Husband's Memories .....	8:5b
C.	The Wife to Her Husband .....	8:6
D.	The Husband Responds to His Wife.....	8:7

Scene Two - Visiting with bride's family in the country.

A.	The Bride Remembers Her Brothers' Words.....	8:8-9
B.	The Wife to Everyone .....	8:10-12
C.	The Husband to His Wife.....	8:13
D.	The Wife to Her Husband .....	8:14

# SONG OF SOLOMON EXPOSITION

## Chapter 1

**Title..... 1:1**

**1:1** By calling this the "Song of Songs," Solomon is identifying this work as the best, or most beautiful of songs. As noted in the introduction the writer clearly identifies himself as Solomon and there is no legitimate reason to doubt this.

Beginning with this section and continuing through 2:7 the young couple speak of various aspects of their love; from excitement and desire to self-doubt.

[To properly understand this book, it is crucial that we always identify who is speaking, who is being addressed, the situation and the subject being discussed.]

## ACT ONE

### Scene One - In the women's chamber of the royal palace.

**I. The Mutual Love of the Bride and Groom ..... 1:2-2:7**  
**A. The Bride to Herself..... 1:2-4a**

**1:2** "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" - The young bride is looking forward to the loving kisses of her groom. It is certainly fitting for one, who is soon to be married, to eagerly anticipate the relationship. This is one of the many things found in the book that is a part of a romantic relationship - (cf. kissing 1:2; embracing 2:6; hearing the voice 2:14; look of the eyes 4:9; and fragrance 1:3; 7:8).

"Your love is better than wine" - We must understand that in the Bible the word "wine" is generic in nature. In the Scriptures the word does not always imply an alcoholic liquid. We must study the context to determine if it is talking about alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine.

1. The word "wine" simply refers to the juice of the grape.
2. It can mean either fermented or unfermented.
3. There are several Bible passages which demonstrate that the word "wine" is generic.
  - a. Sometimes the word "wine" is clearly used for the alcoholic beverage (Genesis 9:21; 19:33-35; Ephesians 5:18),

- b. While at other times the word "wine" is used in a non-alcoholic, unfermented sense (Isaiah 16:10; 65:8).

Isaiah 65:8, "Thus says the LORD: 'As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, "Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it," so will I do for My servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all.' "

- c. The point is we must always consider the context to define how the word "wine" is being used in each occurrence.

- 4. The Old Testament often warns about the misuse of alcoholic wine.

Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."

Proverbs 23:29-32, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper."

Isaiah 5:11, "Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them!"

- 1:3** The groom takes pride in his name and his appearance. He cares for his physical attributes.

This passage serves as a good example to men today that they should be concerned about their physical appearance and cleanliness.

"Ointments" - These were fragrant oils often used as a base for perfumed lotions in the ancient world.

"Virgins love you" - The groom is very popular and other young women can see that he is a "good catch."

- 1:4a** "The king has brought me into his chambers" - This seems to indicate that the marriage is at hand. The groom has a close relationship with his bride.

This could also mean that he has given her special access to his inner thoughts and feelings, which have not been shared with others.

**B. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride..... 1:4b**

"We will be glad and rejoice" - The young bride's attendants are speaking this part. They share in her joy for her new-found love, and they love her as well.

**C. The Bride's Humility ..... 1:5-7**

**1:5** "I am dark (black, KJV)" - This is not the Hebrew word for one who is naturally black skinned. It means she is a farm maiden who has had her skin darkened ("tanned") by her exposure to the sun (verse 6 verifies this).

This section illustrates the young bride's feelings of self-doubt. She is lovely, but still questions if her husband will find her desirable. It is the responsibility of her groom to erase her doubts.

**1:6** "The sun has tanned me" - This proved she was a good worker. The sun had given her a darkness to her skin. People even stare at her because of it.

"My own vineyard" - This phrase refers to her own body. This figurative language is used to explain that she had not been given the time necessary to care for and protect her skin to keep it fair.

**1:7** "Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock" - She loved her groom completely and wanted to be with him. It could be that he was inspecting his flock, and she wanted to join him.

To "be as one who veils herself" reflects the custom of a woman covering her face in public among strangers. If she was alone with him, she could be relaxed and open to him expressing her inner thoughts and feelings.

**D. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride..... 1:8**

**1:8** "Follow in the footsteps of the flock" - The attending maidens respond by telling the young bride to take her little goats into the fields where she will have a good chance to find him.

**Scene Two - In the royal banquet room.**

**A. The Groom to His Bride ..... 1:9-10**

**1:9-10** "My love" - This is a phrase which occurs nine times, and is always used by the husband (1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4). The husband uses descriptive words of praise for her physical beauty. He compares her to his "filly" (a young female horse). He intends to make two points with this illustration:

1. An unbridled filly among the bridled horses of Pharaoh would cause a great deal of excitement! Equally, her beauty excites him greatly.
2. The bridles of the horses were elaborately ornamented with gold, silver, jewels, feathers and brightly colored fabrics. Her beauty reminds him of these animals. She apparently wears jewelry that adorns her face and a beautiful necklace as well.

