

What Should Attract You to a Potential Mate

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Text: Song of Solomon 1:1-4¹

Date: October 3, 2010, 10:30am

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

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Song of Solomon 1:1-4**. We begin today a series of messages entitled “Passion, Purity, and Marital Fidelity”. There is an attack on the family directed to both singles and married people. The best way to secure yourself or your family from harm is to take shelter under the Word of God. God made marriage, he made our bodies, and He has direction for us all. And we will be supremely blessed if we heed what God says on this.

The path that the Song of Solomon takes is very much like all marriages. Today we are going to talk about...

- 1 – What Should Attract You to a Potential Mate (1:1-4)
- 2 – How Do I Know When I am Ready to Marry? (1:5-7)
- 3 – The Courtship Begins (1:8-2:7)
- 4 – Biblical Courtship & Purity (2:8 – 3:5)
- 5 – The Wedding God Wants You to Have (3:6-11)
- 6 – Why Marital Intimacy is Reserved for Marriage (chapter 4)
- 7 – Pleasing God in Marital Conflict (5:1-6:13)
- 8 – Love & Respect, the Secret to a Powerful Marriage (7:1-8:4)
- 9 – True Love is Worth Wait (8:5-14)

When you are looking for a mate, remember that this is a person you are going to spend your entire life with. The vows are still “Till death do us part” not “Till **my desire changes** do us part”. We are committed until death as Christian people because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church.

We want to look for a mate that we can serve God with. Someone that we can raise godly children with. Now we have the Bible, but guess what? The world is not on our side. The world thinks that purity is no big deal and passion should always be fulfilled immediately. The world does not want you to be pure until you are married. The world says, “You need to test drive your potential marriage”. “You need to live together”. The world is not on the side of marital fidelity. They are not on the side of growing old together. The world has established a pattern.

Let’s talk about the Dangers of Modern Dating

We have an awful process in our country that is really nothing more than preparation for divorce. **Most of what is called “dating” should really be called “destruction” because it ends in disaster and the forfeiting of your purity.** Young people in this activity are encouraged to hang out together and perhaps “go steady” or be boyfriend and girlfriend. They are often left alone, they give away their purity, and they are scarred morally as a result. There is a cycle that prepares a young person to not want commitment. To be afraid of

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

commitment and marriage. They want to give up easily. The world establishes this pattern very early on in our children.

Joey Likes Sally

Have you ever seen the scribbling testimonies of love on a tree or a wall that said “Joey HEARTS Sally? I remember as a young person, this was something around the 5th or 6th grade that went on on a weekly basis. A boy would become infatuated with a girl, and the word would get out that “Joey loves Sally”. Word would get to Sally, and Joey would write a note to Sally, “Will you be my girlfriend? Circle YES or NO”. Then they would be a couple. This is what goes on in the fifth grade. That juvenile relationship might last a day or a week or maybe a month, but eventually Sally and Joey “break up” and move on to other juvenile “romances”. Now this all sounds cute, but it gets much more serious in high school, and it prepares our young people for disaster when they get married. Because by the time they get married, they’ve had plenty of preparation for divorce.

Arranged Marriages

I know what we can do, we can just have the parents arrange the marriage. You would be surprised that arranged marriages are far more successful than those built on dating. Often people from other cultures who have arranged marriages are baffled by the stupidity of our “dating” system in America. They can’t believe the practice of a young person choosing who they are going to marry based merely on superficial feelings and the very limited insight I have into a potential mate.

I read about one such visitor to the USA who asked, “Why do these young people think they can make a wise choice about marriage when they’ve never been married? Why do they think they are able to choose their own mates when they don’t even know who they are themselves, much less who they will become? Why don’t they trust their parents, who understand something about marriage and know that beauty is deceitful and charm is in vain?”²

Now I’m not against dating and courtship if the parents are carefully involved. And we are going to get into that next week. In fact, I’ll have two messages on biblical courtship.

