



Growing a Godly Marriage

(Growing in Marriage, Part 8)

Song of Solomon 8

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life

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livinghopechurch.net

“Staying married, therefore, is not mainly about staying in love. It is about keeping covenant. ‘Till death do us part’ or ‘As long as we both shall live’ is a sacred covenant promise – the same kind Jesus made with His bride when He died for her.” ~ **John Piper**

1. No evening service.
2. Baptism and Testimony Sunday is July 3. If you need baptism talk w Pastor
3. Father-son campout Friday at 3pm at the Moffat's. We'll go to Saturday noon. Free.
4. So good to have two little ones in our service today: Caleb Asher Polderman, Abraham Flores
5. After the last song, I'll ask Lisa Badger to come up to the front for the right hand of fellowship.

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 a Godly Marriage.” This is part 8 in our series “Growing in Marriage.” We are looking at Song of Solomon 8 today.

It's Father's Day. Happy Father's Day to all who are fathers today. We have a very appropriate message about growing in marriage. We will talk about fatherhood.

But if you are like me, you feel that you have failed much in the Christian life. I have not been the father I'd hoped to be. I've not been the husband I'd hoped to be. I've not been the Christian I'd hoped to be. But God's not through with me yet. He's growing me. There's a lot of work still left to do.

Proposition: The only way to grow your marriage in a meaningful way is to grow in your walk with Jesus.

Mature Love is Always Growing

Song of Solomon is a summary of the entire love song. The essence of the book is that Mature love doesn't stay static. We don't stay where we are in our relationship with the Lord or in your marriage. True love, mature love, is always pressing onward and upward to higher ground.

Secret to Mature Love in Marriage: Fix Your Eyes on Jesus

The secret to growing a godly marriage is not found in you or your spouse. Fix your eyes on Jesus, and you will have so much energy and power to grow your marriage. He's the perfect Spouse, isn't He?

All Christians Will One Day Be Married to Christ

Christians are to relate to marriage—whether married, unmarried, soon to be married, or formerly married. The Song of Solomon is not just speaking to married people. It is written to all Christians as the profitable, sufficient Word of God as to how we are to relate to marriage on this earth.

God's Word calls us to come together as one Bride that is to be married to Christ, not to divide the church into various special groups. One day all of us are intended to be married. We are betrothed to Jesus Christ. We listen for the trumpet that will call both the living and the dead in Christ to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We come to the Song of Solomon chapter 8, and we find a woman who is happily married. She loves her husband, but she wants to love him more. How many married people here today would say the same thing – I love my spouse, but I want to love them more. How do we grow in our love in marriage, and also with the Lord?

Outline

Five ingredients for maturity in marriage and with the Lord.

- Grow in **Affection**: Be **Devoted** to Your Mate, Song 8:1-4.
- Grow in **Fruit**: Be **Dedicated** as a Parent, Song 8:5.
- Grow in **Love**: Be **Distinguished** by Your Love, Song 8:6-7.
- Grow in **Conviction**: Be **Deliberate** in Your Convictions, Song 8:8-10.
- Grow in **Trust**: Be **Dependent** to Wait on God for Marriage, Song 8:11-14.

I. We need to grow in affection, Song 8:1-4.

This wife was so thankful to be with her husband publically. Her identity was wrapped up in him. She loved being Mrs. Solomon. She wanted to display public affection for her husband, even though it was not culturally appropriate for husband and wife to display public affection.

She wants no limits (8:1).

She wanted to show public affection for her husband. She wanted everyone to know she belonged to him.

Song 8:1, “Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breasts! If I found you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me.”

Those in Ancient Israel did not allow public displays of intimate affection unless you were a near relative. It is that way even today in Israel. Brothers, family members, cousins can display affection, but not husband and wife. It is considered immodest. It was for this reason that the queen wished that Solomon was her brother. She wanted to openly display her love for Solomon. She wanted to lift him up and show him off in public!

She just longs for the fullest possible expression of intimacy with her beloved. She feels restrained—unable to adequately display her affection for Him.

Do You Feel Limited in Your Love for Christ?

Do you ever feel limited in your relationship with the Lord? God is a Spirit – How do we worship Him in spirit and in truth when we live in the flesh? Do you feel limited in how you can express your love to Him – limited by your flesh, limited by your sinfulness, limited by your weakness, limited by your failures or your failed promises to the Lord.

We are all so weak here and now, but saints, there is coming a day when there will be no limitations! There is coming a day “when the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality...” (1 Cor. 15:54).

She wants to show kindness to him with spiced wine. She desires his affection. It’s palpable! It’s strong. Even years later, looking back upon her time before marriage, the desires seem so strong.