Notice how the bride, like the groom in verse 3, has taken her appearance very seriously. She desires to look her best although she knows she is not perfect.

Wives today should also do their best to enhance their beauty for their husbands. The husband will appreciate the efforts of the wife, and his self-esteem will be increased because his wife is showing that she believes that her husband is worth her efforts to make herself beautiful *just for him*. As we will see later the husband as well should make himself presentable for his wife.

**B. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride..... 1:11**

**1:11** The young maiden's attendants join in saying they will provide the bride with beautiful jewelry. Perhaps these are some of the royal household, the female servants who would have the responsibility of caring for the king's new bride.

**C. The Bride..... 1:12-14**

**1:12-14** The bride responds by making three comparisons of her encounter with her husband (the king) with three different perfumes:

1. "Spikenard" is a costly ointment from plants grown in India;
2. "Myrrh" is also a costly perfume, coming from the sap of trees. She wears the myrrh in a pouch next to her skin;
3. "Henna" is a common Palestinian shrub (from Engedi, on the western side of the dead sea), that gives a beautiful fragrance when crushed.

The bride is saying that having her groom near to her, even all night, is like the sweet-smelling perfumes that she uses.

**D. The Groom to His Bride ..... 1:15**

**1:15** The groom responds to her encouraging words with an equally encouraging response. She is beautiful to him. He comments that her eyes are like doves.

This statement is somewhat obscure. There are two different ways of viewing this point:

1. Her eyes, although the dull gray of dove's eyes, are nevertheless very beautiful to him; or
2. Her eyes have a deep, penetrating gray color and thus are strikingly beautiful.

He makes this comparison again in 4:1 and she describes his eyes in the same way (5:12). He also mentions that her eyes are like the pools in Heshbon (7:4), which were deep reservoirs of water.

It is apparent that her eyes (and his) are very beautiful and appealing to the other. Whether others would agree with this opinion is unknown. But it really does not matter. All that matters, is what one's mate thinks.

#### **E. The Bride to Her Groom ..... 1:16-2:1**

**1:16-17** Here we find the bride's response. The groom's insistence that she is beautiful encourages her to comment that he is handsome. She also notes that he is "pleasant" from the Hebrew word meaning, "delightful, sweet, lovely, agreeable." She also mentions the beauty and strength of their future home (the wedding bed and the covering above, as if it were a temple).

**2:1** "Sharon" is a coastal Plain running south from Mount Carmel. It is a very fertile land where roses were grown in abundance.

Some well-known hymns use an allegorical approach to apply these descriptions to Jesus (for example, "*The Lily of the Valley*" and "*Jesus, Rose of Sharon.*")

The Hebrew word translated as "rose" could refer to a "meadow-saffron, crocus, or rose." Therefore, we are unable to exactly identify the species of flower to which she referred.

Therefore, we are left with some difficulty as to what exactly the bride is comparing herself. Some believe that she is once again considering herself to be quite plain. Others say she is like a small flower compared to the massive trees. She may have been expressing her feelings of insignificance in the presence of the king.

"Lily of the valley" - The word for "lily" does not refer to our white, bell-shaped plant of the same name. However, the actual flower is difficult to identify with any certainty.

The bride seems to see some simple beauty in herself, but no more than that. Perhaps what beauty she does see in herself is because of the praise of her husband. She responds to his words, "You are beautiful," and then feels so because of him.

**F. The Groom to His Bride .....2:2**

**2:2** "Like a lily among the thorns" - The groom uses her word for herself ("lily") and demonstrates that her beauty is equivalent to "a lily among the thorns." In his opinion she is the prettiest maiden around.

**G. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....2:3-7**

**2:3** Here again the bride speaks. She explains that when she compared Solomon to other men, he was like a blossoming apple tree which is more fragrant and handsome than other trees (men). She goes on to say that she found desire and delight being near him, like one would find rest and protection from the sun in the shade of a tree. To her his romance was sweet like the fruit of the apple tree.

**2:4** "Banqueting house" - She tells her attendants how he took her to his banqueting house perhaps at the time of a royal reception. Dignitaries invited to the reception would have their "banner" (flag of state), but her banner was the king's love. This "banner" of the King's love could represent belonging to him or having his protection.

**2:5** She is so overpowered with love that she asks for them to give her food (raisins or raisin cakes and apples) for strength.

**2:6** She describes to them the tender embrace she had with the king. One hand was under her head and the other hand was embracing her.

**2:7** She repeats this thought two other times in this song (3:5; 8:4). She charges her maidens to not disturb her sleeping dreams.

"By the gazelles or by the does" was not an oath but a solemn charge, to act as cautiously as a hunter would when approaching these wild animals. This thought concludes the first act.