But for today, instead of going from our own limited perspective, we are going to go way back in time and interview a married man and his wife as they give us inspired biblical advice as to what to look for in a potential mate.

Turn with me if you would to the Song of Solomon. This is a love song that was sung by the ancient Hebrews. We are told that we are to sing “songs, and hymns and spiritual songs”. This would be a “spiritual song”.

In this song there are certain characters that give advice about passion, purity, and fidelity.

- The **Characters** and message of Solomon’s Song.
 - A. First we have **Solomon**. He is the famous king of Israel. As the author of this song, he is one of the main speakers. He gives us the first verse. **Verse 1**, “**The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.**”

² Tom Nelson. *The Book of Romance* (Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, 1998), 2.

This is a song of Solomon that begins with his wife testifying of her unique journey of how she as a **peasant girl** marries a king. This is the only love song inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore this is really the authoritative standard on passion, purity and marital faithfulness. So why should Solomon, who in later years was not known for marital fidelity, write this book? I believe he wrote this book before he strayed. The fact that God brought him back by the end of his life demonstrates God's grace, and should give all of us hope!

But there is another character we meet in this love song. Her actual name is never mentioned.

B. Solomon's song is about the love he shares with a **peasant girl** who becomes his princess. The first biblical record we have of Solomon marrying is to a pagan, Pharaoh's daughter as part of a political alliance (**2 Chronicles 8:11**). Yet, it seems that the Song of Solomon was written well before that—a song written to Solomon's first wife and first love, a young and beautiful Shulammitte girl from the tribe of Dan. She has become known throughout the ages as "the peasant princess". In **verse 6**, you'll notice that the Shulammitte girl's brothers made her a shepherdess—"they made me keeper of the vineyards" (**verse 6**). This was not a flattering thing for a girl. Nothing much was on her side. She was poor, and without striking natural beauty. Yet Solomon loved her and wrote this letter as the standard for marital love in the Bible.

C. The **Message** of Song of Solomon is that it is God's will for God's people to have a full and happy marriage. But marital love is very spiritual. It is far more than skin deep. In fact, Song of Solomon is not only a love song about godly marriage—it ultimately points to a far greater love—the love Jesus Christ has for His church. We must always remember that marriage is a temporary institution which will be ended by death and whose purpose it to tell us of God's everlasting love for His people.

What we are going to see in the first seven verses is two married people reflecting on what it was that attracted them to each other. Now this is a love song, but it is filled with wisdom about how to deal with passion in a godly way and to be pure until marriage and faithful within marriage.

So Let's Begin!

What Kind of Person Should I Be Attracted to for Marriage? You have to understand that this is a married woman remembering the days leading up to her wedding day. She's going to talk about what attracted her to Solomon.

I. The first level of attraction mentioned is **Physical attraction** (vs. 2). The first thing we notice is that these are definitely the words of a married woman. The Jews would have forbidden any and all sensual contact outside of the context of marriage, recognizing that such contact would inevitably lead to intimacy.

Verse 2, “<SHE> Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine.” Certainly, there was the kiss of a greeting that at times was allowed, such as when Jacob kissed Rachel. This is not the kiss of a greeting. Here is a married woman testifying to what we all know.

Explanation: Love is powerful. There is a powerful jolt of electricity that God designed with physical touch. There is a physical urge in all of us that is reserved only for marriage. This kind of love is worth the wait. **Electricity is very helpful, but it must be harnessed, or it will destroy!**

Illustration (Farris Wheel): I remember the first time I held Jill’s hand. We were on the Farris Wheel at the Carnival in Oak Forest, Illinois! Wow, that’s electric! We do have a level of passion and attraction in our hearts that is not wrong, but it must be very guarded. Solomon’s Shulammitte bride reflects of her battle with attraction before she was married in **Song 2:7**, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem... that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.”