She needs no fancy new ideas (8:2a)

Song 8:2a, “I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother— she who used to teach me...” Here is a lady who grew up on a farm in the tribe of Dan. She didn’t have any noble graces that would attract royalty. She knew the wisdom she needed was not from this world. The kind of woman that attracts a godly an is one who avoids the world’s wisdom. This very blessed lady had a mother who she could learn from. She saw her mother loving her father. This is something mothers must teach their daughters by example.

So many girls run from the wisdom of the godly mother. Young ladies, please I beg you, do what this humble bride did. Follow your godly mother. Listen to her teaching. Don’t stray from her.

This humble lady didn’t have the fancy fads of the world, but she had what really lasts: she has a mother who had the grace of God in her heart. This maturing bride has learned to be an attractive, godly woman from her mother. She doesn’t act like a know it all. She’s humble. She says, *“I’m so grateful for my mother. I learned so much from her.”*

There are many who struggle in marriage or child rearing because they have not had a godly example. Don’t use that as an excuse. The church provides you with dozens of godly examples. You who have learned contentment and godliness in marriage, teach the young wives to be content. Be a godly mother to them!

This lady learned so much from her mom. I can say I thank God for my wife who learned from a godly mother. If we are going to grow in marriage and in our walk with Christ, we can’t do it alone.

She wants no distractions (8:2b-3).

Song 8:2b-3, “... I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate. 3 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!”

Spiced wine – this is very strong drink. Her love and affection is powerful.

She wants to spend time with him. Notice children and career are not mentioned. Couples need to turn the mobile phones off, say no to the office, turn off the TV, put the kids to bed and spend time together.

Slow Down, and Spend Time with Christ

It is this way in our life with Christ. Do you know how many universes God controls? And yet we think we need to control our own lives. We need to slow down, tune in, and listen up to God. Spend time with Him. He said, “Without me, you can do nothing” (**John 15:5**). Christ’s presence is satisfying and encouraging. All time spent with Him will be rewarded.

In the same way married couples, you need to spend time together. You are a living parable of Christ’s love for His church. Talk with each other.

She has no regrets (8:4).

Physical love is so precious it is reserved for marriage. Keep intimacy in marriage! If you have a great love life in marriage, that is a virtue, but outside of marriage it is a shame and a reproach and a STAIN. We must not soil that which is precious and pure.

Solomon’s wife recalls that there is always a time and a place for physical affection. It is after the vows are made before God and others. It is specially reserved for marriage.

Song 8:4, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.” The Shulamite Bride now tells the “daughters of Jerusalem” to follow her example. She saved her love for her husband.

Solomon’s wife remembers the days before she was married, and recalls how she reserved this for marriage. She has a healthy view of marital intimacy. She reserved herself for her husband so that she could give all that she was to him and him alone.

The natural joy of sexual awakening is ruined by premature experimentation. Satisfying sexual passions outside of God’s covenant of marriage is like a person who enjoys stolen money.

In contrast to “the woman Folly” (Proverbs 9:13) who says “stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant” (Proverbs 9:17), here the woman Wisdom gives her beloved “spiced wine” and “the juice of my pomegranate” (Song 8:2) in her mother’s house, with total approval.

In Proverbs 9, there is a woman called Folly. It is said in verse 13 that “she is seductive and knows nothing. 14 She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, 15 calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, 16 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” And to him who lacks sense she says, 17 “**Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.**” 18 But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.”

Here is a woman who has the total approval of her mother (and father). The marriage bed is approved by God. What a joyful safety is the marriage bed.

There are no regrets when it comes to the marriage bed. Save yourself young people, for marriage.

This woman reserved her affection for her husband. She wanted no limits, no distractions. She has no regrets. Have you become distracted and dry? Are you regretting how you’ve been in your marriage? There are some married couples who are rarely together physically. Outside of real physical limitations, that kind of pursuit of each other is sinful and selfish. Perhaps there is bitterness between you and your spouse. Do something about it before you lose your marriage. If you are not physically together as a married couple, your marriage is in danger. Hear me now. You need to get with the one of the pastors and get help. It’s serious. The physical union is a barometer of your marriage. It’s not the main thing, but it tells you a lot about the state of

communication, companionship and communion with each other. Get it right! Get some help! Don't wait. It's serious!

Ask the Lord right now for a revival. You will not be able to have the proper affection for your spouse if you don't first love Jesus.

II. We need to grow in **fruit-bearing**, Song 8:5.

In **Song 8:5**, she says, "Under the apple tree I awakened you." She's referring to the family tree. She speaks of the place where "your mother bore you." This now is more clearly a reference to their family tree. She's having babies.

Solomon still has his queen leaning on him, intoxicated with love. They pass by an apple tree near Solomon's childhood home. It reminds them of their family tree and their children.

She's saying, "*Your mother bore you at this place. Now I am bearing you children and adding to the family line. Praise God!*"

We Must Be Leaning to Bear Fruit

The first thing we hear is a comment of others: **Song 8:5a**, "Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" They've had children, but their love is still strong.

