



# Growing in Marriage, Part 1

## An overview of the Song of Solomon

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life  
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[livinghopechurch.net](http://livinghopechurch.net)

“When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now.”

– C.S. Lewis

1. Expositors class today at 5pm.
2. Evening service 5pm

*If* you don't have a Bible, there should be one in the seat in front of you. Open your Bible to **Song of Solomon**. The title of our message this morning is “Growing in Marriage.”

Human love is so imperfect, yet it can at times be exhilarating. On a human level physical beauty fades. The spark of romance is imperfect. Often people get married to satisfy their desire to love and be loved. For those of you who are married, you know this can be quite a rocky experience. But today I want to point you to a love that never fails – a love that will not let you go.

Today and next week we are going to see how Christ now sees His Bride as eternally beautiful. You are loved by God today. And if you are in Christ. You are eternally beautiful to Him from beginning to end.

The Song of Solomon is a love story that takes us from King Solomon's first glance at his peasant princess until they grow old together. It is a story of human love that God has designed to reflect His divine love for us.

### **Marriage is a Picture**

Marriage is so important, not only because it the foundation stone of our society, but more importantly it is a picture of Christ's love for the church.

God created marriage as a picture to tell the story of His love for His Bride. Marriage is an expression of God's love for people who don't deserve it.

Though there is great joy in matrimony, marriage was not created mainly for our **happiness**, but for God's **glory**. No human spouse can deliver ultimate happiness. Ultimate happiness comes from giving our lives away, not to each other, though that is important. Ultimately happiness comes by each one of us giving him or herself to God.

The Apostle Paul says in **Ephesians 5:32-33**, “This mystery [of marriage] is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. So, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

## PERSONALITIES IN THE SONG OF SOLOMON

In this love story of Solomon's song, there are several captivating and attractive personalities, all of whom have high moral character.

### King Solomon

The first and most distinguished character we meet is the famous King Solomon. He is the illustrious son of David and Bathsheba and of course the king of Israel during her golden age. As the author of this song, Solomon is one of the main speakers. He gives us the first verse: "The song of songs, which is Solomon's" (1:1).

So why should Solomon, who in later years was not known for marital fidelity, write this book? It is a fair deduction to believe Solomon wrote this book before he strayed. The fact that God brought him back by the end of his life, as we see in the book of Ecclesiastes, demonstrates God's grace and should give all of us hope!

It is also a wonder that this great King should be attracted to a poor farm girl from the tribe of Dan. And so it is with Christ. It is our goal here this morning to consider how long, how high, how wide, and how deep is the love of Christ for such poor sinners as ourselves!

### The Shulamite Farm Girl (Peasant Princess)

Of course there is another character we meet in this love song: the Shulamite farm girl who becomes King Solomon's bride. It is quite intriguing that her actual name is never mentioned.

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 Shulamite girl from the tribe of Dan. She has become known throughout the ages as "**the peasant princess**."

*God's Love is Relentless.* Everything about Solomon seeking a poor peasant farm girl to marry is meant to tell the greatest love story ever told. This is the story of how God can love the most unworthy people. God takes impoverished sinners and pursues them. He overcomes them with His relentless love.

### The Virgin Daughters of Jerusalem

The virgin daughters of Jerusalem appear many times in this love poem. They serve as a point of comparison to the Shulamite bride. The women then might be those who display the refined characteristics of the city girls of Jerusalem as opposed to the very "backwoodsy" disposition of the farm girl Solomon is displaying.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carr, G. L. (1984). *Song of Solomon: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 19, pp. 84–85). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

## Outline

Nine ways we mirror the love of Christ in marriage...

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|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Attraction, 1:1-4   | 6. Intimacy, 4:1-5:1             |
| 2. Readiness, 1:5-6    | 7. Conflict, 5:2-6:13            |
| 3. Courtship, 1:7-2:7  | 8. Growing Old, 7:1-13           |
| 4. Engagement, 2:8-3:5 | 9. Christ and the Church, 8:1-14 |
| 5. The Wedding, 3:5-11 |                                  |

### I. Attraction, 1:1-4

#### A Song!

Attraction is one of the first things we think about when it comes to marriage. The first words of the Song of Solomon, introduce the genre: this is a song! “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s” (1:1).