The sad thing is that the world paints this kind of love as the ultimate goal of love for those who are not married. That is so sad. Solomon’s pure Jewish bride says that marital love is “better than wine.” Love that is expressed in God’s time and in God’s way is truly heavenly and holy. It is something to be esteemed. It is so sacred and holy, precious and priceless. It is not something that we should say is “dirty”. It is holy if it is kept and reserved for marriage.

What Solomon and his pure Shulammitte bride symbolize is the same as what the writer of Hebrews says in **Hebrews 13:4**, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous”.

*****Marital love is pure, but if you remove the marriage covenant from the equation, all sexual activity (including that which occurs only in the imagination) is nothing but fornication, a serious sin that is especially defiling and shameful—so much so that merely *talking* about it inappropriately is a disgrace according to Ephesians 5:12).³ This is why the words about marital intimacy are shrouded and hidden and mysterious. God uses words that are purposely metaphorical to guard the sacredness of marriage.**

This physical desire must be harnessed by holiness, not as dirty, but as sacred, God-given, and precious and reserved for marriage. **We must never found a marriage on romance alone. That is a recipe for disaster.** Marital love is intoxicating. Love that is reserved for marriage will make a person light-headed. It is exhilarating. This is why it is extremely dangerous if this is all you have.

Application: Sadly, many people rush to marriage only on the fumes of romance. It’s like putting lighter fluid on a fire. There is a great explosion of fire at first, but then the fire quickly dies out and gets very cold. There is nothing of substance to make that fire burn. In our day, couples too often rush into marriage on passion alone. Soon after

³ See John MacArthur. *The Rape of the Song of Solomon*. Blog archive. Challies.com.

marriage, after the romantic vapors evaporate, what is left are two very flawed and selfish people. So we have to build on something greater than mere physical attraction.

- II. The second and most important level of attraction mentioned is **Spiritual** attraction (vs. 3). I've heard girls say, "He's such a hunk!" My first question is "a hunk of what?" What's this guy made of? What you ought to be looking for, single girls, is a man that is made of godly character. Dads and moms, you need to teach your children what to look for in a mate.

Listen to the Shulammitte peasant girl: **Verse 3**, "your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you".

A. **Cleanliness** ought to attract us (vs. 3a). The Shulammitte says, I like your "anointing oils". She's saying, "I like his cologne". The first thing she notices is that this guy's well put together. He's clean. **Verse 3a**, "your anointing oils are fragrant". Solomon took care of himself.

- In Solomon's day, men rarely bathed. They used scented oils and ointments—kind of like cologne. These oils kept their skin from drying out in the dry Middle East climate. So yes, he was well groomed and clean, and often the superficial outward things like this first grab our attention.
- I can remember in college we would get intercollegiate letters, and no matter who it was from, every letter smelled like perfume!

Illustration: You can tell when love begins to awaken in young people. The kid who used to hate baths is taking showers twice a day! They are constantly brushing their teeth and swishing with mouthwash.

So cleanliness is important, but what really impressed the Shulammitte girl was something much more important than his cleanliness.

B. **Character** ought to attract us (vs. 3b). **Verse 3b**, "your name is oil poured out". A person's name in Israel was equal to the person's character. Solomon's cleanliness goes far beyond how he kept the outside. His godly character is pleasing and above reproach. There's nothing in Solomon's character at this time that "smells bad".

"...oil poured out": This oil is referring to the most purified oil there is. It is the first pressing of the oil—this was the oil that
"was used in the lampstand that burned day and night in the Temple. The first pressing of any olive harvest went for Temple use only...it was designated solely for the worship of the Lord. Purified oil, therefore, was the best, but even beyond the best, it was the best given to God."⁴

Application: Are you seeking a mate that has given themselves to God?

⁴ Nelson. *Romance*, 4-5.