**ACT TWO**

**Scene One - In the bride's private chamber**

**II. The Mutual Seeking of the Bride and Groom.....2:8-3:5**

**A. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem.....2:8-14**

- 2:8** "Leaping" and "skipping" like a gazelle or a young stag probably describes the groom's approach on horseback.
- 2:9** She describes to her maidens her beloved's anxious search to find her at home. The groom goes from place to place to find her.
- 2:10-13** The time of year is now spring and the weather is pleasant. He invites her to go with him for an outing. The idea is that together they can view the beauties of nature.

This could mean something else. She may be saying, "This is the spring-time of our lives and we should enjoy it now."

- 2:14** It appears he was trying to convince her to join him. The phrase, "Rise up, my love...and come away" is seen twice in this section (2:10, 13b). Perhaps she was playing "hard to get." However, she quickly responds to him in the next section (2:15-17).

**B. The Bride's Words to Her Groom .....2:15-17**

- 2:15** The NASV translates this verse as, "Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards." This may be a better translation. The idea is that their romance was like a beautiful, fruitful vineyard and if they were not careful it could be ruined by other people, circumstances or events.
- 2:16** This verse seems to indicate that the groom responded to the bride's plea of verse 15.

"My beloved is mine" This is a key phrase (6:3; 7:10). They belong to no one else, but each other. Certainly, Solomon would have done well to have remembered this truth and not turned his affections to other wives and concubines.

The New Testament often speaks of the unity shared by a man and wife.

Matthew 19:6, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Hebrews 13:4-5, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

In our text the bride has the confidence that he belongs to her. Should not every wife live with this same confidence?

Also, she leaves no doubt in his mind that she is his. He does not need to worry that she may have intentions of being unfaithful to him. When spouses make a commitment to each other, they also make a commitment to God. God knows what people do and whether they are indeed faithful. God sees all!

The road to unfaithfulness begins when one loses control of their lusts. This is why Job said what he said and why Jesus taught so strongly against lust.

Job 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"

Matthew 5:27-28, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

The phrase, "I am his," are only words unless he or she intends to back up the statement with a commitment to remain faithful. The foundation for this is to control one's lusts.

James 1:13-14, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

"He feeds his flock" - The image here is of a shepherd to illustrate the duties of a king to his people (cf. 2 Samuel 5:2). Solomon has taken his job as king very seriously and has done his best to meet their needs.

**2:17** If this is connected to the last thought of verse 16 she is saying, "Now that you have done your work of taking care of the flock, take care of my needs." She sought his attention! Husbands and wives would do well to continue giving the proper attention to their mates after they are married.

"Mountains of Bether"- There was a mountainous district called Bethron, east of the Jordan (1 Samuel 2:29). The word "bether" means, "cleft or separation." This would give the phrase the literal meaning of "mountains of separation." This could be understood to be her plea for him to overcome all obstacles that would keep them apart.

## Scene Two - The brides bad dream.

### A. The Bride to Herself.....3:1-4

**3:1** This section (verses 1-4) is possibly her account of a bad dream she is remembering.

"By night on my bed" - This phrase probably indicates that the reported events are the retelling of her dream.

"Whom my soul loves" - Again this indicates the dedication the bride has for her groom. She is totally devoted to him. When he is away she is not thinking of, or desiring, another. Her longing is for him and him only.

"I sought him" - Why the groom is absent is not stated. Some have suggested that as king, Solomon was busy with the affairs of his kingdom and thus delayed in returning to his true love.

**3:2-3** She searches the city (probably Jerusalem), asking the guards if they have seen her groom.

**3:4** Finally, she finds her true love and she clings to him tightly.

"I had brought him to the house of my mother" - The fact that she could bring him into her mother's house is an expression used to show that her relationship with her groom was respectable and decent. She had no reason to be ashamed of their relationship.

### B. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem.....3:5

**3:5** The groom is able to rest peacefully in her mother's house, so she begs her attendants to not disturb him. Perhaps her mother's house had become a place of peace and solitude away from his daily responsibilities as king.

## ACT THREE

### Scene One - Song of the daughters of Jerusalem.

### III. The Wedding and Marriage Celebration.....3:6-5:1

#### A. The Daughters of Jerusalem Sing of the Approaching Groom .....3:6-10

**3:6** The attendants describe a royal wedding procession. The groom is well prepared having put on the perfume pleasing to his bride.

**3:7-8** The specific mention of Solomon has given many commentators problems. Some delete the name altogether while others try to translate the name into some comparable meaning. The reason for this is they refuse to believe that a polygamist like Solomon could be the subject of this section.

However, the Hebrew text is certain here. Solomon is clearly the one whom the attendants are singing about. He has a very impressive entourage.

1. He has sixty mighty men, reminding one of the bodyguards of David (2 Samuel 23:8-39).
2. Scholars have noticed the use of the term "Israel" in verse 7. This could provide more proof that this was written before the division of the Northern and Southern kingdoms in 922 BC.

**3:9** "Palanquin" - Solomon appears riding in a very impressive chair made of the finest wood. It is not clear whether this is being wheeled (a chariot) or carried.