Love and attraction make one break into singing. Adam broke into poetry the moment He realized God have given him a wife. “‘At last!’ the man exclaimed. ‘This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh!’” (Gen. 2:23, NLT).

#### Till Death Parts Us

Attraction is very powerful. There are many of you who are young and old who are eligible bachelors and bachelorettes. You want to make sure you are using godliness to attract people to your character. Anything else is dangerous! If you get married, you want to make sure the person is godly.

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 we part” not “Till my desire changes do we part.” We are committed together until death as Christian people because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25ff).

#### What Attracts the Shulamite to Solomon?

As we enter the first chapter, we must remember 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.

### Physical Attraction

Solomon’s bride gushes with love reflecting on her love for her husband: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine” (1:2). The initial level of attraction mentioned is physical attraction. Immediately we notice the first words from Solomon’s bride would have to be the words of a married woman. Certainly, there was the kiss of a greeting that at times was allowed, such as when Jacob kissed Rachel (Gen. 29:11). These are not the kisses of a greeting. Here is a married woman looking back and testifying to what we all know about physical attraction.

#### Holding Jill’s Hand

I remember the first time I held my wife Jill’s hand. We were on the Farris Wheel at the annual carnival in Oak Forest, Illinois. About half way up she told me she was afraid of heights. She grabbed my hand and asked if I would sing “Amazing Grace.” She was not aware, but as the

adrenaline of fear was cursing through her veins, my heart was pounding with joy! I do not remember if my version of “Amazing Grace” was in tune or not, but I’ll never forget the electricity of her innocent grasp of my hand.

### **Do Not Awaken Love**

Throughout this love song, the Virgin Daughters, the single women of Jerusalem constantly give a warning to all of us, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem... that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases” (2:7). How easy it is for us to stir up the emotional and physical fires of love prematurely.

### **The Fumes of Physical Attraction**

Physical attraction is real, but it is nothing to build a marriage on. Sadly, many people rush to marriage only on the fumes of romance. It is 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.

### **Spurgeon: Christ is Better Than Wine!**

Whether it be marriage or any relationship, we need to build our love on Christ. “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine” (1:2). Spurgeon’s words are especially insightful:

“Wine in the Bible is frequently used as the symbol of joy; so certainly, Christ’s love is better than wine. Whatever joy there may be in the world’s love... yet the love of Christ is far superior to it... The love of Jesus brings a joy that is fit for angels, a joy that will continue even in heaven itself; it is therefore far better than wine.”<sup>2</sup>

Love from Jesus is better than wine! Better than all earthly loves!

### **No Spouse, Besides Jesus, Can be Your Savior**

It must also be said, that since only Jesus is a perfect Savior with a perfect love that satisfies and intoxicates far more than wine or any human love, then we must not think that a spouse can be depended upon for lasting and satisfying love. No spouse, besides Jesus, can be your Savior. A person who is needy (and there is usually one in every marriage) can depend too much on a spouse for emotional, social, and sexual satisfaction.

*Jesus’ love far supersedes human love.* He says, “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself” (Jer. 31:3, NLT).

## **Social Attraction**

### **A Hunk of What?**

Another aspect of attraction mentioned in Solomon’s song is social attraction (1:3a). I have heard girls say, “He’s such a hunk!” My first question is “a hunk of what?” What is this guy made of? What you ought to be looking for, single girls, is a man that is made of godly character. Young men as well need to remember that physical attraction in a woman can be very misleading. “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (Pr. 31:30, NIV).

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Spurgeon. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 42*, Sermon 2459, “Better than Wine” (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896), 157.

## Well-Groomed

Listen how the peasant girl begins: “your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you” (1:3).

Orderliness ought to attract us. The Shulamite says, I like your “anointing oils.” She is saying, “I like his cologne.” The first thing she notices is that the king is well put together. He is well groomed. 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.

## Spiritual Attraction

### Godly Character

Godly character ought to attract us. The young woman exclaims: “your name is oil poured out” (1:3b). A person’s name in Israel was equal to the person’s character. There is nothing in Solomon’s character at this time that “smells bad.” His reputation is like “oil poured out.”