It's hard to be married. It's hard to adjust to marriage. But as hard as that is, children are an even greater challenge. They demand so much. Yet even after giving her all for her children, she is still "leaning on the arm of her beloved."

Living the Christian life and bearing fruit for God is not easy. Yet after all these years, you are still "leaning on your beloved."

We Must Be Willing to Bear Fruit

If it is possible we are to have children in marriage. We are called to raise up "a godly seed" for Christ.

Not All Are Blessed with Children

We are to raise children for the Lord. Don't take it for granted. Not all marriages are blessed with children, but if you are blessed, you need to see the high calling you have. It's not easy.

Verse 5b, "<SHE> Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor." We might say it like I woke you up where the stork had been. It's a reference to the joy of children in marriage. The implication of the apple tree is symbolic of the "family tree" that bears the fruit of marital love, namely children. The desire is to carry on the family by having children.

Listen, a marriage is more than companionship. It's more than romance and intimacy and fun together. It is all that. But it's about building a family tree.

We Must Be Loving to Bear Fruit

Don't get so busy in ministry that you lose your love for the Lord. This girl is "leaning on the arm of her beloved." How is your love in marriage? Have you lost your love for the Lord? You can only love each other by the love you have in your walk with God.

In the ministry there are many spiritual children. But don't get so busy in ministry that you lose your walk with the Lord. We need to grow in fruit-bearing. But if you are so tired and dry from ministry, you are out of focus and out of balance.

It's the same in marriage. Don't get so busy with your children that you lose your marriage. Slow down! Enjoy the fruit God gives. Enjoy that fruit, but don't enjoy it more than your walk with Him.

III. We need to grow in godly Love, Song 8:6-7.

In marriage or in our relationship with the Lord, we cannot be robots. We must be distinguished by the love we have.

A Permanent Marking

I'm told that my ancestors, the Scots, were the "original barbarians." I'm told they invented the tribal tattoo. That tattoo was a permanent marking of identity.

The Shulamite talks about how she wants to be a seal on Solomon's heart and arm. Listen to Solomon's wife. **Song 8:6a**, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm." A seal is a permanent marking of identity. It doesn't go away. Seals in ancient times were used to show ownership and permanence.

Godly love is Permanent

Christ has graven us on His hands! Your love ought to be like Christ's – permanent kind. You are going to stick around till you die. Love is not a feeling, but a choice to sacrifice yourself for another, whether they are worthy or not. Verse 6 describes the Velcro of a long lasting marriage relationship.

Are you plugged in, totally committed to marriage? It means you forsake ALL others and love only her. It means you always answer her phone calls. The biggest insult you can give a wife is to make her talk to your voice mail. The only way that ought to happen is if you lose your phone. It ought to be so rare that if your wife has to talk to voice mail, the next thing she feels compelled to do is file a missing person's report.

Be plugged in. You ought to be like a seal on your wife's heart. Like a permanent marking on her arm. You are one flesh. Know your wife. Talk to her. Listen to her. She needs you to be engaged.

For men, it is easy to ignore their wife. Show her attention. Have a rule when you get home. I'm told that you need to give her a ten second kiss when you walk in the door! Don't ignore your wife. She probably feels ignored at times. Listen to her. Love her. She'll want to lean on you. If you want a long lasting marriage, be friends. Be plugged in to her life!

Godly love is powerful

Song 8:6b, "for love is strong as death." No one is "half dead." You are either dead or you are not! Death is so strong that once you die you can never come back. That's the kind of

commitment godly love gives. Men are to love their lives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it through the DEATH of the Cross. Love is as strong as death.

Godly love is persistent

Song 8:6c, “jealousy is fierce as the grave...” The grave never gives up its people. It has an eternal strong hold on everyone who goes there. That’s how strong godly love is! It never let’s go!

The Lord love for you is as gripping as the grave. He is our relentless Redeemer. He will never let you go. He will never give up His grip on you. He has a divine persistence. He never lets us go.

That kind of godly, possessive guarding love is from God in marriage. He will never leave us or forsake us.

Godly love proceeds from the Lord

Song 8:6d, “Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD.”

This is the only place in the entire Song of Solomon that the Lord’s covenant name “Yahweh” is used. This reference to fire reminds us of the presence of God. God often reveals Himself in fire: the burning bush, the pillar of fire of His manifest presence, the tongues of fire at Pentecost. O God, bring your fire anew in my heart! This kind of love is possible only through the LORD. It is called in verse 6d, “the very flame of the LORD.” You can only love like this if you are walking with Christ. It finds it’s very origin in God!

Godly love is persevering

Song 8:7a, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.” Many tests will come to your love, but love from God will overcome it all. Your love must not be based on fleeting emotion, but on covenant commitment to God! Many waters cannot put it out! It keeps on burning!