C. **Chastity** ought to attract us (vs. 3). **Verse 3c**, “therefore virgins love you”. Young women of marryable age loved Solomon. They respected him. The chaste women of Solomon’s court felt safe with Solomon. Why? Solomon had the reputation with others of having a pure, godly, and chaste lifestyle. He apparently treated women with dignity and respect. He kept himself pure. This was well known. He was chaste and careful with the opposite gender. The unmarried girls felt safe around him. He had a reputation of godliness and purity.

Application: Are you chaste? If you are a flirt around the opposite gender, you ought to be ashamed. You are not protecting and respecting God’s daughters. When considering a lifelong mate, ask yourself:

- Do I have the reputation as a chaste, godly person?
- Am I attracted first and foremost to the physical, or is this person’s beauty more than “skin deep”? Is their godliness the primary reason for my attraction?
- Would I be proud to bring this person home to meet Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa, Aunts and Uncles?

D. **Chivalry** ought to attract a young woman (vs. 4a). What is “chivalry”? We find it in **verse 4**, “Draw me after you; let us run”. **Chivalry is when the man takes the lead.** A young man sets the tone for his future marriage by being a man. He “draws” the woman after him. He takes the lead. He opens the car door. He esteems her with his words. He treats her gently. He draws her in the right way.

Ladies, if a man wants to put you into a compromising situation, then he is not a leader, but a coward. He will lead you to all the safe places. He will insist that you never be alone. If you suddenly come on to him, he will warn you! He will be a man. It is that kind of man that every young woman wants to “run” with. “Let us run” says the Shulammitte.

By the way, women ought not to put themselves forward. A godly woman will WAIT for a godly man to draw her after him. A godly man will take the lead, and never lead to compromising places. That leads us to the last thing that the Shulammitte names that attracts her. It is self control.

E. **Self-Control** ought to attract us (vs. 4b). Solomon was of such character that he took the lead in his courtship of his pure Jewish bride. There is a need for self-control. Notice in verse 4, that the desire for marriage is strong. “The king has brought me into his chambers.” The bride is looking back from her wedding day with NO REGRETS!!!

The sacred day did arrive for the Shulammitte. But they kept pure until that day. He protected her. He was a man of reputation. He never put her in any compromising situations. Here is a married woman reflecting on her courtship and what attracted her to Solomon – The king waited until the wedding day to bring her into his chambers.

Application: To our single men and ladies, what is reserved for marriage is so precious must guard it. Some men will say, “Well I love her!” Single men, if you want to express your love, then you protect her and don’t treat her like a prostitute. Don’t awaken that romantic strong love until you are married. ***You ought never put yourself in a situation where you are alone with your potential mate.***

Notice she speaks of marital love as a place that is hidden and secret: the “chambers”. Intimacy is reserved for marriage! Marital love is sacred and should be mysterious. It should be something shared only between a man and the wife that he has covenanted to be with whether they are poor or rich, whether they are sick or in good health. They are together until death parts them!

This is why we ought to be offended when marital intimacy is prostituted on TV commercials and on internet ads! We ought to be incensed and infuriated! If we men are truly men at all, we will guard our homes from this garbage. We will guard our own eyes from that which trashes the most sacred love between two people.

Where is a man of this character? Every lady who is interested in marriage ought to want a man like this. Every mother ought to diligently teach her son to be a man like this.

Listen to the godly daughters of Jerusalem in **verse 4b**, “<OTHERS> We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.”

A man like this is one in a thousand. Men, married or single, you be a true man that protects that which is sacred. You be a man that honors what God honors. Don’t contribute to the decadence of our culture. Keep sacred that which God calls sacred. Men, if you do that you will be highly honored by women in general. They will point to you and “exult and rejoice in you”. They will rightly respect you.

Conclusion: Perhaps there are those here today that are thinking about marriage. The first question you ought to ask yourself about your potential mate is:

1. Is this person born again? Do they truly have a walk with Jesus Christ?
2. Has this person grown in the faith? Do they have a reputation about being forward and courageous about the things of God?
3. Is God more important in this person’s life than any human relationship?