### Chastity

Chastity ought to attract us. Godly young women were attracted to Solomon because of his godly spirit and character. “Therefore virgins love you” (1:3c). 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. The virgins of Jerusalem loved Solomon because he was chaste. He kept himself pure.

Are you chaste? If you are a flirt around the opposite gender, you will attract a person who is flirtatious and careless as well. Ladies, if you flirt, you are prostituting yourself and will attract the wrong kind of man.

### Chivalry

Chivalry ought to attract a young woman. What is “chivalry?” The future queen says to Solomon: “Draw me after you; let us run” (1:4a). 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 demonstrate trustworthiness. He is a gentleman. He opens the car door. He esteems her with his words. He treats her gently. He draws her in the right way.

*Does He Love Jesus? Does He Have a Job?* We might add that a chivalrous man will be one who is able to provide for his potential wife. First question I have for any suitor who comes to court one of my daughters: 1. Does he love Jesus, and second – 2. Does he have a job? Young men, if you don’t have a job and a means to support yourself, a bride, and future children, then you ought not to be considering marriage. Draw her after you, but don’t do it if you can’t deliver. You need to love **Jesus**, and you need a **job**!

### Self-Control

Notice that the desire for marriage is strong. “The king has brought me into his chambers” (1:4b). The bride is looking back from her wedding day with no regrets! The King had self-control. This girl was a virgin on her wedding night. The king made sure of it. That takes self-control. A person with self-control ought to be attractive to us. Solomon was of such blameless character that he took the lead in his courtship of his pure Jewish bride. There is a need for self-control.

The sacred day did arrive for the Shulamite. But they kept pure until that day. Solomon protected her. He was a man of reputation. He never put her in any compromising situations. They waited for that special day, and now they can have their fill of love!

*Which Allures You: God or the World?* Let me ask you, are you being drawn by God or the world? Which is your attraction today? Here's a bride who craves the companionship of her beloved. She longs to be with him, and she wants to be closer to him than to anyone else. I think of that verse in Psalm 73 that says, "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 73:28). She says, "Draw me—draw me away. It is good for me to draw near to God."

### **Godly Young Ladies Respect Solomon**

Listen to the godly daughters of Jerusalem: "We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you" (1:4c).

A man like this is one in a thousand. Men – married or single – be a true man that protects that which is sacred. Be a man who honors what God honors. Do not contribute to the decadence of our culture. Keep sacred that which God calls sacred.

Single young men, do you manifest godly character in such a way that young women respect you?

## **II. Readiness, 1:5-6**

### **When is a Person Ready to Marry?**

Here we have a description of a young lady who is really not pursuing marriage. She is content where she is. She is not chasing after the King. She is working hard in the field, serving God the best she can, right where she is. How can you know when you are ready to marry?

### **When Inner Beauty Matters to You**

You are ready for Christian marriage when you are not beguiled by superficial and shallow attractiveness. This Shulamite is no princess. We find out that she's grown up on a farm. She's not so concerned about superficial beauty.

She ponders true beauty: "I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. 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!" (1:5-6).

### **Poor Peasant Girl**

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?

The godly Shulamite 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 is a working-class peasant girl.

She is not a princess. Her skin is dark not only because of natural beauty but also 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” (1:5).

### **Tents of Kedar: Protected Inner Beauty**

“I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon” (1:5).

The material that makes up the Bedouin tents of Kedar is made of prickly, coarse goat's hair which could protect the one sheltered from the fiercest onslaught of the elements and also provided a place of **great privacy and discretion**.

The curtains of Solomon were dark, but you never knew what was happening on the inside – there is mystery inside and modesty outside. 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.

The Shulamite was a woman who **protected that which was on the inside**. She guarded her character and her purity.

Does inner beauty matter to you? Are you protecting your character and purity?

### **Responsibility Matters**

“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!” (1:6).

What the Shulamite is saying here is that she does not have the time to “tend to her own attractiveness.” She has a working-class complexion, and her hair is undone, and her attire is unattractive. She has been on her feet all day pruning vines or picking grapes, shooing away sneaky foxes. And when she gets off her shift, she calls it a day. She is more concerned about lasting things than her own attractiveness. She is loyal and faithful and sacrificial for her own family's sake. She has no time for a manicure and pedicure, and certainly no time to powder her sunburnt cheeks.

