



# Godly Engagement

## Growing in Marriage, Part 2

### An overview of the Song of Solomon

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life

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[livinghopechurch.net](http://livinghopechurch.net)

“Staying married, is not mainly about staying in love, it is about keeping covenant. ‘Till death do us part’... is a sacred covenant promise – the same kind Jesus made with His bride when He died for her.”

– **John Piper**

1. Expositors class today at 4pm.
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.”

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.”

**Outline**

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

- |                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 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**

**Physical Attraction**

**Social Attraction**

**Spiritual Attraction**

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

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

**When Inner Beauty Matters to You**

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

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

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

**Discover who the Person Really is**

**Friendship**

**Commitment**

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

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

Look at how Solomon and the Shulamite girl he is courting dealt with passion. It is

## Determination to Please God

*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).

## IV. Engagement, 2:8-3:5

### **The last week we talked about courtship.**

What’s that all about? Courtship is a time when you are deciding whether or not the person is someone you would consider marrying. Courtship is has parental involvement, accountability, visibility, and it committed to purity. In courtship there is a commitment to not go to the romantic side. It doesn’t mean you don’t want to! It means you have a special friendship with lots of parental involvement. I was always with Jill’s parents or other godly adults.

### **Courtship ideally leads to engagement.**

You’ve come to the place where you believe this person to be someone you can look up to spiritually. You haven’t had to compromise your purity or your convictions to keep this person.

Let me just say, that if you have had to compromise, put on the brakes! You don’t want to hitch your wagon to a wild horse! It’s not a wagon you will destroy, but your life. Make sure the person you are considering marrying is faithful, dependable, exemplary and predictable in their godliness and convictions.

Now we come to Song of Solomon 2:8-3:5, where courtship leads to marriage.

**Song of Solomon 2:8**, “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.” She is anxious to see him! He’s anxious to see her!

## **Anticipation**

Song of Solomon 2:8, “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.” The anticipation of seeing one another is breathtaking. We see King Solomon “leaping” and “bounding” over hills and mountains.

Courtship is exhilarating. So you need to be careful. There are many mountains and hills that you could trip on! Courtship ought to be a time when you are focused on trying to understand the person’s convictions and faithfulness. Guard your heart! Do not give your heart away! You may not get married to this person. Even the consideration that the person you are courting might be the one is intoxicating. It makes one leap and bound like a gazelle! The pursuit of a wife is a good thing!

**Anticipating Christ.** Our relationship with Christ ought to lead us to meditate on heavenly things. Col. 3:1, “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth...”

## Dedication

Dedication is good preparation for marriage. Solomon was committed.

The word courtship comes from the Elizabethan era in which the ladies of the court were wooed and won by knights and lords of the court through a process of frequent visitation.

He saw something in her that helped him overcome all obstacles and persevere. Often people in courtship overcome obstacles quite resiliently. Song of Solomon 2:8, “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.” Mountains and hills are probably literary images for obstacles to their love that the man overcomes.

**Christ.** Consider the obstacles Christ “leaped” over to demonstrate His love for us—“In that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!”

## Affection

Affection is good preparation for marriage. Again, I’m not speaking of the physical side of love here. I’m talking about a healthy esteem and respect for the other person. You ought to think the world of one another for the right reasons. And here in verses 9-10 we see the foundations of love and respect being established for marriage.

Listen to the peasant princess in **Verse 9a**, “My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.” Solomon sets the example with strength and gentleness.

- Are you like a strong young stag of a man that will keep his convictions?
- Are you gentle but firm with your special someone, so that they know you want their best.
- Are you graceful like a gazelle?

The Shulamite trusts Solomon as a man of honor. Solomon was a man among men, but he was a true “gentle-man”.

The man’s affection draws him to his beloved Shulamite farm girl.

Verses 9b-10, “Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. 10 My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away,”

Solomon approached the wall around the Shulamite’s home and then peered through the lattice. He was anxious to see her.

**Christ says to us**, “Arise my beautiful one.” You are accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1) There is no condemnation. You are beautiful in His sight!

