

What Do You Do When The Honeymoon Comes To An End?

Song of Songs 5:2-8

Introduction: 1) Honeymoons are wonderful times of excitement, fun, happiness, joy and love. We get married like Solomon and Shulamite in Song of Songs 3:6-11, bask in the passion of our wedding night (4:1-5:1), and think this is the way that it is always going to be. But then we return home to the real world with all of its demands and responsibilities and before long the glow of the honeymoon has faded into a flicker of a lackluster routine. Disappointment sets in. Expectations are not met. Questions begin to haunt us: Is this what I signed up for? Is this what I am going to endure for the rest of my life? Did we, did I, make a mistake in marrying this person?

2) If you have found yourself asking these kinds of questions I have some good news for you. Everyone has! Every couple in their marriage are going to have peaks and valleys, good days and bad days, good weeks and bad weeks, and I can expand the calendar if you like! And, those bad times can often make their way into the bedroom. For many years, when I speak on the subject of marriage, I will repeatedly say to the couples present, “What takes place outside the bedroom will influence what takes place inside the bedroom.”

3) In our text our couple has married and celebrated their wedding by sexually consummating their union. Commentators universally point out that Song of Songs 5:1, “lies at the center of the Song. This is true in word count, in the order of events and in tone and intensity” (Griffiths, 114). However, in 5:2 we return to real life and immediately we find our couple experiencing trouble. There are problems already in Paradise. Paul Griffiths succulently says, “After the orgasmic culmination of 5:1, voice, place, and tone shift suddenly” (Griffiths, 117). However, with this shift comes some very helpful and practical wisdom for all as we adjust in marriage, work through conflict, and emerge on the other side reconciled and reunited. The honesty of the Bible is so refreshing. We are all going to experience times of difficulty. Marriage involves two depraved human beings trying to figure out how to get along. Again the good news is we can, and Scripture is a helpful guide in getting us where God wants us to be.

I. Anticipate the challenges of time 5:2

1) Our text again presents a bedroom scene, most likely a dream and a time of separation (3:1-4). Previously this took place while they were courting. Now they are married. Times of separation would disappear or at least be kept to a minimum. At least that is what Shulamite thought. However, things have not worked out as she hoped. She is alone in bed (again?!), dreaming, tossing and turning. Where is he? Why is he late again? Why

does it seem like he thinks spending time with others is more important than spending time with me? I know he is the King but I am his wife. LOVE is a beautiful 4-letter word and for me it is best spelt TIME.

2) Suddenly she is awakened. “A sound! My love is knocking!” Note that our text records his saying at the end of the verse, “For my head is drenched with dew, my hair with droplets of the night.” This is an example of Hebrew parallelism and indicates that he has arrived home late. It is probably near or even after midnight. No doubt he had had a long hard day, and his day had run into night. On this particular occasion work won out over the wife and the challenge of time management had beaten them. The stage is perfectly set for a confrontation, a showdown in the bedroom.

3) Solomon may have anticipated there might be a problem, some potential for a fight. A locked bedroom door would be a big hint! His approach is commendable, gentle and sensitive. It’s not going to work, but give him credit for trying! He speaks to his wife using four terms of affection each preceded by the personal, possessive pronoun “my”. We have seen these tender descriptions before. Maybe he thought, “they worked before, maybe they will work now.”

- 1) My sister (cf. 4:8), you are my friend as well as my lover. I have a familial love and affection for you.
- 2) My darling (cf. 1:9; used 9 times in the Song). Some translate it “my love.” I delight in you. I take pleasure in you. You have my heart.
- 3) My dove (2:14). Maybe a pet name; you are gentle and pure. I find peace and tranquility in your presence.
- 4) My perfect one (4:7). You are flawless and blameless. It is instructive to note that this is what Jesus Christ redeems His bride to be (Eph. 5:26-27).

4) Solomon is working hard to redeem the evening, but unfortunately we are headed for a bad night, a disappointing night, in the bedroom. Bob Turnbull in an article entitled, “What Your Wife Really Needs”, reminds us that wives can dry up and wither on the inside if four things are missing in our marriage. They are:

- A) Time – The currency of a relationship; clearing space in your calendar for her says you are valuable to me.

- B) Talk – this is how she connects with you. It is also a way she handles stress (men on the other hand, walk away or take flight).¹
- C) Tenderness – it feeds her soul when she is nourished and knows she is cherished.
- D) Touch – non-sexual, affectionate touch is crucial to a wife and, if she only receives it as the pre-game warm-up to sex, she will begin to feel used, like a marital prostitute.²

II. Beware of the sin of selfishness 5:3

1) Few sins are more lethal in marriage than the sin of selfishness. At its root, it is a form of idolatry. In our text it is clear that the husband disappointed his wife and let her down. He failed the 4-T test we just noted. However, this does not justify the response of Shulamite. Basically her response says I don't have time for you. Serving you would be too much trouble.