### **Scorched Without, But a New Heart Within**

When we come to know the love of Christ, we are changed from the inside out. He takes away our heart of stone, and gives us a tender heart of flesh (Eze. 36:25-27). We may be scorched by sin, but we are lovely to Christ. He has set His love upon you and me.

Sometimes we get discouraged by the scorch of sin. But you need to understand that Christ does not see His bride as the peasant and servant girl she is now, but as the princess she will become. You are beautiful in Christ's eyes.

How about you? Does inner beauty matter to you? Have you come to know the love of Christ on the inside, or are you more concerned about what you look like on the outside?

### **When You Are Careful to Serve the Lord**

You are ready to be married when you are careful to serve God where you are (1:6). So many people serve themselves and put on rose colored glasses thinking that Mr. Right or Miss Perfect is going to make them happy. If you are looking for someone to make you happy, you are not ready to marry! The Shulamite farm girl had a tough life, but she was faith-fully serving God where she was.

### **Her Mother's Sons**

She did not have an ideal family situation. When she speaks of her “mother’s sons” (1:6), 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.

*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.

### **When You Are Cautious About the Sanctity of Marriage**

You are ready to be married when you are cautious about the sanctity of marriage (1:7). You don’t have to give away your purity in order to get a potential mate.

### **Purity Matters**

The Shulamite looks back to her first conversation with King Solomon when she said: “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?” (1:7).

### **No Provision for the Flesh**

In Solomon’s day, a veiled woman who would appear in midday was a prostitute. The Shulamite says, “I will not practice the immorality of a prostitute to get a man.” Single ladies should have the same attitude: “I will not sacrifice my chastity and my purity for a man.” The Shulamite girl had convictions.

She’s willing to wait. She wants to spend time with him, but she wants to go about it in a legitimate way. We are to “make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (**Rom. 13:14**).

### **Put on the Brakes**

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. 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.

### **Look for Spiritual Maturity**

What kind of foundation do you want for your marriage? Have you 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 who loves and walks with the Lord.



### III. Courtship, 1:7-2:7

I know you are wondering, what is the pathway to marriage? What is the proper way to pursue that special someone and get to know them? For thousands of years there has been a time of getting to know one another, a time of courtship.

Courtship (or as we like to call it “dating with a pur-*pose*”) is all about building trust. You want to find out if this is the person you can trust to care for you, to build a family together, to serve God together. How can you find out if the person is trustworthy? From this passage of Scripture, we are going to find that courtship rests on four pillars.

#### Discover who the Person Really is

##### Getting to Know You

Before a courtship begins, there needs to be safe places where the young man and young woman can talk and get to know each other as friends.

Looking back from her wedding day, she says: “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?” (1:7).

##### Soliloquy

What should we think about this strong language of love? Isn’t she coming on strong? She tells the story with strong words towards Solomon, but most commentators agree that this is part **soliloquy**, that is, this is the sentiment of her heart, not exactly what she said to Solomon. Ladies, it wouldn’t be appropriate to speak this way to someone you are just getting to know! But she was feeling this way. She had observed King Solomon. She saw that he was godly, a leader, someone any godly girl would desire.

##### Three Commitments of Discovery

In verse 7, the first thing we see are three commitments in discovering who that special person is that God may have for you to marry: visibility, accountability, and purity.

*Visibility.* The Shulamite farm girl asks where Solomon might be so they can meet in a public place. “Tell me... where you pas-ture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon” (1:7). She is asking where she can find him at a time when the sheep would be resting and not demanding the shepherd’s complete attention. She wants to meet this young king. She wants to make sure there are plenty of other shepherds pre-sent so that she does nothing that is inappropriate. She is concerned about modesty and purity.

*Accountability.* This farm girl is coming at noon in the middle of the day when many people would be around, in broad view of the public eye. As you consider the possibility of courtship, you need to meet anyone of the opposite gender in the broad daylight, so to speak. People with the same standards as you ought to be around. You must always meet with the right kind of people around, people who will hold you accountable.

*Purity.* We see from this peasant girl, that even she knew nothing questionable could be going on. Without accountability and visibility, she could be accused of being a harlot. She asks, “Why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?” (1:7b). She doesn’t want to be like the prostitutes that would veil themselves and catch a shepherd all alone.