## Communication – Time Together

Communication is good preparation for marriage. There’s a desire to spend time together. He says, in verse 10, “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away,”

Solomon, asks the Shulamite, the one he loves, to go for a walk in the countryside. It’s important to spend time together and get to know each other.

There is that time when you are able to spend frequent time together. But be careful. Don’t focus on romance. There will be enough sparks flying in your heart that you need to be careful and self-controlled, or you will start a fire that you can’t put out! Focus on seeing if this person is committed to the Lord. Also remember when you are together, as we learned last week, there needs to be visibility, accountability, and purity.

**Come away with Christ.** There is coming a day when Christ will call us to “come away” with him. Until that time, he wants to shower his love on you in daily communication.

## Renewal and Hope

It's springtime... Springtime is often celebrated as a time for young people in love. This is a gift from God. It is exciting and refreshing. There is much potential.

Verses 11-13, "for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. 12 The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. 13 The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance."

There is great hope during a good courtship process. You can see how you might work together. You have the same convictions. You love the Lord. You deeply feel respect and love for your special someone, and they make you feel loved and respected.

## The Proposal for Marriage

We find an invitation to leave her home. Verse 13b, "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away." He's hinting at it in verse 10 as well. This is the closest thing to a proposal we have in the Song of Solomon.

Engagement is a promise to marry. Betrothal in Bible times was serious. It required a spoken and eventually written covenant that laid out the intentions for marriage. It was taken very seriously, and it was made between the two families. It was signified by giving a ring or some other token of the Groom's intention to marry the bride.

**Ceremony for Betrothal.** There was actually a ceremony for betrothal. "The Jewish betrothal [ceremony] in Christ's time was conducted thus: The families of the bride and groom met, with some others present to serve as witnesses. The young man would give the young woman either a gold ring, or some article of value, or simply a document in which he promised to marry her. Then he would say to her: "See by this ring [or this token] thou art set apart for me, according to the law of Moses and of Israel."

Engagement requires the father's permission, if living and able (**1 Corinthians 7:36**). As I said, both families were involved in the Jewish betrothal. So, the parents should be involved in the engagement. It is not mentioned here, but it must be said. In courtship and in engagement, it is the man's responsibility to seek the father's permission.

## A Pledge to Provide and Protect

Engagement means that the woman must start thinking about leaving her parents protection and come under the protection of the groom. Verse 14, Solomon calls out to his betrothed, "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely."

Doves hide in the crevasses of the rocks. This speaks to her desire for safety and the protection of her mother's home. Quoting Genesis 2:24, Jesus said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife" (Mark 10:7). The woman has to trust the protection of this man.

Ladies, one way you can know if this man is a man of honor and will protect you, is if he is careful to protect your purity. Is he careful to guide the conversation in a godly direction? Are his walk and talk consistent? If not, stay in the crevasses of the rocks in your parents' home! It's better that you break an engagement than you later find yourself with a broken marriage!

**Betrothal Assumed.** The betrothal is not mentioned here, but it is assumed. The courtship has been observed by godly people. The father is consulted. In this case, since the Shulammmite's father does not seem to be on the scene, the mother would be consulted. Perhaps the mother would seek advice from other godly men in the family. At any rate, by this time it should be plain to godly, mature people whether or not a wedding should take place. So permission is either granted or denied.

So we've seen the preparation for marriage, and the proposal for marriage. Now we move to the engagement. Let's talk about...

**Christ calls us doesn't He?** Many are called but few are chosen! John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." David speaks in the Psalms of being called from his mother's womb. Jer. 1:5 says Jeremiah was ordained a prophet before he was born!

## **The Pressures/Problems of the Engagement**

Engagement brings with it many pressures. It's one thing to dream about marriage. There are no imperfections in most of our dreams. But actually considering marriage is scary for most people. You really begin to see the flaws for the first time. But it's a good thing if you handle the pressures in the right way.

Verse 15, "Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."

Foxes are pests that wreak havoc in vineyards (e.g., they will eat the grapes).

"The foxes represent as many obstacles or temptations as have plagued lovers throughout the centuries. Perhaps it is the fox of uncontrolled desire which drives a wedge of guilt between a couple. Perhaps it is the fox of mistrust and jealousy which breaks the bond of love. Or it may be the fox of selfishness and pride which refuses to let one acknowledge his fault to another. Or it may be an unforgiving spirit which will not accept the sincere apology of the other. These foxes have been ruining vineyards for years and the end of their work is not in sight".