- “I have taken off my clothing. How can I put it back on?” It is too much trouble to put on my robe. And, think what you are missing beneath these sheets because you were out late.

¹ Karen Peterson, “To Fight Stress, Women Talk, Men Walk” (*USA Today*, 8-7-99).

² Bob Turnbull, “What Your Wife Really Needs” (*Marriage Relationships*, Fall 1999).

- “I have washed my feet. How can I get them dirty?” I am bathed, clean and in bed. It’s time to go to sleep.

Her two-fold objection in our modern vernacular would translate, “not tonight, I’m tired.” “Not tonight, I have a headache.” “Getting up would give me a headache.” “Not tonight, I’m not in the mood.” You came home late. You didn’t even call. I will deny you. I will punish you. Knock all you want, that door is staying locked!

2) Let’s get practical and honest at this point. All couples fight. Every couple will experience conflict and disagreements. The issue is not will we fight, but how will we fight. Will we fight dirty or will we fight fair? I am not sure where I found it, but I have personally benefited from a short article entitled “Ten Tips On Fighting Fair.” Solomon and Shulamite certainly would have been helped by it. And, take special note how the 10 items focus more on the other person than it does on you. Selfishness and self-centeredness are almost completely absent from these words of wisdom.

“Ten Tips On Fighting Fair”

- 1) **Confront problems** as soon as possible after they arise. Don’t allow them to fester and cause bitterness.

- 2) **Master the art of listening.** Show your mate respect by hearing them out. Ask for clarification if you don't understand. Be patient. Don't hurry the conversation.
- 3) **Limit the discussion** of the conflict to the present issue. Don't drag out yesterday's (or last year's!) dirty laundry. Being "historical" will infect the conversation.
- 4) **Use "I" messages** in making your point and expressing your emotions. This allows you to take responsibility for your feelings, and it also allows the other person to hear about your feelings without feeling defensive. "You" messages tend to be perceived as attacks and criticism. Why? Because they are!
- 5) **Avoid exaggerations** such as "always," "never," etc. Such statements are seldom true simply because as inconsistent human beings we very seldom "always" or "never" do anything.
- 6) **Avoid character assassination** (name calling and putdowns). Pointing out character flaws or demeaning another person will do nothing but stir up greater disharmony.
- 7) **Use appropriate words and actions** for the matter at hand. Not all arguments are worth fighting at peak volume. The fact is no argument is worth fighting at peak volume.
- 8) **Don't be concerned about winning or losing** the argument. It's better if both parties can be more concerned about resolving the conflict rather than who "wins" or "loses." Compromise is a good word and a valuable goal in this context.
- 9) **Determine limits.** Comments which are hurtful or damaging must be avoided. Speak to your mate in the way you want them to speak to you.
- 10) **Choose to forgive.** All people fail. If we don't give others a chance to start over after failure, our relationships will suffer. Complete forgiveness may take time, depending on the degree of

hurt caused by the other person. However, it's important to have an attitude of forgiveness and keep asking God to help you get to the point where you can truly forgive. Remembering how much you have been forgiven by Christ is essential at this point (Eph. 4:32).

III. Expect seasons of regret 5:4-6

1) Have you ever had the experience of, “I sure wish I had not said that? I sure wish I hadn't done that?” I suspect we all have. At least I hope you have because we all make mistakes in marriage. We all do things that sooner or later we regret. This was certainly true for Shulamite. First, she locked the door to their bedroom. Second, she told him to “take a hike!” He was not worth the trouble of getting out of bed and putting her robe back on. His sweet talk in verse 2 would not work this time. As anyone would know, this would have been devastating to the all too fragile male ego.

2) However, this man is different. He does not give up, at least not yet. Shulamite tells us in v. 4, “My love thrust his hand through the opening, and my feelings were stirred for him.” Six times in 5:2-8 Shulamite calls her husband “my love.” She will do so four more times in verses 9-10.

Solomon makes one final attempt to win her heart. He gently “thrust his hand through the opening.” Because our Song is poetic, symbolic and erotic, many scholars believe we have a double entendre at work. Several

times in Scripture the male hand is used euphemistically for the sexual part of a man (see Isa. 57:8, 10; Jer. 5:31; 50:15). That would also mean the word translated “opening” corresponds to the female’s sexual parts.

Shulamite’s response would seem to support this understanding. She says, “my feelings were stirred for him.” The *ESV* says, “my heart was thrilled within me. The *NIV*, “my heart began to pound for him.” Whatever harsh feelings she had were being vanquished by his kinds words and persistent pursuit.

