

When Are you Ready to Marry?

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: Song of Solomon 1:5-7¹

Date: October 10, 2010, 10:30am

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

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Song of Solomon 1:5-7**. We continue in a series of messages entitled “Passion, Purity, and Marital Fidelity”. Many who are single want to be married. If you are single, you should not marry until you are ready. How do you know when you are ready?

When are you ready to marry? You are ready to marry **when you are the kind of person that you ought to be**. You need to come into marriage with Godly character, ready to work hard. Marriage is not there to make us happy. Joy and happiness come when you are submitted to God whether you are married or single.

So many people rush into marriage thinking it will make them happy and solve all their problems. That’s a recipe for disaster. To be married takes an awful lot of work and sacrifice on the parts of both people.

First we need to realize that if you are not a person

- I. You are ready to be married when you are **concerned** about what is most important. Inner beauty matters (vs. 5-6).

You are ready to marry when you are not concerned with the superficial and shallow. This Shulammite is no princess. We find out that she’s grown up on a farm. She’s not so concerned about superficial beauty.

She says in **verses 5-6**, “I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. 6 Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!”

A. She was not **socially** attractive.

1. She’s from a broken and poor family. We first notice she addresses the “daughters of Jerusalem”, the single, eligible ladies in Solomon’s royal court. She was not from the royal city. The Shulammite is from the tribe of Dan in Lower Galilee—she’s from the wrong of the tracks! There is always that desire to compare. But she does not gain her value from her family or hometown.
2. Her father is not named, but her brothers have put her to work. Many commentators believe the father has either left the family or has died. What hope does this girl have of marrying?

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

The godly Shulammitte girl is from a poor Jewish family in the tribe of Dan and does not have the pampered beauty of the urban women of the upper class. She was a working-class peasant girl. She was not a princess. Her skin was not dark because of natural beauty but because of the sun-tan that comes from working so many grueling hours in the fields.

She says, “I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon”.

3. To say that she was dark was to say that she was **“weathered”**. She was sun-tanned. It had little to do with the **color of her skin and more to do with her social standing**.

The Shulammitte girl in our passage as looked down upon not because of her skin but because of her low social standing. Her face was sun-tanned and she had blisters on her hands. Everybody knows farm girls don’t marry kings!

There were many Africans in her day that were royal and dignified and respected. We think of the famous Queen of Sheba. The Shulammitte was weathered, but she was beautiful. Her beauty was not simply on the outside.

- B. She may not be socially attractive, but she is **spiritually** attractive!

She says, “I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon”. Inner beauty mattered to this Shulammitte.

1. Like the tents of Kedar, she was a woman who **protected** that which was on the inside. She guarded her character and her purity. She was like the **tents of Kedar**, which were weaved of black and grey goat hair. The tents of the Bedouin shepherds of Kedar are blackened by exposure to the elements and are strong enough to endure the desert climate.² So the Shulammitte shepherd girl is not dainty and fragile like the ladies at Solomon’s royal court. Yet she sees herself as “lovely”.

The tents of Kedar were more concerned with **protection** than with **presentation**. She’s good looking but not at all pampered or in with all the fads of the day. She’s out of touch with what’s “in” because she’s been working in the field. They were beautiful sprawling tents that were a shelter of protection for the Bedouin shepherds and their family. The tents of Kedar were places of protection and shelter—they took the wear and tear to protect what was in the inside.

The Shulammitte was willing to take the wear and tear on the outside to protect that which was most important on the inside. These tents soaked up the heat and provided cover for the family and the belongings. It was a place of comfort and rest.

²Garrett, D. A. (2001, c1993). *Vol. 14: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (386). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

2. Like Solomon's curtains, she was a woman who was **mysterious** and **modest**. Verse 5, "I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon."

The curtains of Solomon were dark, but you never knew what was happening on the inside. There was mystery and modesty. You are ready to be married when you know not to blab all your problems to the world. When you can be quiet and take your problems to the Lord.

You are ready to be married when you can be like the curtains of Solomon and have some shamefacedness and modesty and mystery about you ladies.

There is something attractive about a girl who is content with herself. Who isn't chasing after the guys. Who is secure and spiritual. Ladies and men, this is good preparation for marriage.

- Some of you ladies are tempted to chase after **superficial fads** so that you can get noticed. That's a dangerous road to follow. Even if it worked, what kind of guy would you get? You'd get a guy that's going to be superficial spiritually, and he'll break your heart in the end! **If all you are is make up, cool clothes, and a good hair style, then you are not ready for marriage.** If you have to flirt with a guy to get him to notice you, you are not ready for marriage.
- **What are you on the inside?** Are you a godly girl? When's the last time you prayed for an hour? When's the last time ladies you read the Bible from cover to cover? When was the last time you had answered prayer. You are not ready to marry if your standard for living comes from your peers. You have to be able to stand on your own on the Lord's side.
- We don't know what **the woman of Proverbs 31** looked like, but we read in **verse 30**, "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

- II. You are ready to be married when you are **careful** to serve God where you are (vs. 6).

When responsibility matters.

Verse 6, "Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!"

So many people put on rose colored glasses and think that Mr. Right or Miss Right is going to "make them happy". If you are looking for someone to make you happy, you are not ready to marry!