Engagement will bring with it foxes. Are you able to guard your relationship from foxes? Are you able to keep yourself under control? Even in ideal courtships and marriages most couples encounter some potentially destructive problems. Their willingness to solve them together is an evidence of their maturity.

If you can't get along and solve problems with each other for a few hours a day, three or four times a week, you certainly aren't going to be able to get along with a person seven days a week for the next fifty years!!

**Christ is Sufficient.** There are little foxes in the best of relationships. But are you able to go to Christ and commune with him and keep your heart in His wisdom? He is sufficient. His word is sufficient.

## **The Passion of Engagement**

Verse 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies. 17 Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains." Solomon like a graceful gazelle is very gentle in how he approaches her. Yet he is strong in his convictions as "a young stag on cleft mountains".

Flowers every month. I was like a **gazelle** with Jill. I sent her flowers for the number of months we had left until marriage. 12, 11, 10.... 1.

Yet I was also like a **young stag**. I tried to be strong in my convictions.

Solomon is careful to protect her from her own passions and emotions. She strongly desires marriage. She says, “Until the day breathes and the shadows flee”—she wants to be his wife! Her passions are strong.

**Betrothed to Christ.** We are betrothed to Christ. We are to be faithful to our beloved. We are not to love the world or the things in the world. (1 John 2:15-17)

## The Purity of Engagement

(Song of Solomon 3:1-5).

The woman dreams of her future husband. Song of Solomon 3:1-5, “On my bed by night [very strong in the Heb. lit. “night after night”] I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. 2 I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. 3 The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” 4 Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.”

The wedding is approaching. Night after night she thinks about marriage to this man. She truly cannot live without him.

### Fellowship Broken

I think this paragraph gives us insight into seasons in a marriage when intimacy has been broken—missing the intimacy, seeking intimacy, and finding intimacy. It gives us insight into seasons of life when our fellowship with Christ can be broken, when we’re not experiencing with Him the intimacy that we once knew.

Love will always seek the loved one. When you lose the one that you love, you will seek after restoration. She is not content to be without him. She’s not content to stay separated from him.

Listen, an evidence that we belong to Christ is that when you lose the sense of His presence, you go seek Him. You go looking to have that intimacy restored.

### How Badly Do You Want Jesus?

Do you have a seeking heart? Or are you content with where you are, what you have, and what you know of Jesus?

- How badly do you want Him?
- Are you desperate to find Him?
- Are you willing to leave your bed and go about the city?
- Are you willing to go to greater lengths to find Him?
- Are you willing to make sacrifices, to extend yourself, to be inconvenienced?<sup>1</sup>

What are you willing to deny yourself in order to have a more intimate relationship with Christ? Food? Sleep? Pleasure? Friends at times? Is anything too great a price to pay in order to find the supreme treasure—Christ?

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Leigh Demoss. Study on the Song of Solomon, Day 10, from [reviveourhearts.com](http://reviveourhearts.com).

**Her passions are strong.**

She is a godly woman. These are pure and holy passions, but she knows they must be reserved and guarded for the soon coming marriage, and so she says again in verse 5, “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.” She asks for accountability!

She dreams of married life, but she is careful with her desires. She guards her passions.

**A Fire in the Hearth**

A fire in the hearth is beautiful because it is controlled and in the right place. It gives warmth and light. But if you take the logs and burn them in the middle of the living room, you'll lose everything. So it is with passion. You must guard it!

**Guard your Relationship with Christ.** Don't let anger, bitterness destroy it. Don't let lust and pleasure from the world destroy it. If you have lost that intimacy, seek it. Guard your heart.

**Warnings**

Let me give you a few encouragements and warnings.

**Don't jump into an engagement too quickly.** If you are not very, very sure that this person truly is what they say they are, wait. Don't jump in too quickly. Listen to godly people around you. Make sure you desire marriage for the right reasons.