3) Verse five says, “I rose to open for my love. My hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with flowing myrrh on the handles of the bolt.” The “I” is emphatic in the Hebrew text. She jumps out of bed, apparently not taking time to cloth herself, quickly perfumes herself (though the text could mean that Solomon left the myrrh on the handle as a token of love), and hurries to the door now ready for a time of intimacy and lovemaking. Time to make up!

4) Unfortunately, it is too late. Verse six, “I opened to my love, but my love had turned and gone away. I was crushed that he had left. I sought him, but did not find him. I called him, but he did not answer.” Wounded males often go into shells. They just walk away. One can hear the heartbroken regret in Shulamite’s words. He’s gone. I’m crushed. I can’t find him.

He's not answering (taking my calls). This has not worked out at all like I hoped or expected.

5) If Solomon earlier failed the 4-T test, perhaps Shulamite failed the 4-C test. Yvonne Turnbull, in "What Your Husband Really Wants", notes 4 things a husband longs to receive from his wife. Ladies, he wants you to be:

- 1) His cheerleader – A man thrives on his wife's approval and praise.
- 2) His champion – A wife's respect and encouragement lifts a man's spirit and his sense of self-worth.
- 3) His champion – A man wants his wife to be his best friend.
- 4) His Complement – A woman is necessary to complete a man.³

A single friend of mine playfully says, "Being single makes for lonely nights but it sure makes for peaceful days." A married man longs for both peaceful days and intimate night. Where those things are absent, regret is certain to follow.

IV. Receive the blows that lead to repentance 5:7

1) In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 Paul writes, "Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance. For you were grieved as God willed, so that you didn't experience any loss from us. For godly grief produces a repentance not to be regretted and leading to salvation, but

³ Yvonne Turnbull, "What Your Husband Really Wants" (*Marriage Partnership*, Fall 1999).

worldly grief produces death.” Because of the content and nature of verse 7, I am all the more convinced this section of our Song is a dream. It is virtually impossible to believe Solomon’s wife, the queen of Israel, would be treated in what we read. First, “The guards who go about the city found me.” She cannot find her husband but she is found by the police who guard the streets and walls of the city. She is seeking her man (vs. 6) but only runs into other men, men she views as little more than a desert (1:14)! Second, “they beat and wound me.” Third, “they took my cloak (or “veil”). She is stopped, struck, and stripped. Though interpretive certainly not possible, I see here the blows of repentance given to her by God that will lead to restoration and reconciliation with her husband. Kinlaw raises the questions, “Does this treatment by the watchmen reflect the girl’s guilt and sense of failure at the slowness of her response to her husband?” (Kinlaw, EBC, 1232). I believe it does. Griffiths refers to it as “a love wound” (p. 125). Having been broken, heartbroken, she now acts on her change of heart. It is painful. It hurts. In her case, it is even humiliating. However, it is worth it.

2) In another book of wisdom, the book of Job, we find words that closely parallel the words of this verse. There in Job 23:8-10 we read, “If I go east, He is not here, and if I go west, I cannot perceive Him. When He is at work to the north, I cannot see Him; when He turns south, I cannot find Him. Yet

He knows the way I have taken; when He has tested me, I will emerge as pure gold.”

3) Charles Spurgeon said of repentance, “it is a discovering of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character...” This is beautifully put on display by Shulamite in this verse. Her wounds went deep, but her healing would be complete.

V. Pursue the joys of reconciliation 5:8

1) The full fruit of Shulamite’s reconciliation with Solomon is beautifully detailed in 5:9ff. However, its seed is deposited for us to see here in 5:8. Once again Shulamite calls to her girlfriends, “the daughters of Jerusalem,” “the young women of Jerusalem” (*HCSB*). Shulamite has previously charged them in 2:7 at 3:5. She will do so again in 8:5 with the same exact oath. Here her charge is different. Regret led to repentance which now leads to a longing for reconciliation. What Shulamite is about to say is important, and she wants there to be witnesses to her words. Further, she, in essence, calls on her girlfriends to join her in her reconnaissance mission. My friend Bill Cutrer, who is now in heaven, says, “Shulamite sends a message of her present, repentant, anxious desires for her lover” (unpublished notes).

2) What is her charge? Listen to it in several translations:

- “If you find my love, tell him I am lovesick” (*HCSB*).
- “If you find my beloved, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love” (*NIV*).
- “If you find my beloved...tell him I am sick with love” (*ESV*).
- “If you find my lover, please tell him I want him, that I’m heartsick with love for him” (*The Message*).

3) Our bride loves her man and she wants everyone to know that, especially him. She is weighed down with lovesickness for him, a strong and powerful image. She grieves over his absence and separation, and she will not stand for it. She is looking for him and she enlists others to join her in the search. Whoever finds him first is to let him know that she loves him, she desires him, she wants him. What kind of man is her man that she would speak so boldly and publicly? The answer will follow in 5:10-16. No wonder she longed to be reconciled to her man. No wonder he wanted the same thing too (6:4-10).

