

Is He Really The Man Of My Dreams?

Song of Songs 3:1-5

Introduction: 1) The blessings and benefits of marriage are far too many to count.

As the two become one (Gen. 2:24), the life experiences shared, involving both joy and pain, enrich our lives and make us better. At least they can and should.

2) This was beautifully illustrated to me some years ago when I came across a strangely titled article, “Berry Mauve or Muted Wine?”¹ It is a powerful story of love, courage and devotion forged in the hot flames of real life and covenant marriage.

Berry Mauve or Muted Wine?

He found me weeping bitterly in the hospital room. “What’s wrong?” Richard asked, knowing we both had reason to cry. In the past 48 hours, I had discovered the lump in my breast was cancerous; the cancer had spread to my lymph nodes; and there was a possible spot on my brain.

I was 32 years old and the mother of three beautiful children. Richard pulled me tight and tried to comfort me. Many had expressed amazement at the peace that had overwhelmed me from the beginning. God was my comfort the moment before I found out I had cancer, and He remained the same after. But it seemed to Richard that all that had crashed in the few moments he had been out of the room.

¹ T. Suzanne Eller, *Chicken Soup for the Couple’s soul* (Deerfield Beach, Fla.: Health Communications, 1999).

He held me tight. “It’s all been too much, hasn’t it, Suz?” he said. “That’s not it,” I cried and held up the hand mirror I had found in the drawer. Richard was puzzled. “I didn’t know it was like this,” I cried. I had found the mirror in the nightstand and was shocked at my reflection. I didn’t even recognize myself. After the surgery, I groaned in my sleep and well-meaning friends had freely pushed the self-dispensing medication to ease what they thought was pain. Unfortunately I was allergic to morphine and had swelled like a sausage. Betadine from the surgery stained my neck, shoulder and chest and it was too soon for a bath.

A tube hung out of my side draining the fluid from the surgical site. My left shoulder and chest was wrapped tightly in gauze where I had lost a portion of my breast. My long, curly hair was matted into one big wad.

What hit me the hardest was that over 100 people had come to see me over the past 48 hours and they had all seen this brown and white, swollen, makeup-less, matted-haired, gray-gowned woman that used to be me. Where had I gone?

Richard left the room. Within moments he came back, his arms laden with small bottles. He pulled pillows out of the closet and dragged a chair over to the sink. He unraveled my IV and tucked the long tube from my side in his shirt pocket. He reached down and picked me up and scooted the IV stand with one foot as he carried me over to the chair. As he sat me down gently on his lap, he cradled my head in his arms over the sink and began to run warm water through my hair. He poured the small bottles he had confiscated from the cart in the hall over my hair and washed and conditioned my long curls. He wrapped my hair in a towel and he carried me, the tube and IV stand back over to the bed. All of this done so gently that not one stitch was disturbed.

My husband, who has never blow-dried his thick dark hair in his life, took out the blow drier and dried my hair, the whole while

entertaining me as he pretended to give beauty tips. He then proceeded, with the experience of watching me for the past 12 years, to fix my hair. I laughed as he bit his lip, more serious than any beauty school student. He bathed my shoulder and neck with a warm washcloth, careful to not disturb the area around the surgery and rubbed lotion into my skin. Then he opened my makeup bag and began to apply makeup. I will never forget the laughter we shared as he tried to apply my mascara and blush. I opened my eyes wide and held my breath as his hands shook as he brushed the mascara on my lashes. He rubbed my cheeks with tissue to blend in the blush.

With the last touch, he held up two lipsticks. “Which one? Berry mauve or muted wine?” he asked. He applied the lipstick like an artist painting on a canvas and then held the little mirror in front of me. I was human again. A little swollen, but I smelled clean, my hair hung softly over my shoulders and I recognized who I was. “What do you think?” he asked. I began to cry again, this time because I was grateful. “No, baby. You’ll mess up my makeup job,” he said and then I burst into laughter.

During this difficult time in our lives, I was given only a 10-40% chance of survival over five years. That was nine years ago. I made it through those years with laughter, with God’s comfort, and with the help of a man brought into my life named Richard. We will celebrate our 21st anniversary this year with our three children—our twins, who are 17, and our 18 year old daughter. Richard understood what others might have taken for vanity in the midst of tragedy. Everything I had ever taken for granted had been shaken in those hours—the fact that I would watch my children grow, my health, my future. With one small act of kindness, Richard gave my normalcy. I will always see that moment as one of the kindest gestures of our marriage. [This was written in 1999. In 2014 I corresponded with Suzanne. She is doing well!]