Physical attraction is not strong foundation. There must be consistency, godliness, and biblical conviction. Does the person you are interested in speak and live openly about their walk with Christ? If it is not the center of their life now, you cannot expect anything to get better when you are married. You can certainly expect things to likely get worse.

**Look for the warning signs.** Can your relationship survive misunderstandings, arguments and the pressures of life? If not, you ought to put the engagement on hold.

**Plans should move quickly if you are engaged.** The time to discover if this is the person to marry is during courtship. I believe in a long courtship but a brief engagement.

Once the decision is made to marry, it is very difficult to restrain passion. DO NOT be alone together. The passions are too high. More than a year of engagement is not wise unless there is great distance between you. I was engaged to Jill for a year and two months, but she was 1000 miles away in college. We were both very busy during our engagement. A short engagement is advisable. Keep busy planning the wedding and get on with the marriage!

Here's a word of advice to you men. Get to know the girls' parents well during the courtship time and especially the engagement time. Schedule some time with her parents while she is away. You are not only marrying her, but you are marrying her family!!

**Chaste Bride.** The Bible tells us that we are betrothed to Christ and we need to be a “chaste bride.” 2 Corinthians 11:2, “For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.”

This is true in engagement, but it is also true in our Christian life. We are not yet in heaven. We have not yet partaken in the marriage supper of the Lamb. The deepest pleasures with the Lord have not yet been revealed.

Don't go to the world for your pleasures. Keep yourself unspotted from this world. Let your heart be on the Beloved One Jesus Christ! Walk closely with Him, because He is coming very soon to bring His Bride to the wedding feast!!



## V. The Wedding, 3:5-11

### The Wedding Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is symbolic of the marriage of Christ and His church. A Christian wedding is the anticipation of the wedding that is to come between Christ and His Bride when we will fully be united eternally with Christ. What a day that will be! In every way the wedding day should display the Church's relationship with Christ.

It is the day when two people become one in every way: spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially. The wedding ceremony is so important because it lays the secure foundation for your family, and for many generations to come.

I often remember my wedding vows.

"I Matthew take you Jill to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honor, protect, and cherish, abandoning all others and dedicating myself wholly to you 'till death do us part."

### A Vow of Faithfulness to One Another

Verse 5, "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."

You are to preserve your purity for your spouse. It's not for anyone else.

The wedding ceremony symbolizes the couple's fidelity to each other (vs. 5). The Shulamite farm girl has more anticipation of love than most young marryable women. She is a poor peasant girl about to be a queen. And yet, she demonstrates self-control. Some people say, "**I just can't help myself.**" That is not true! You can and you must. Listen to this young lady's words.

### Abandoning All Others

Verse 5, "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."

On my wedding day I remember the wedding vows: Jill was mine "to have and behold from this day forward". In my marriage vows I said, "abandoning all others and dedicating myself wholly to you 'till death do us part." That's why this young lady was controlling herself. She was reserving what was most precious for her king and soon to be husband.

**Abandoning all friendships.** Once I was married, I abandoned any friendships of the **opposite gender** I might have had. That is an obligation for all married people.

Once I was married, my wife was all mine, and we could awaken love fully and completely. Until that day, purity must be carefully guarded. Love is not to be awakened until after the marriage vows. It is for this day the couple has preserved themselves.

Staying pure is hard work, but it is worth it a thousand times over. It is the day that you have reserved yourself for each other. You have kept yourself from the world's lusts. You have remembered 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."

You have remembered Proverbs 5:15, "Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well." And now, this is the day that God has given you your own cistern that will fulfill you and by His grace bring you many generations of godly children.

## A Vow of Devotion to God

Listen to the description of Solomon. He is described as one who is devoted to God and led by Him into this marriage.

Verse 6, “What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant [traders who would come from all around the world]?”

### For Better or for Worse

Solomon is the shepherd-king who takes his bride from her parent’s home. Verse 6, “What is that coming up from the wilderness...?” As a king he has become like a shepherd to win the love of this lowly shepherdess. The image of the **green wilderness pastures where the shepherds would pasture their sheep is given**. Some of the imagery is that this wilderness extends as far as Egypt. They would literally “come up” to Jerusalem, which was truly the beautiful royal city set on a hill.