In marriage, the eye finds, the heart chooses, the hand binds and only death should loose. Howard Markman says, “It’s not how much you love each other, but when conflicts arise, (it’s) how you handle them that determines the success of your marriage or relationship.” George Worgul, adds, “many

people want to have good relationships and enjoy a happy marriage. Love, however, is hard work.” Both men are right. Marriage is hard work. But it is worthwhile work, and when the work is pursued following God’s guidelines and for His glory, you’ll enjoy a Christian marriage and discover a Christian bedroom as our great God intended: one that is satisfying, liberated, sensual, erotic, intimate, and pleasing both to God and one another. With a commitment to Jesus and one another, and the courage to stay with it no matter what, we can find the joy God planned for all of us. On the other side of repentance, reconciliation is waiting.

Practical Applications

Relationships are a challenge in a fallen world ravaged by sin. This is especially true when it comes to marriage. Two sinners saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ are still sinners. They need the enablement of His Spirit and the instruction of His Word to be a blessing rather than a curse to their mate. Simply put, they need His attitude, they need His mind (Phil. 2:5). Below are ten principles the “flesh out” the mind of Christ that will help us restore, redeem and rejoice in the relationships of life. They are exactly the things our Shepherd-King and his beautiful bride needed to get their marriage back on track.

How to Bless Rather Than Curse Your Relationships

1. Make a choice (commitment) to accept your mate as they are recognizing that they were made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27) and that Christ died for them (John 3:16). Accepting them does not entail always affirming their actions (Phil. 2:3-5).
2. Receive your mate as someone valuable in your life. God will use them to conform you more to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-30).
3. Accept personal responsibility for your relationship. Do not play the blame game (Prov. 14:16; 15:12, 32; 28:13; Eph. 4:29-31).
4. Rejoice and value the differences, looking for the positive.
5. Determine to communicate in a godly manner (Prov. 4:24; 10:11, 19-21, 31-32; 26:20-28) by:
 - a) Sharing (Prov. 11:13-14; 25:11-12; Eph. 4:15).
 - b) Listening (Prov. 12:15; 15:22; 19:27; 21:23; 29:11, 20; James 1:19).
 - c) Talking (Prov. 15:1, 23, 28; 16:24; Eph.4:25-27).
6. Never assume anything. Grow in your understanding of your mate (Prov. 3:3-4, 7; 17:27-28; 18:1-2, 13, 15; 19:2).
7. Be an encourager. (Prov. 3:27; 12:25; 15:15; 17:22, 1 Cor. 8:1; 13:7).
8. Be real: be honest and willing to admit your own failures. Learn to say, "I am sorry, I was wrong. Will you forgive me?" (Eph. 4:32; Jam. 5:16).
9. Accept yourself in Christ (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3-14). It will free you to love and accept others without either a superiority or inferiority complex (1 Cor. 13:4).
10. Be a *Lover*: Learn to speak in a language that your mate will understand (1 Cor. 13:4-8). Remember Gary Chapman's wisdom of the 5 love languages.

Words
Touch
Service
Gifts
Time

How does this text point us to Christ? See the King Who Pursues His Bride

1) A Hebrew person reading this text would have been surprised if not stunned by the rebuff of Shulamite to Solomon her king. They would also be amazed at his gentle pleading and request. Kings don't plead they demand. Kings don't beg they command. At least that is true of most earthly kings. No, this Shepherd King, this lover, stands at the door knocking, asking his bride to let him enter that they might enjoy sweet communion and intimacy. Would the world ever see such a King with such power and grace all wrapped up in one man? Yes they would!

2) In Revelation 3:20 we see "the Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:8), "the First and the Last" (Rev. 1:17), "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness" (Rev. 3:14), the KING OF KINGS AND THE LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16) standing at the door of His Church gently knocking. What are the tender and pleading words that flow from His mouth? "Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me." That precious invitation from the Great King is for you! It is for me! It

is an invitation to be restored to a right relationship with your Creator (Rev. 3:14). It is an invitation to be reconciled with your Shepherd King who has redeemed you by His blood (Rev. 5:9). One greater than Solomon desires to enter into sweet, spiritual intimacy with His chosen ones. He stands at the door gently knocking. If I might paraphrase an old gospel hymn written in 1880 by Will Thompson,

- 1) “Softly and tenderly Jesus is knocking,
Calling for you and for me,
Here, at the door, He’s waiting and knocking,
Watching for you and for me.
- 2) Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
Pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not His mercies,
Mercies for you and for me?
- 3) Oh, for the wonderful love He has promised,
Promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, He has mercy and pardon,
Pardon for you and for me.”