3) Song of Songs 3:1-5 appears to be a dream, or maybe better, a nightmare, that the bride-to-be had one night as her wedding day was approaching.

Understandably there was excitement but also anxiety. She was nervous.

There were still some questions racing through her mind. Is this Shepherd-King really the man of my dreams? Is he truly the one that I want to be with til “death do us part?” She is determined to find the answers and we can summarize the “search and find mission” she sets out on by raising 4 questions these verses will answer for us.

I. Do you really love him? 3:1

1) Perhaps the king has returned to the city (3:3) leaving Shulamite alone in the country. Their separation is painful to her, but it is also helpful. It provides insight and it clarifies her true feelings. Four times in the poem she refers to the King as “the one I love” (3:1, 2, 3, 4). The *ESV* translates it “whom my soul loves.” We also see four times the theme of “seeking” (3:1 (twice), 3:2 (twice)). She is alone in bed struggling thru a restless night. Once again he is absent (1:7) and she misses him badly. Why? Because she really does love this man. Her bed is where he belongs and she wants him there! This will happen soon, but not soon enough as far as she is concerned. She is seeking the one she loves but she cannot find him. This is a situation

that must be remedied. This is a situation that she will not stand for. Richard Hess remarks, “The females’ desire for her lover, equal in intensity to her desire to live, will cause her to go forth and seek him” (Hess, 103).

2) Settle in your heart that you truly love the person you are considering for marriage. If there are doubts, then wait. If questions remain, then put things on hold. There is something worse than not being married. It is being married to the wrong person. Wisdom may sometimes say wait, especially when it comes to matters of the heart.

II. Is he worth the risks? 3:2-3

1) Shulamite looked for her King but did not find him (v.1). She will now do something about it, risking both life and reputation in the process. She is convinced he is worth it. She leaves the comfort of her bed (though on this night it had been anything but comfortable!) and the safety of her home and she ventures into the city (3:2). No doubt it is the capital city of Jerusalem (3:5) with its streets and plazas (*ESV*, “squares”). This statement adds weight to the interpretation that 3:1-5 is a dream sequence. Going out at night and alone is something a woman would not do in that day or for that matter, in any

day. This is especially true in the Middle East. Tom Gledhill says of her actions that they are, “irrational, impractical, impossible” (p.144). However, her love for this man is so great she will risk it all. She will cast proper decorum to the wind as she seeks the one that she loves.

2) Unfortunately she again is met with disappointment: “I sought him, but did not find him.” You can almost feel panic setting in. Her heart is pounding, her mind is racing. She cannot find him but suddenly she is found: “The guards (*ESV*, “watchmen”) who go about the city found me” (v.3). The significance of the guards (cf. *S.S.* 5:7; *Jer.* 6:17) is not readily evident. Certainly they are men of authority and importance. Could it also be that they are men who are wise in the way of the streets (“street smart”) who could help our lady locate her man? Perhaps while on patrol they had seen the King. Regardless of the circumstances she has only one question for these street cops, these highway patrolmen, “Have you seen the one I love?” She is bold and clear in her question. She is not hesitant, even with strangers, to profess her love and devotion to her man. Hers is a healthy (not reckless) abandonment in search of the one her soul, her very life, loves.

3) Over time, after they are married, it will continue to be a healthy sign of their relationship that they miss each other and long for each other when they are apart. After all, “the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone”...” (Gen. 2:18). It is not good for the woman either. However, because their love will mature and deepen, a confidence and security will develop that will lay anxieties and fears to rest. That there would ever be a time that they would look forward to and actually enjoy being apart would be a telltale sign that their marriage was in serious trouble.

III. Is he the one you want to spend the rest of your life with? 3:4

1) This is the longest verse in our five verse poem. It is also the happiest! Overtones of Mary Magdalene finding the risen Lord Jesus are in the air (John 20:11-18)! We will address that shortly.