God is the true shepherd king. Solomon is described as coming up like “columns of smoke” from the wilderness. Verse 6, “What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke.”

***Like God’s Pillar of Cloud.*** This is a striking reference to the leading of the Spirit of God who manifested Himself through **a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire** by night in the wilderness – His Shekinah glory – His manifested presence!

***Marriage is a three-fold chord or braid.*** A marriage is **not** just between you and your spouse. It is between **you, your spouse and God**. It is a holy, unbreakable vow before the divine Author of marriage. Therefore it is important to follow the leading of God into your marriage!

**Christ bringing us out of the world.** The wilderness the Jews would have understood reading this passage would refer to a region south of Palestine toward Egypt. And in the Scripture, Egypt is usually a picture of the world. So we see a picture here of God leading His people out of Egypt through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, the presence of God leading them safely to the promised land.

Today, Christ is bringing His Bride, the Church, out of the world—out of that which she was born into—out of her natural state in Adam—out of the wilderness. He’s taking His Bride safely to a place of abundance and fruitfulness to the place where He lives—to heaven.

### Divorce Rates among Christians.

I’ve heard that divorce rates are just as high among Christians as in the world. This is deceiving. It’s not actually true. “A recent survey concluded that 80 percent of relationships in which couples were living together without marriage vows end in separation. Sixty percent of those who are married by a justice of the peace are divorced later. Forty percent of those who are married in churches eventually divorce. And those who read their Bibles together [regularly] divorce only at the rate of 1 out of 1,050”.<sup>2</sup>

It is so important that a marriage be founded upon devotion to God!

Think of the joy when the church’s wedding day comes, and we see the King of kings and Lord of Lords coming for His Bride! Marriage is a vow to God.

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<sup>2</sup> Tommy Nelson. *The Book of Romance* (Thomas H. Nelson: Nashville, 1998), 71.

## A Vow of Permanence

The wedding ceremony symbolizes the sacredness of marriage (vs. 6b).

Solomon is described as “...perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant” (Verse 6b). This marriage was extravagant and costly. This extravagance points to the permanence of marriage. You don’t spend all this money and have this kind of lavish display for some overnight fling. This marriage is “til death do us part”. The costly fragrances point to the sacredness and significance of the marriage. The Scriptures teach that marriage is permanent.

The merchants here refer to the traders that would have brought the very best of the perfumes from across the world. Solomon spares no expense to make this wedding one never to be forgotten for his bride. You must spare nothing for your marriage.

The marriage is special and sacred. It is to be celebrated. It is extravagant.

“The Scriptures teach that marriage is one of the most important events in a person’s life. Therefore it is fitting that the union of a couple be commemorated in a special way.”<sup>3</sup>

**Consider the extravagance of Christ’s love to us!** Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

## A Vow of Protection

Verses 7-8, “Behold, it is the litter [the couch on which servants carry the king] of Solomon! Around it are **sixty** mighty men, some of the mighty men of Israel, 8 all of them wearing swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh, against terror by night”.

He arrives on his chariot-chair with sixty groomsmen beside. Solomon’s royal litter, the couch upon which he was carried by his servants. This is a royal, full-dress military wedding. These are the navy seals or green berets of Solomon’s army.

“The king was taking no chances with the safety of his bride. If bandits would appear at night and terrorize the bride, the soldiers were ready for them. The lesson is valid today for a would-be husband. He should give proper thought and planning to protect his bride. One form this takes is providing economic security for her.”<sup>4</sup>

**Ephesians 5:25-29**, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church”.

The word cherish means “to warm with body heat.” It has the idea of not leaving the body vulnerable. A man is to protect his wife. What does Paul mean about nourishing and cherishing his own body? Well, when your body is vulnerable you cherish it. When you hit your thumb with the hammer you carefully protect it and shelter it. You make sure no one and nothing can do it any more injury.

<sup>3</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1017). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

***Christ Guarded His People from the Deserved Punishment of Sin.*** God is jealous for his people. He is our shelter and our shield and our high tower. Christ cherishes His Church. Do you realize what Christ has done for us?