Godly love is priceless

Song 8:7b, “If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.” This kind of love is so priceless. We often play with the worthless toilet water when God has a beautiful ocean for us. His love is priceless.

IV. We need to grow in our Convictions, Song 8:8-10.

Be a Secure Wall in your convictions

Keep the fires of marriage within marriage. God says they are pure and holy in the marriage union! The Shulamite queen now tells the story of her life long integrity from the time she was a little girl. She says she was a wall, not a door. She was not an easy woman that men could walk through like a door. She was a secure wall.

She recalls her brothers wanting to protect her before she was a woman. They were looking out for her—they were guarding her for her wedding day.

The brothers were taking the responsibility of the father. The father is not on the scene. Listen to them.

Song 8:8-9, “<OTHERS> We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? 9 If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.”

Do you see the imagery? Basically if she seemed to want to be promiscuous, they were going to protect her from herself. If she seemed to be pure they would trust her.

Be a Celebrated Wall in your convictions

Song 8:9-10, “<SHE> “If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. 10 I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace.””

She looked at her body as a place of peace and security. She was not a violated castle. She was not compromised. Her body was like a wall. She did not give away her purity to win a man. She would never have been with Solomon had she been like a “door.”

She no longer needs to defend her virginity against the male aggressor who would storm the walls. She, the female, and her lover, the male, are at peace. Instead of battle towers to *defend* her, she has breasts that *adorn* her beauty in his eyes.¹

Love Pleased to Awake in Marriage

Love is pleased to be awakened in marriage. That is the only place the fire is safe. As we’ve said before, fire inside a hearth is fine. Fire outside the hearth is disastrous. If you are married, determine that your physical union is reserved for your spouse alone.

10 Steps to Protecting Your Marriage²

1. Resolve in your heart to honor the sacredness of your and others’ marriage vows
2. Remember the picture that marriage is supposed to be illustrating a picture of God’s covenant-keeping love.
3. Rejoice in the mate that God has given you.
4. Rely on the grace of God and the power of His Spirit to meet needs that your mate cannot meet.
5. Ask God to rekindle your love for your own mate.
6. Run from potentially compromising situations. Social networking, Facebook, some of these things have become a huge catalyst in divorces today.
7. Reject anything that could fuel impure desires. What goes into our minds is so important. The potential for impurity is so enormous today through movies, DVDs, magazines, romance novels.
8. Resist temptation to isolate yourself. When you’re being tempted, when you’re in a difficult marriage or compromising situation, sin’s power is strengthened by secrecy.
9. Rehearse the consequences of sexual sin.
 - It eats away at the soul.
 - It defiles the marriage.

¹ Garrett, D. A. (1993). *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs* (Vol. 14, p. 429). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² From Nancy Leigh DeMoss. *How to Fall and Stay in Love with Jesus*, ReviveOurHearts.org.

- It defiles the picture of redemption.
 - It's destructive.
 - It's deadly.
10. Rehearse the blessings of faithful love, of being a covenant keeper, the blessings in your marriage, in your children, in your conscience, in your future.

A wise woman realizes that she can lead a man straight to hell by tempting him, and so she looks forward to marriage, and keeps herself pure.

There is a reason that we speak of marital love as the most beautiful, free relationship that a human being can have. But something this sacred must be reserved for marriage.

Regardless, this is a woman who is at home with her husband. She loves spending time with him. She feels safe. She knows him. She wants to display her affection publically for him. She is his helper and speaks well of him!

V. We need to grow in our **Trust**, Song 8:11-14.

Trust God's Providence (Control over every circumstance)

Song 8:11, "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver." Solomon owned the vineyard. He "let out the vineyard to keepers" (vs. 11). And who were these keepers? They were the Shulamite's brothers.

They were to bring Solomon the profit of what they sold. "Each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver." (vs. 11).

But Solomon got something more than the price of the vineyard. He got these brother's little sister!

We can trust God for marriage. The Shulamite's eyes were not on marriage, but on being faithful!

Song 8:12, "My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred." Solomon can have the profit, and her brothers get some of the profit too, but Solomon got her!

Celebrate God's Providence

Song 8:13, "<HE> O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it."

This is a verse that speaks of celebration! Solomon is saying to his friends, "celebrate with me!"

Be Refreshed in God's Providence

Song 8:14, "<SHE> Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices."

Conclusion

How do you build a lasting marriage? All this is vain if you only see the surface of marriage. This is not meant to be a “self-help” message. Moralism helps no one. This message is a clarion call to know your God.

This is a picture of Christ and the church. Christ is our oasis. Married people, you need to communicate that in your marriage. Single people, you need to give single hearted devotion to Christ.

Let His flame burn in you, and your marriages will burn brightly. Draw near to Him single and married people as we await our marriage to our Sinless Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.