2) The guards said nothing to Shulamite (v.3), so she moves on. She will not be sidetracked or stopped as she seeks her King. Suddenly, unexpectedly, she tells us, “I had just passed them when I found the one I love.” We can easily sense her excitement in her discovery! “I found him! I found him!

3) Finding him, she is anything but docile and passive in her response: “I held on to him and would not let him go until I brought him to my mother’s house—to the chamber of the one who conceived me.” Shulamite’s persistence has paid off. She found her Bridegroom King and she is not about to let him go, now or ever. To make crystal clear her intentions she takes him to her maternal home, a place where she feels safe and secure. Further, in beautiful Hebrew parallelism, she will take him into the chamber of the one who conceived me.” I believe this means the bedroom for a time of intimacy. Tremper Longman says, “she grabbed him ardently and pulled him back to the privacy of her mother’s bedroom. These actions certainly dispel a typical stereotype of the woman’s “role” in a relationship. She is no passive wallflower waiting for the advances of the more active male. She grabs him and hauls him off to the privacy of the bedroom” (p.130). Gledhill believes our text means even more that this! He notes,

““The house of my mother”” could be translated more exactly as ‘my mother-house’, with the possessive “my” qualifying the compound unit ‘mother-house’. Then ‘mother-house’ could literally be the chamber where motherhood becomes a reality, that is, her womb. The phrase occurs again at 8:2 where again some intimate activity is implied (drinking spiced-wine,

drinking from the juice of the girl's pomegranate), leading on to the embracing of 8:3 and the adjuration at 8:4. So again, motion to *my mother's house* leads us...metaphorically to the girl's own secret place, to the entrance to her womb, the 'chamber' (1:4), the innermost sanctum of intimacy to which she longs to bring her lover. That this is the meaning is confirmed by the request the girl (or is it the author?) makes, that love should not be awakened or aroused until there is an appropriate opportunity for it to be fulfilled. Her dreamings have led her to explicit sexual fantasies, which cause her to be aroused, when there is no hope of satisfaction, except in the physical presence of *the one my heart loves*. But she is still alone, and her fantasies are an exercise in frustration, so it is better that she not be aroused at all" (p. 145).

4) Such actions on the part of a woman or man should only take place when you are rock solid certain this is the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. Indeed such actions should only take place within the covenant of marriage which leads us to our 4th and final question.

IV. Is he worth the wait? 3:5

1) For the second of three occasions (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) the readers of this Song are placed under an oath along with the "Young women of Jerusalem" (*NKJV, ESV*, "O daughters of Jerusalem"). There is a divine solemnity to this oath as all are challenged to not give way to sexual passion "until the appropriate time." That time, as Scripture

makes perfectly clear, is marriage between a man and a woman united in a covenant relationship for life. Indeed as King Jesus said in Matthew 19:6, “what God has joined together, man must not separate”.

2) Once again we are reminded that sex is a good (great?!) gift from a great God. What is necessary for its maximal enjoyment is the right person at the right place at the right time. Here there is maximum protection, pleasure, and partnership. If he is the right man he is worth the wait. If she is the right woman she is worth the wait.

3) Unfortunately, too many have been deceived by the lies of the evil one, been convinced that premarital sex is the norm and without consequences, and thereby suffered the disappointments and sorrows that are all too common. In their well-researched book, *Premarital Sex in America* (2011), Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker expose what they call “Ten Myths about Sex in Emerging America.” These are especially relevant to the issue of sex before and outside of marriage and provide serious food for thought. These myths include:

MYTH: Long-term relationships are a thing of the past.

MYTH: Sex is necessary to maintain a struggling relationship.

MYTH: Boys are sexual beings and cannot be expected to follow sexual norms.

MYTH: You are entirely in charge of your own sexuality; others' decisions don't matter.

MYTH: Others are having more sex than you.

MYTH: Sex doesn't need to mean much.

MYTH: Living together is a positive step towards marriage.

(Adapted from a blog by Sean McDowell at Conversantlife.com. 9-20-12).

Myths deceive but God's Word is a sure and certain guide. His counsel is always for our holiness. His wisdom is always for our good. If they are the right person they are worth the wait. You will be glad you did.

Practical Application

1) Asking questions, lots of questions, is a wise and good thing to do before getting married. We should ask good questions of each other and we should also seek the wisdom of family and friends who love us and have our best interest at heart. It is simply impossible to have too much information when we make this second most important decision we will ever make in all of life. Of course the first and most important decision of all is will I trust my

life completely and only to Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. No questions will ever trump this one!