On the surface, we would all say, she does not compare to the women of the royal court. She's only a farm girl! She's a peasant, not a princess! But this girl was content to be single. She wasn't looking to marry Solomon. She was looking to be faithful to God!

The Shulammitite's brothers might have been angry and mean to her, but God used that situation in her life to make her a hard working and learn to submit to God even in a hard situation.

The Shulammitite was not looking to be married. She was faithful to God. Serving God did not help her cause on the surface. On the surface she was less marryable.

She was submissive to authority, even in times of great stress. She did what she was told to the neglect of her own eligibility for marriage.

A. **She did not have an ideal family situation.** When she speaks of her "mother's sons", she's talking about her step brothers. We don't know why they were angry with her. Nothing is indicated that she did anything wrong. This is just her lot in life. She has no idea that one day she is going to be a princess. She just kept her eyes on God and trusted God. That's what you need to do. She's looking back and saying, I wasn't fretting about being single. I'm content to serve God right where I am.

You may not have an ideal family situation. That doesn't matter. God is in charge of finding you a mate. God sent Solomon one day to look out at his fields and he noticed a humble lady that was different from the women of his royal court. As he got to know her, he put aside all the superficial stuff, and saw a girl who wanted to serve God! A man is attracted to a girl who is not afraid to work.

Application: Do you have a servant's heart? **Until your highest goal in life is to please God and serve Him with all your heart, you are not ready to be married.**

B. **The Shulammitite girl didn't have the money or the time to be worldly wise with fashion.** In verse 6, she says of her brothers, "they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!". She was willing to put off marriage for the livelihood of her family. They needed to eat. She gave of herself. **If you think worldly fashion is the road to a good marriage, you are NOT ready to get married!** You need to adorn yourself with a humble servant's heart. That's what makes for a lasting marriage.

Application: Men if all you are attracted to is the outside, you are in for a very rocky marriage. Ladies, are you willing to trust God to send the right man along if that is God's will for you? Do you see that God wants to make you the woman that you ought to be so that if you get married, you'll have the marriage God wants you to have?

III. You are ready to be married when you are **cautious** about the sanctity of marriage (vs. 7). You are ready to be married when you know you don't have to give away your purity in order to get a potential mate.

When purity matters.

Verse 7, "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?"

She's willing to wait. She wants to be with him, but she wants to go about it in a legitimate way.

We are to "make no provision for the flesh".

A. In Solomon's day, a veiled woman who would appear in midday was a prostitute. The Shulammitte says, "I will not practice the immorality of a prostitute to get a man". Single ladies, "I will not sacrifice my chastity and my purity for a man". The Shulammitte girl had convictions.

If at any time you feel like you must set aside your Biblical godly convictions to win the attention of someone, then you need to PUT ON THE BRAKES.

B. The right person for you if you are a Christian, is someone who is going to push you toward God, not away from Him! You should aspire to marry someone who is going to challenge you spiritually, and is willing to tell you goodbye if you go the wrong way!

C. Let me say finally, that what you wear ladies matters. **1 Timothy 2:9-10**, "women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works."

The Shulammitte said, "why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?" And I ask all the ladies here today, are you concerned that your apparel communicate the modesty and respectability of godliness, and not the questionable morals of the world? It is quite difficult to buy clothes as a Christian woman these days because so much of what the world pushes is meant to accentuate your form.

Single Christian ladies, you should want to wear clothing that accentuates your face, not your body. You want the man you marry to love you for a beauty that is more than skin deep.

IV. Finally, you are ready to be married when, you are **content** to be single.

Song of Solomon 2:7, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases" (cf. Song of Songs 3:5).

The daughters of Jerusalem are the elite class of women in the royal court. The Shulammitte girl never was jealous of her peers who had money and popularity in the royal court. She was content being single. She wasn't looking for Solomon. You might ask, if she doesn't have the money or the friends of the ladies of the royal court, then how can she compete? She wasn't competing. She was content to be single. She had desire. But she was careful not to awaken that desire.

Illustration: Jim and Elizabeth Elliott. Both loved each other. Desired marriage. Gave up marriage for missionary work. They met near a cemetery. As they told each other of their love, and that they would sacrifice that love for the cause of Christ, the shadow of a cross from one of the grave stones came between them.

You are not married until you are married. You may have whims of love as a single person, but you cannot awaken it until you say “I do”. We’ll get much more into this in the next two weeks, but for now let me say this is the art of contentment in singleness.

You cannot put your mind on marriage until the right time.

Conclusion: What kind of foundation do you want for your marriage? How many of you have ever gone camping? Have you ever started a fire with twigs and lighter fluid that burned brightly and then quickly burned out? You know that in order to have a fire that lasts, you have to have some good strong mature lumber. In the same way, unless you are spiritually mature, you are headed for disaster. Unless the person you are interested is spiritually mature, you are looking at starting a long term relationship with lighter fluid. If you are looking at a potential mate, you need to have someone with strong, godly character, that loves and walks with the Lord.

The person you desire in a mate says so much about you. May God give grace to all our singles to make the right choices, and to all our parents to teach and guide their children in making these choices.