He bore the wrath of God for us! He took the shame of our sin upon us! He intercedes for us. He guides us. He says, “I will never leave you or forsake you”. We abide under the shelter of His wings. We can say “I am His and He is mine!”

### **Means of Grace to Protect Us**

Think about the many different **means of grace** He has made available to us—

- His holy angels that He has promised to send to protect us even though we can’t see them;
- The Presence of the Holy Spirit to Convict you of sin, righteousness, and the coming judgment.
- His people, those who are girded up as these sixty valiant men were girded up with their swords, God’s people who are girded up with the Word of God and know how to use the Scripture to help us think God’s way and to protect our minds from the assaults and the attacks of Satan.
- God’s Word – Isn’t that where the battle is so much of the time—in our minds? Those people are the message of grace—the preaching of the Word of God—it’s a protection for us. So we can travel on this journey without fear.

### **A Vow of Provision**

Verses 9-10, “King Solomon made himself a carriage from the wood of Lebanon. 10 He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was **inlaid with love** by the daughters of Jerusalem.”

The song even describes the chair which is the finest quality for this occasion, even **inlaid with love**. The women of the court have lovingly contributed to this day. Everyone shared the joy.

**Purple cloth** was made using a pigment from the murex shellfish; it was even rarer than silver and gold.

A man must be ready and willing to **provide** for his wife. It is his responsibility, not hers. Lack of money is one of the greatest causes of tension in life, and it certainly is true in marriage.

In the New Testament, husbands are called to lay down their life for their bride and to nourish, or provide for them (Ephesians 5:29).

He is our Shepherd. Psalm 23:1, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” You can see how Christ is the believer’s provider.

**Psalm 84:11**, “No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.” Christ will nourish His Bride. He will provide for her in every way. He cares for her.

### **We Travel with Christ!**

We travel with Christ and enjoy all His **provisions** in his chariot. The seat of purple. Purple represents royalty, kingly authority. This is a carriage fit for a king and a reminder that because we are married to the King of kings, we travel with Him in His carriage. “Its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.” We won’t take time to get into that except to say that everybody in this scene is involved in this love story.

## Vows are given after Parental Permission is Granted

The wedding ceremony symbolizes the permission & blessing of the parents (vs. 11). Verse 11, “Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.”

**Solomon’s mother crowned him** with the wedding crown that a groom wore in those days, usually a laurel crown of leaves. It was a sign of her approval that he was marrying a woman she valued and would love as a daughter. **It is also a sign to the general public that he would be leaving his parents’ home and making a home of his own.**

For centuries upon centuries, crowning was a part of marriage ceremonies. Today, the bride is crowned with her veil. The bride even in ancient times would be crowned with a garland of flowers by her father.

### Minister’s Question...

All of this symbolizes the parent’s permission and blessing. Today, usually the wedding ceremony begins with the minister asking, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” The father normally gives permission by saying, “Her mother and I do”.

1 Corinthians 7 demonstrates the importance of the father’s permission. It’s clear in the NKJV.

The giving of the bride is the father’s prerogative. 1 Cor. 7:38, “he who gives her in marriage does well...”

A wedding that is approved by the parents is one that God blesses!!

*Your Attention is on Christ.* The focus of marriage is on Christ. She’s not saying, “Look at my dress. Look at me. Look at my dress. Look at my beauty.” She’s saying, “Look at my bridegroom. Look at his crown. Look at his beauty.”

## A Vow of Preparation

Finally, the wedding ceremony symbolizes the great preparation and joy that God gives a couple who diligently give their marriage to Him (vs. 11b).

Verse 11b, “...on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.” Do it right and you will have gladness of heart. Do it wrong and you will have questions.

The joy of Christ! Revelation 19 tells us about that wedding. It says, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready.” I want to remind us of the day the Lord Jesus took you to be His bride, His heart rejoiced. Can you imagine that we give Him joy?

### We talk about being Prepared for Marriage

We talk about being prepared for marriage, but are you prepared to meet Christ.

- Mother’s death, I wasn’t expecting it, but I was prepared.
- What about your death? If you are in Christ, it’s an entrance into His glory.

Let’s grow in our love for Christ. If you are married, you should mirror the love of Jesus with your marriage.