**3:10** "He made" - This shows that the king had personally overseen the preparation of their honeymoon coach. The "pillars" were made of silver, its "support" (railing, or canopy) of gold and the "seat" was "purple" (the color of royalty).

The interior of the coach being "paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem," probably refers to cushions or a woven blanket made by the ladies of the court for the wedding trip as a gift to the bride and groom.

**B. The Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem.....3:11**

**3:11** The text again mentions Solomon (as it will again in 8:7, 12) and designates this as his wedding day. On his head he has a special "crown" or wreath given to him by his mother on this special day as a token of her blessing the union. The Hebrew word for "crown" here is not the same word for the royal crown. As he approaches he looks magnificent and everyone is extremely impressed!

**Scene Two - In the bridal chamber.**

**A. The Husband to His Wife .....4:1-15**

**4:1** The groom speaks in this section through verse 15. His bride is, in his eyes, beautiful. Whereas before he merely stated she was attractive, now he will describe in detail what he finds about her that is so beautiful.

He describes her eyes. As mentioned in other verses (1:15; cf. 5:12) her eyes are like the eyes of a dove. In his estimation, these deep, penetrating, gray-colored eyes are beautiful.

The king now describes his bride's hair. He says her hair is like a flock of goats. Most Palestinian goats have long, wavy black hair.

"Going down from Mount Gilead" - When one stood at the bottom of a hill and goats were coming down, it appeared as if the mountain was moving. Her hair had this type of look. It appeared active and flowing.

**4:2** His attention is now shifted to her teeth. He makes the following observations:

1. They are brushed and white,
2. They "bear twins," indicating the symmetry and perfection of her teeth and
3. She has a mouth full of teeth; there are no spaces.

**4:3** He next considers her lips. He observes that they are like a scarlet thread indicating she had used some kind of lip coloring. Cosmetics were common in ancient times. In noting her lips, he considers her mouth to be lovely (delightful or enchanting).

While still viewing her face, he mentions her "temples." The idea here is most likely her cheeks which have a reddish color which are visible under her veil (the pomegranate was a red fruit).

**4:4** He describes her neck. To him it is like the beautiful tower of David that projected up from the houses below (cf. Nehemiah 3:25).

1. Her neck being like the tower of David may indicate that it was slender and graceful in appearance.
2. In 7:4, he states that her neck is like an "ivory tower" perhaps referring to the white stones of the tower as comparable to the white loveliness of her neck.
3. The jewelry worn around her neck reminded him of the brightly polished shields of the guards which hung on the walls of the armory.

**4:5-6** He now describes her breasts. The idea of symmetry (cf. verse 2) is repeated here. The "two fawns" and the "mountain" and "hill" mentioned in verse 6 are her breasts. The "mountain of myrrh" (verse 6) is referring back to the "bundle of myrrh" worn between her breasts as a pendant suspended from a necklace (1:13).

**4:7** He wants his bride to know just how beautiful she is in his eyes. In a way, he is saying, "Do not change a thing, you are perfect." She is without "spot" or blemish.

**4:8-9** "My sister, my spouse" - He calls her his sister four other times (4:9-10, 12; 5:1-2). This may seem odd to us, but this phrase is used to emphasize that this will be a permanent relationship. A sister will always be a sister, and his bride will always be his bride, no matter what happens in life.

"One look of your eyes" - Everyone who has been in love understands the power of that look. She looks at him with that "wanting you" look in her eyes.

**4:10** He appreciates the way she looks and smells - all that she is and has done pleases him!

**4:11** Her lips are enticing. Her words are sweet and she smells wonderful! The word for "garments" in the original Hebrew language (ŚALMĀH) means, "outer garment." This probably indicates that her garments were fresh and clean like the cedars and flowers of Lebanon.

**4:12** She is a beautiful woman, but entrance into her "garden, spring, fountain" is only granted to the one to whom she belongs. This indicates that she is a virgin, pure and virtuous, and her love is only for her husband. Once they are married, she invites her husband into her garden to partake of the fruits (4:16).

**4:13-14** His beautiful bride's "plants" (qualities) are now described in loving terms by her groom. He uses various fragrant things to describe his appreciation for her.

**4:15** In addition to all these fragrant plants and spices, her garden had lovely springs of pure water, cool and refreshing like the snow-fed streams of Lebanon. Proverbs 5:15-18 uses this same imagery.

Proverbs 5:15-18, "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth."

The "well, cistern, and fountain" represent the wife. This passage in Proverbs commands men to remain loyal and true to their own wives being satisfied with them and not enticed by other women.

**B. The Wife to Her Husband .....4:16**

**4:16** The wife now responds to her husband. She invites him to enter her garden. She urges him to be enticed by the fragrance of her delights, to share her love, and eat the fruit that belongs only to him.

**C. The Husband to His Wife .....5:1a**

**5:1** "I have come" - He responds to her call in 4:16.

"I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk." - The myrrh, the honeycomb and wine all refer to the delightful charms of his beautiful bride, who is now his wife.

The marriage is now consummated!