## Friendship

### A True Friend Protects a Girls' Honor

King Solomon is a gentleman, and he wants to protect her modesty and insists that she come properly in public. He is teasing her a bit and says (1:8), "If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents" (1:8). In other words, everyone would know where Solomon would be. All the shepherds would be with Solomon if he was visiting their fields.

Christ calls us to a place of honor, to a refreshing place. He does not come to take advantage of us, but to serve us! He leads us beside the still waters! He restores our souls!

### A True Friend Prizes Godly Character

Imagine Solomon's young majestic voice paying this country girl a complement: "I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots" (1:9).

That doesn't sound like a compliment! "My horse. My darling horse." Now ladies, you might not consider that a compliment if your husband said that to you, but it actually is a great compliment.

In ancient times, chariots would never be pulled by mares. "Stallions, not mares, were used to pull chariots in antiquity." Solomon prized this Shulamite for her godly character. She wasn't like all the others. Solomon prized her integrity. She was like a "mare among" stallions – she was untouched and pure.

Let me remind you, that you are pure and precious to Christ. He has made you righteous in Himself. You are untouched and pure. Some here have failed morally. Ah yes, but in Jesus you are clean and untouched! He makes us clean in Him! Our righteousness is not our own, but Christ's! Never forget that.

## Commitment

### Take Courtship Seriously (1:10-11)

Dating is not a game. Solomon takes this courtship seriously. Solomon pictures this peasant girl as his Bride and his Queen. He's not looking for superficial pleasure from her. He's looking for commitment. He honors her with honorable words: "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels" (1:10). "It was a centuries-old fashion in the East for a woman to wear a cord of gold around her forehead."<sup>3</sup>

It seems that he was imagining her wearing this jewelry, because in the next verse, the daughters volunteer to make these for her. She is poor. She is likely adorned with no jewelry. Her chief attraction is her grace and purity. She is an unlikely candidate for a king. Yet in pursuing a woman, Solomon wasn't looking for mere social interaction, it is clear he had major, lifetime commitment in mind.

And so the daughters of Jerusalem, the elite women in Solomon's court, volunteer to make the peasant girl her royal jewelry. "We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver" (1:11). This is a gesture of commitment from the heart of the king.

*What a beautiful picture of Christ and the church.* We were poor, and Christ has made us rich. We were servants to our sin, but Christ has freed us, not to be a mere servant, but to be His

<sup>3</sup>Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. (1998). *Manners & customs of the Bible*. "Rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick" – Cover.; Includes index. (Rev. ed.) (344). North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers.

bride. We were unkempt in our unrighteousness, and Christ has adorned us with His righteousness! He takes us seriously. He laid down His life for you and me!

### **Keep Your Emotions in Check (1:12-16)**

Look at how Solomon and the Shulamite girl he is courting dealt with passion. It is beautiful. They have very real passions, but they keep them under control.

Listen to the words of the Shulamite farm girl. **Verse 12-14**, “While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance. My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.”

The language here seems a bit shocking, but it really is not. We must be careful not to make that which is pure and innocent to be worldly and sensual. To the pure all things are pure. She is speaking of that which is closest to her heart. These are the thoughts of her heart.

It was common for a woman to wear a pouch of perfumed spices and flowers around her neck. Whenever she smelled it, she thought of Solomon.

The “nard” is simply a very expensive perfume from near the Himalayan mountains in India, and the “myrrh” is an expensive spice that would have been mixed with the holy oil in the Tabernacle and then Temple worship (Exodus 30:23-33).

By referring to Solomon as the “nard” or sweet smelling and very expensive perfume, she is saying Solomon is precious to her. She esteems him. In verse 16, she goes on to say “Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.”

### **Christ and the Church**

This is the language of love for Christ and the church! We often don’t feel like we are beautiful before Christ. We don’t often think Christ cares for us do we?

Can you think of somebody else in the Scripture who expressed similar feelings? Think of Romans chapter 7. The apostle Paul said:

“I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out...Oh wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7:18–25).

### **Eyes of Grace and Love**

Solomon sees this farm girl through the eyes of grace and love. Solomon also greatly esteems her. He exclaims: “Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves” (1:15). Solomon knows her eye color. He loves her.