2) Howard Hendricks (1924-2013) was a hero in ministry to me and thousands of others. “Prof” as he was fondly known by his students taught Bible Interpretation at Dallas Theological Seminary for more than 50 years. But, he also taught on marriage and family as well. Some years ago a friend passed on to me a list of “Prof’s” entitled “30 Questions Most Frequently Asked by Young Couples Looking Forward to Marriage.” There is some real wisdom here, and any couple contemplating marriage would be well served to walk through them one by one.

**“Thirty Questions Most Frequently Asked by
Young Couples Looking Forward to Marriage”**

1. Where should a couple stop in petting before marriage?
2. Is jealousy part of love for your mate?
3. Who should control the purse strings?
4. When both are working, is the wife’s money her’s or both’s? If both work, who should support the family while (if) the husband continues his schooling?
5. Is there any reason why the wife should not support the family while the husband continues his schooling?
6. Should the husband help with housework?
7. Should couples have a will drawn up soon after marriage?

8. Should a young couple carry insurance?
9. What are the effects of frequent business travel or unusual working hours on marital happiness?
10. To what extent should we discuss our pasts?
11. Is it true that people are not really “in love” until after they have been married for some years?
12. When we differ, how can we work out a happy adjustment?
13. Is it true that quarrels are never necessary?
14. If we come from divided families, can we profit by our parent’s mistakes?
15. When we belong to two quite different churches how do we work out our differences and what about children?
16. How can a couple keep in-laws in their place, but still make them feel loved and necessary?
17. What if he feels she does not give enough and she feels he does not give enough, they talk about it and still feel this way, what is suggested?
18. How soon after marriage should a couple plan to have children?
19. When considering having children, should the decision be primarily economic?
20. Are contraceptives safe to use? Do they lead to cancer or sterility? [Possibly abortion?]
21. What part does each partner have in the love play preceding and during intercourse?
22. Is every couple able to have satisfactory intercourse?
23. Is it harmful or wrong to have intercourse during menstruation?

24. Is there danger of constantly arousing sexual desires and not fulfilling this desire, in both male and female?
25. How does a woman know when she reaches a climax?
26. Do women undergo emotional changes during pregnancy and menstrual periods?
27. How important is it for couples to know their RH factor?
28. Are regular times for prayer important?
29. Are there occasions in marriage when divorce seems a reasonable and even proper solution?
30. If we find difficulties arising in our marriage what immediate steps should we take?

How Does This Text point to Christ? I Will Seek My King

1) Douglas O'Donnell draws our attention to the fact, "There is a long history of Christians making a connection between the heart of our text (3:1-4) and John 20, the tomb scene where Mary Magdalene encountered the resurrected Jesus. Hippolytus (Bishop of Rome from 222-235), was the first to point out the possible parallels between the Song and this Gospel scene, arguing that our text is a prophecy" (71). It is indeed the case that both Shulamite and Mary go in search of their King while it is dark. Both are met by others in their search. Both, once finding the object of their affection, cling fast not wanting to ever let go again. These parallels are worth thinking about to be sure.

2) O'Donnell also notes certain thematic themes with another well-known Gospel story; the story of the wee little man named Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Again we see a man seeking the King, finding him, and taking him to his house! This is good! But, and I appreciate O'Donnell's insight so much at this point, this little story is eclipsed by the "Big Story" of Redemption:

"But wait. Zacchaeus sought and found Jesus. That's the story. True, he did. But Jesus sought and found Zacchaeus—that's the bigger story [Luke 19:10]. Jesus came out of his safe home to seek after sinners like Zacchaeus, people who are lost in the city streets and squares, and to bring them home to the security and intimacy of his love" (p. 72).

3) So Jeremiah 29:13-14 most certainly is true and beautifully illustrated in Song of Songs 3:1-5, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you—this is the Lord's declaration—". Yes, we will find our King when we seek Him, but unlike Shulamite, it will be because He first sought us, He first loved us (1John 4:19). The Song of Songs is a beautiful love story to be sure. And, it is a door that opens up to us an even greater love story, the Greatest Love Story of All, found in a Greater King, a Greater Solomon, the King whose name is Jesus.