Notice that all the restraints are removed in the marriage. There are no negatives with the sexual relationship in a marriage. Lust for one's spouse is not condemned. Sex does not defile the marriage bed (Hebrews 13:4).

[For additional information concerning marriage please see the appendices - QUALITIES OF AN IDEAL MARRIAGE.]

**D. The Husband to the Guests .....5:1b**

"Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!" - The husband now calls for their guests to share in the feast that the servants have prepared for the wedding celebration.

**ACT FOUR**

**Scene One - The bride's bad dream.**

**IV. Love Separated and then Reconciled .....5:2-6:9**

**A. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....5:2-8**

**5:2** There are two interpretations for this section.

1. All of this is a dream sequence similar to the one in chapter 3:1ff. In this verse she says, "I sleep, but my heart is awake." So, this is probably another time when she is dreaming.
2. However, others say this is not a dream, but a lapse in the marriage relationship. All couples have times when something is lacking.

When this is happening, a marriage can run into serious difficulties. Both partners need to work on problems immediately and try to get them resolved quickly.

"Open for me, my sister, my love" - She has dreamed that Solomon comes to her door late in the night and knocks on her door. It would not be uncommon in this situation for the husband and wife to have their own private quarters; thus, she slept alone.

"My head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night" - He is asking to be let in from the cool dampness of the night air.

- 5:3** In her hazy dream state, she was slow to let him in. Perhaps she was teasing him with the excuses she makes. Such as, that she was already undressed and didn't want to get her feet dirty walking to the door.
- 5:4** In his persistence Solomon tries to open the latch, but the door is locked. Seeing his frustration and anxiousness to be with her, she is persuaded to let him in.
- 5:5** "I arose to open for my beloved" - She is eager to open to him now. On her way to the door she stops to perfume herself with myrrh.
- 5:6** Finally reaching the door she discovers that her husband has left. She denied him entrance for too long and he probably left feeling frustrated and rejected.

This serves as a good lesson for marriage partners today. This example emphasizes to us in a dramatic way just how important it is for both parties to consider the sexual needs of their spouses.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5, "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

Fearing that she had offended her beloved, she panicked and rushed out into the night to find him.

- 5:7** As the terror in her dream intensifies, she frantically searches for her husband, but he cannot be found. Some wicked watchmen find her and mistreat her by

striking her, wounding her, and taking away her veil. Perhaps they struck her because she was not allowed to be out in the city at that time of night.

**5:8** When she returns to her home she begs her attendants to help her find her beloved and tell him how much she loves him. She is sorry and upset. It is essential to remember that all of this was a bad dream.

**B. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife ..... 5:9**

**5:9** The attendants ask her to explain what is so special about her beloved.

**C. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 5:10-16**

**5:10** In verses 10-16 the wife paints a beautiful poetic word picture of the qualities of her husband.

"White and ruddy" - He is handsome. This probably means that his skin was fair and his cheeks were ruddy (red, rosy).

The term "ruddy" can deal with hair color (reddish) or complexion.

David was described as "ruddy" (cf. 1 Samuel 16:12).

"chief among ten thousand" - She is saying that if ten thousand men were standing in a row, he would be the most handsome.

**5:11-12** "His head is like the finest gold" - This could be a reference to the gold crown he wore.

"His locks are wavy, and black as a raven" - She notes that his hair is black and wavy.

"His eyes are like doves by the rivers of waters" - She describes his eyes as deep and penetrating.

"Washed with milk, and fitly set" - This suggests that the white of his eyes was pure white, not red from tiredness or yellow from sickness.

**5:13** "His cheeks are like a bed of spices" - This indicates that his cheeks are strong and anointed with a sweet-smelling perfume.

"His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh" - In other words, his lips are like flowers that produce a wonderful aroma like costly ointment. His breath is sweet.

**5:14** "His hands are rods of gold set with beryl" - His hands are strong and his fingers are covered with costly rings. His body is strong and muscular.

**5:15** His legs are as solid as the pillars of the temple and as beautiful as pure gold. He is solid like the mighty trees of Lebanon. Cedar trees are very strong.

**5:16** "His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely" - This could refer to the sweetness of his kisses or the sweet words that flowed from his mouth. This could mean that he speaks words of love and romance to her or it could refer to the fact that he was a good conversationalist. His speech is full of sweetness.

"This is my beloved, and this is my friend" - The best possible marriage relationship is that of lovers who are also friends. Happy is the husband whose wife is his best friend (and vice versa)!

**D. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife .....6:1**

**6:1** "Where has your beloved gone"- Now her attendants would like to see him for themselves.

**E. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....6:2-3**

**6:2** She answers that he has gone to visit his country estate to see his gardens and sheep. He has gone to take care of business.

**6:3** She repeats that she is totally his, and he is totally hers. Their relationship is strong. She trusts him while he is away at work, pasturing his flock. She also reaffirms her love for and commitment to him. Solomon enjoyed his gardens, orchards and parks.

Ecclesiastes 2:5-6, "I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove."