And the Shulamite girl responds with equal joy and excitement: “Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful” (1:16)

*This is how Christ sees you.* He loves you! You are beautiful to Him. You are truly delightful to Him. You might think, Oh! How could He say that? He says that because He doesn’t see me as I am in my flesh. **He sees me as I am having been clothed in His righteousness.** His beauty He has given to me so He can say you are part of His Bride, who is the fairest among women!

### **Determination to Please God**

You must be determined in your accountability. The courtship begins! You can see that this is the first instance of the couple together in a committed way. We see this in Song of Solomon 1:16b-17, “...Our couch is green; the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine.”

They are together, but they are never alone. They are in a public place – their house is the trees that line the forest. As we saw, other shepherds are around them. Yet their desire is increased.

If you want to destroy your potential marriage before it starts, then have no accountability, and keep yourself in a state of temptation. If you are alone, no matter how godly you are, you will be tempted! You must be determined in your purity. The emotions are running high.

### **Rose of Sharon, Common Wildflower**

*In Christ we are treasured.* The bride feels **treasured** (vs. 1-2). Song of Solomon 2:1-2, “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. <HE> As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.”

You may remember that old song, “He’s the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star.” Many commentators think the bridegroom is speaking in this verse, but if you look, it’s actually the peasant girl speaking. The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys are just common, ordinary wildflowers. The bride is saying in essence, “*I’m just a lowly, everyday wildflower.*” She doesn’t feel herself to be anything special. There’s nothing in her that is worthy of his notice.

And so it is with Christ. We don’t feel worthy of His attention, but he dotes upon us. We are just common ordinary sinners. Some of us feel like the chief of sinners. Why would He love us? Dear saint of God, you are treasured in Christ’s heart.

*In Christ we are protected.* The bride feels **protected**. He furnished her with the best food. “<SHE> As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow...” (2:3a).

*In Christ we are provided for.* The bride feels **provided** for. “With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste” (3:3b).

*In Christ we have joy.* The bride feels **joyful** and a part of his heart, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love” (3:4).

### **Guard this Picture of Love!**

For those of you who are “dating with a purpose.” You are courting with accountability. Don’t mar this beautiful picture. You may be overtaken by love and desire. But do not awaken love in your courtship until it is time. Be thankful for the love you share, but do not enter upon dangerous ground of awaking physical desire.

We have another soliloquy. We hear the thoughts of this sweet farm girl’s heart as she is courted by King Solomon: “Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!” (2:5-6). Look at her strong desires, but then we have the right response to those desires. She exclaims to the elite women of the court: “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” (2:7).

### **Just a Glimpse of What is Coming**

King Solomon is protecting her. He is giving her a glimpse of his love. Isn’t that what we have now with Christ? In our relationship with Christ now as His Church, as His Bride, as His

people, we can have a glimpse, a foretaste of the eternal love, the eternal life, the eternal joy that we will enjoy with Him in His eternal home. And it won't be just His home. It's going to be our home. So all that we're doing here on this earth today is preparation.

### **Conclusion**

When I was in college I carried around a photograph of Jill. I also had photos of her in my dorm room. I talked of her all the time. I got letters from her every other day, and sometimes every day. We were dedicated to each other.

But that picture was not Jill. I didn't introduce the photo to my friends. I didn't talk to the photo. It is a photo. It looks like her but it's not her.

And so marriage is an imperfect picture of Christ's love for you, His Bride. It will give you a taste of His love, but no spouse can compare to Christ.

We fail often in our marriages, don't we? But Christ never fails. Singles, don't look to marriage for satisfaction. It's just a photograph. Married people, our spouse can never be our Savior. But O, look to the One who with one glance of His eyes can melt our hearts. Look to Him! Drink of the living water! Taste and see that the Lord is good! He has loved us with an everlasting love!

Next week we will look at...

- IV. **Engagement**, 2:8-3:5
- V. **The Wedding**, 3:5-11
- VI. **Intimacy**, 4:1-5:1
- VII. **Conflict**, 5:2-6:13
- VIII. **Growing Old Together**, 7:1-13
- IX. **Christ and the Church**, 8:1-14