**Scene Two - The Husband and Wife Together**

**A. The Husband to His Wife .....6:4-9**

**6:4** This is the second description by the husband of his wife. This time he praises four of her physical features.

"You are as beautiful as Tirzah" - Tirzah was an ancient city of the Canaanites (Joshua 12:24). It became the capital of the rebellious northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 15:33). Considering the comparison being made it must have been an especially charming place.

"Lovely as Jerusalem" - Jerusalem was another city admired for its beauty. The psalmist, Asaph, described Jerusalem (also called Zion) as "the perfection of beauty" (Psalm 50:2).

"Awesome as an army with banners!" - This seems to be an unusual comparison, but it means that her beauty was as awe inspiring as an army marching in full colors on parade.

**6:5** "Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me" - Solomon again notes the power of her eyes, which are overwhelming. When one is truly in love, often more is said with the eyes than with words. Perhaps her affectionate gaze left him breathless and weak.

"Your hair is like a flock of goats going down from Gilead" - Her beautiful black wavy hair is again mentioned (4:1).

**6:6** He praises her beautiful white teeth, all perfectly aligned and without any missing.

**6:7** Her "temples" (cheeks), again, are that rosy red color he finds appealing.

"There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number" - Notice that at this point Solomon has not yet reached the shocking number of wives and concubines he eventually accumulated in his harem.

1 Kings 11:3-4, "And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David."

A "concubine" was a lawful wife "of a second rank, who enjoyed no other conjugal right but that of cohabitation" (McClintock and Strong). Their children would be considered as legitimate, but they would not automatically inherit with the children of his primary wife.

The Old Testament Scriptures do not explicitly forbid polygamy. However, they do repeatedly warn concerning the dangers in order to discourage its practice.

[For additional information concerning marriage please see the appendices - WHY POLYGAMY DOESN'T WORK.]

**6:9** "My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother" - The husband says to his wife that she is unique; the only daughter of her family, and

is desired above all women. Even the queens and the concubines think she is a woman of great beauty.

## ACT FIVE

### Scene One - The daughters of Jerusalem exalt the wife's beauty.

- V. The Husband Praises His Wife .....6:10-8:4**  
**A. The Daughters of Jerusalem Praise the Wife .....6:10**

**6:10** The daughters of Jerusalem ask who is this beautiful maiden? They repeat Solomon's description of her.

- B. The Wife Responds to their Praise.....6:11-12**

**6:11** She had been for a stroll in the royal gardens. She walked among the nut trees, vines and flowers and as she strolled in this beautiful setting she was reminded of her family who were back home in the north country. Her heart longed to leave her life in the palace to travel back to visit her loved ones.

**6:12** "Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people" - As she strolled through the garden, she may have been thinking about the great change that had happened in her life. How had she, as a lowly farm maiden, been chosen by the king to sit at his side in the royal chariot?

- C. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife .....6:13a**

**6:13** "O Shulamite; Return, return, that we may look upon you!" - Her attending maidens begged her to stay with them so they could be blessed by her presence.

The maiden is a Shulamite. Shulam was located near Mount Tabor in Galilee, nine miles west of Megiddo. David's nurse (Abishag) came from this same area (cf. 1 Kings 1:1-3).

- D. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem .....6:13b**

"What would you see in the Shulamite?" - She humbly asks this question. It could be they were asking her to dance to help her feelings of loneliness.

"The dance of the two camps" - The KJV translates this as, "the company of two armies." The ASV translates this as, "the dance of Mahanaim." This Hebrew word can refer to armies or dances. The translators of the NKJV decided to translate it as "the dance of the two camps."

1. This could be a dance that expressed her feelings of indecision and separation.
2. She may have felt like she was being torn between the two places.
3. She wanted to be in the palace with her husband, but she desperately missed her family at home.

**E. The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Wife ..... 7:1-5**

**7:1-5** As she danced her attending maidens commented on her beauty. Notice the things mentioned:

1. Her feet are beautiful.
2. The curves of her hips are like the work of a fine craftsman.
3. Her navel is round like a goblet of wine.
4. Her waist is narrow and small like stalks of harvested wheat tied around the middle. There may have been a garland of flowers around her waist.
5. Her breasts are like two fawns, indicating perfect balance and symmetry.
6. Her neck is long and precious like ivory.
7. Her eyes are deep-set, like the pools of Heshbon.
8. Her nose is perfectly formed, like the tower of Lebanon.
9. Her head is like Mount Carmel, a beautiful extension of the land of northwestern Palestine.
10. Her long and flowing hair was like the purple garments worn by royalty.

**F. The Husband to His Wife ..... 7:6-9**

**7:6** Again the loving king rejoices in the beauty of his bride. She has many "delights" (charms, characteristics) that he finds appealing and attractive.

**7:7-8** After having described her beauty, he compares her to the stately date palm tree with its tall, slender form and her breasts are compared to "clusters" of grapes.

"The fragrance of your breath like apples" - Here he describes the sweetness of her breath referring to the joy of kissing her.

**7:9** "The roof of your mouth like the best wine" - He is saying that her kisses are like sweet wine. Her kisses are so gentle that they would not even wake up a man who was sleeping.

1. Poor quality wines would have a bitter taste that would be unpleasant.
2. In like manner, so would another woman's kisses.

Proverbs 5:3-5, "For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell."

**G. The Wife to Her Husband ..... 7:10-13**

She responds by saying she belongs to him and wants to satisfy him.

**7:10-13** "Let us go forth to the field" - She reaffirms her love for him and asks that they go back to her home village. She longs to see the fields and vineyards of home. It is now the spring time of the year and the countryside is lovely. She promises that if he takes her to the country she will reward him with her affections.

"Mandrakes give off a fragrance" - She mentions "mandrakes" as perhaps a romantic enticement to her husband.

1. The mandrake was a flowering plant with a long taproot usually forked at the bottom.
2. People in that day believed that eating the root promoted fertility.
3. It was also prized as an aphrodisiac or love potion.
4. In Genesis 30:14-17 we find that Leah used mandrakes to gain the attention of Jacob.

**H. The Wife to Her Husband ..... 8:1-3**

**8:1** "Oh, that you were like my brother" - She wishes that she could have always been together with her beloved. Brothers and sisters have the advantage of growing up together. Also, they could greet one another with a kiss and embrace without any shame.

**8:2-3** In earlier years the mother had been the bride's teacher. She taught her daughter (as all good mothers do) the "facts of life." Now the bride longs for her husband's embrace. In her mother's house they could be refreshed and have privacy for romance.

**D. The Wife to the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 8:4**

**8:4** The scene closes with her husband's embrace and the bride asking her attending maidens to give them their privacy.

**ACT SIX**

**Scene One - Set at the wife's home in the county.**

**VI. The Maturity of Love ..... 8:5-14**

**A. The Song of the Daughters of Jerusalem ..... 8:5a**

**8:5a** These are the words of the maidens who see the couple who are obviously very much in love with each other. They see the wife leaning against her husband as they stroll through the wilderness.

**B. The Husband's Memories ..... 8:5b**

It is difficult to know what this section is referencing. Perhaps, in some way, Solomon is expressing his thankfulness for his mother-in-law's willingness to endure the pain of giving birth to his future bride. It could be that under this tree is where his bride was born.

**C. The Wife to Her Husband ..... 8:6**

**8:6** "Set me as a seal upon your heart" - They let everyone know that they belong to each other and are devoted completely to each other.

1. In the culture of that day, every king had his signet ring used to seal personal communications.
2. The letter would be sealed with wax and stamped with his ring to prove that it was authentic.
3. If it fell into the wrong hands it would be disastrous.
4. Therefore, the security of the ring was very important.
5. In a way, she may have been saying to Solomon, "Let me be as precious and as close to you as you keep your signet ring."

"For love is as strong as death" - Their love is as strong and compelling as death, for when death calls no one can resist it.

A preacher once said, "Death never relents in his pursuit of his victim. Death knows no discouragement. So, her affection for her mate would never fail, and every obstacle would be overcome."

"Jealousy as cruel as the grave" - In this context, the jealousy mentioned is the proper jealousy of a spouse. A devoted, loving wife will not share her husband's love with another woman, and a devoted, loving husband will not share his wife with another man.

1. It must be remembered that we have a jealous God (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 6:15; Joshua 24:19; Isaiah 42:8; 48:11; Nahum 1:2).
2. God will not share the honor that belongs to Him with another.

"A most vehement flame" - The ESV translates this phrase as, "the very flame of the LORD." They claim the Hebrew word found here includes the name of Jehovah. However, in all probability this is not the correct translation.

1. In Young's Literal Translation you find the following interpretation, "a flame of Jah." There are three theories of interpretation concerning the use of "Jah" (the name of Jehovah) in the Hebrew word:
  - a. "Jah" is simply an intensifying suffix, and not a reference to the divine name;
  - b. "Jah" is a short form of the divine name, but here serves as an intensifying suffix;
  - c. "Jah" is a short form of the divine name, and represents the divine name.
2. Other versions seem to have the better sense of this Hebrew word:
  - a. KJV = "a most vehement flame";
  - b. NKJV = "a most vehement flame";
  - c. NIV = "like a mighty flame."

In all probability this verse is saying that love is like a large fire that has an unquenchable flame. This fits the context the best when you consider the first part of verse 7.

**D. The Husband Responds to His Wife ..... 8:7**

**8:7** True love is something that endures. Even though life may present its challenges and difficulties, this kind of love cannot be quenched.

"All the wealth of his house" - As an illustration Solomon compares love with riches. Even if a man were to offer him all that he owned to purchase his bride's love those riches would be despised (and thus rejected). Her love, as with any married person's love, is not for sale. Such love is reserved and restricted for that one special person.

**Scene Two - Visiting with bride's family in the country.**

**A. The Bride Remembers Her Brothers' Words ..... 8:8-9**

**8:8-9** This is a difficult text. Perhaps this describes the wife's younger sister. Her body has not yet matured and developed and the couple are concerned as to what to do about making sure she does not engage in a sexual relationship before she is married. The couple promise that they will care for her and educate her until she is older.

"If she is a wall" - This means that if she remained pure and virtuous then no man would be able to seduce her.

"If she is a door" - This means that even if she was open to the advances of young men, they would go to great lengths to protect her to keep her virginity until the appropriate time. They would do anything necessary to protect her innocence and purity.

**B. The Wife to Everyone ..... 8:10-12**

**8:10** "I am a wall" - Remembering the words of her brothers she proclaims for all to hear that she had remained virtuous and pure before her marriage. She had been like a strong wall, resisting every temptation.

"I became in his eyes as one who found peace" - Her purity had been an important character trait to the king when he chose her for his bride.

1. It is interesting that the names of both (Solomon and Shulamith) mean, "peace."

2. Thus, they found peace together with each other.

**8:11-12** In these two verses, the wife compares herself to one of her husband's vineyards so that she can make a special request. She lovingly explains that she is his as a gift of love without any "renter's fee." Therefore, the king should reward her brothers who had carefully raised her and kept her purity for him in the past.

"Those who tend its fruit" probably represent her brothers who should be paid two hundred pieces of silver. The text does not give us Solomon's response, but he probably was happy to grant his wife's request.

**C. The Husband to His Wife ..... 8:13**

**8:13** "You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice" - At this point, it appears that voices are heard from without, asking Solomon's wife to come out and sing for them. Perhaps these were old friends and companions from her village who had been near and dear to her.

"Let me hear it!" - Solomon wishes to hear her sing as well. Thus, the scene ends with his lovely young wife singing a song to show her love for her husband.

**D. The Wife to Her Husband ..... 8:14**

**8:14** "Make haste, my beloved" - It is fitting that the book closes with the devoted wife calling for her beloved to draw near to her, to hear the song of her love for him.

Truly the song of songs!

**END**

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## **Qualities of an Ideal Marriage**

From the Song of Solomon

1. The man and the woman are learning to be totally captivated with each other (1:15-17; 2:10-14; 3:6-11).
2. Each partner is developing a love and contentment with the physical attributes of the other (5:10-16). He is content with her body, and her body only (even if it is not perfect - cf. 1:5,15).
3. Verbal appreciation for those physical attributes is often expressed (1:8-11; 4:1-15; 5:10-16; 6:4-9; 7:1-9).
4. Each partner longs for the affection of the other and desires the love of no other (1:2-8; 2:3-6; 8:1-3). They make known to the other when they want to make love (2:10-14; 4:7-16; 7:11-13; 8:14).
5. Each appreciates how they are better because of the other (1:12-14; 8:10).
6. There is a feeling of "total commitment" to each other (2:16; 6:3; 7:10; 8:5-7).
7. There is a genuine care and concern for the other (3:1-4; cf. 2:7; 8:4).

## WHY POLYGAMY DOESN'T WORK

"Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5).

The Bible does not specifically condemn polygamy (a man having multiple wives). Several passages strongly imply that it is not God's will. Jesus quotes Genesis 2: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:5-6). In marriage, two become one. Paul concedes, "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).

Yet where the Bible reports in detail on polygamous marriages, it shows them as a disaster. Abraham takes Hagar in addition to Sarah, and a vicious rivalry develops between them. Jacob is tricked into taking Leah along with Rachel—and adds their maids Bilhah and Zilpah to the mix—and the result is a toxic environment. Leah cannot bear enough children to make her husband love her. The children of these unions grow to hate each other, to the point that they sell Joseph (beloved because he is Rachel's child) into slavery. Elkanah's wives Penninah and Hannah needle one another and cause great grief to Hannah. David's multiple wives lead to hostility between the children—Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon. The favored children are always those of the favored wife. This is to say little of Solomon's glut of wives who turned his heart away from serving Jehovah.

The record shows us that in polygamous marriages, resentment builds. Inadequate attention is paid to all the different wives (and children). Rivalries inevitably develop between wives and between children.

Why doesn't polygamy work? Polygamy doesn't work because it's not how God designed marriage. God intended marriage to be a union between two people. When we go against the grain of our design, we shouldn't be surprised when our efforts fail miserably and are counterproductive. The biblical principles of marriage—two becoming one flesh, clinging to his wife, loving as Christ loved the church—do not allow for polygamy. God's picture of a loving home for husband, wife, and children does not square with the scenes described above.

"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food'—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13-14). Paul speaks of what our bodies are "meant for." It is folly to use what God has given in ways he did not intend. We could try to use a hammer as a screwdriver, but we shouldn't be surprised when we end up with a mess on our hands.

God has a purpose for our speech (Ephesians 4:29), his church (Ephesians 4:11-16), our money (1 Timothy 6:17-19), and our intellect (Matthew 22:37). Our charge is to live according to our design.

Polygamy doesn't work because God's plan works and our "good ideas" don't.