

The Marks of a Redeemed and Reconciled Relationship

Song of Songs 5:9-6:10

Introduction: 1) Years ago a singing group called “The Stylists” sang a song that burrows down to the soul. It was entitled, “Break Up to Make Up,” and the lyrics went like this:

Tell me what's wrong with you now , tell me why I
 Never seem to make you happy though heaven knows I try
 What does it take to please you? Tell me just how
 I can satisfy you woman, you're drivin' me wild

Break up to make up, that's all we do
 First you love me then you hate me
 That's a game for fools
 Break up to make up that's all we do
 First you love me then you hate me
 That's a game for fools

When I come home from workin', you're on the phone
 Talkin' about how bad I treat you, now tell me I'm wrong
 You say it's me who argues, I'll say it's you
 We have got to get together or baby, we're through

Break up to make up, that's all we do
 First you love me then you hate me
 That's a game for fools

2) Unfortunately, that song captures the experience of far too many couples. They find themselves in a never-ending cycle of breaking up and making up, hating and loving, fighting and loving. But, it does not have to be this way. Now, we must never forget the insight of J. C. Ryle, who reminds us, “Marriage is, after

all, the union of two sinners, and not two angels” (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of Mark*, 1985, 1st ed. 1857, p.200). But, in Christ, we are two sinners saved by grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit. We are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) who have within us a supernatural enablement to navigate the challenges of married life and emerge better, reconciled, and moving forward on the other side. Elisabeth Elliot is spot on when she says, “When sinful people live in the same world, and especially when they work in the same office and sleep in the same bed, they sin against each other. Troubles arise. Some of those troubles are very serious and not subject to easy solutions.” The good news? She notes, “God knows all about them, and knew about them long before they happened. He made provision for them” (*Trusting God in a Twisted World*, Revell, 1989, p. 96).

3) Our God has indeed made provision in Christ, and in this portion of the Song of Songs He also provides wisdom that will lead to reconciliation, and that will help us bear the marks of a redeemed relationship, a relationship nurtured and nourished by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. The woman has her part to do.

5:9-6:3

1) In our Song, the happy couple hit a bump in the road in 5:2-8. There was some bad timing, hurt feelings, and an unhappy night in the bedroom. However, this couple loves each other and will not allow their relationship to stay sidetracked. They will put in the hard work necessary to work through their

problems. The honeymoon may be over, but their marriage is just beginning. They are in for the long haul, and they will work to make it work.

2) In marriage both the woman and the man have roles and responsibilities. As those redeemed by Christ, they are not takers but givers. Their focus is not on themselves but the other. Shulammite is determined to do her part and to do it well. Her God should be honored. Her husband should be blessed.

1) There are things she should say. 5:9-16

- Shulammite is challenged in verse 9, given her expression of love for her man in verse 8. You are “lovesick” over this guy? Then tell us why. Twice they ask, “What makes him better than another?” Further, “You charged us,” or put us under oath. This is serious. So, help us understand. What is so special about your love that he arouses the feelings of illness or fainting? (Hess, 179)
- Shulammite welcomes the challenge. In fact, it is almost like she invites it. Yes, I am lovesick over this man and you would be too if you knew what a man, what a mighty fine man he is. So, let me tell you. What follows is real good!

a) Praise his uniqueness. 5:10

- Shulammite admires and respects her husband and she showers him with a catalog of praise in verses 10-16. She begins by calling

him, “my love,” and pointing out how unique he is. Yes, he is “fit and strong” (“radiant and ruddy,” HCSB marginal reading, *ESV* reading). Glickman translates it, “dazzlingly ruddy” (p. 66). But better and more important than that, he is “notable among ten thousand.” There is no man like my man, at least in my eyes. He stands out from and above all the rest. One can only imagine how this would make her husband feel.

b) Note his attractiveness. 5:11-16

- Shulammitte begins to describe the physical attractiveness of her husband, though issues of character are implied as well. This is the only physical description of the man in the Song. In contrast, there are three of the woman (4:1-7; 6:4-10; 7:1-9).
- “His head is purest gold” indicating great wealth and value in her eyes. “His hair is wavy and black as a raven,” perhaps a reference to his youthful vitality. “He is neither gray nor bald” (Garrett, 414).
- In verse 12 she says, “His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, washed in milk and set like jewels.” Looking into her love’s eyes she sees peace, gentleness, calmness and tranquility, brightness and alertness. Like his hair, they are attractive to her.

- Verse 13 informs us that his cologne radiates a sweet smell like “beds of spices.” And his lips? They are lilies “dripping with flowing myrrh.” They are sweet, offering wet, passionate kisses she longs to receive. He has aroused her sense of sight, smell and taste.
- Verses 14-15 address particular parts of his body. His arms are strong and valuable, like “rods of gold set within topaz.” His body is “an ivory panel covered with sapphires.” He is handsome, carved and cut, powerful and strong. His body, “possesses the might necessary to carry the rest of his muscular frame and to protect the female from harm, such as the beating the guards inflicted upon her (5:7)” (Hess, 185). His legs are also strong and sturdy, like “alabaster pillars set on pedestals of pure gold.” Indeed his appearance is breathtaking, almost statuesque. He conjures up images of the majestic cedars of Lebanon.
- In verse 16 she returns to his face, his mouth. It is nothing less than pure sweetness. And he is nothing less than “absolutely desirable.” This strong masculine male is her hero, her champion. He is the man she has chosen to share and spend her life, and she has no

regrets. This is my love, ladies of Jerusalem. In my eyes, no one comes close in comparison. But there's more.

c) Cultivate his friendship. 5:16

- Shulammite tells the young women of Jerusalem that her husband, “my love,” is also “my friend.” There is tremendous significance in this statement.
- Whenever I do premarital counseling, I always ask the couple before me if they like each other. Not, do you love each other? Do you like each other? I then challenge them as strongly as I know how to work at becoming one another's best friend. I then tell them if they do, I can make two promises to them. First, their marriage will be a blessing because it is a blessing to hang out with your best friend. Second, their marriage will go the distance because best friends do not give up on their best friends.
- A husband and wife should be lovers. They should also be best friends. By God's grace I have found both in my wife Charlotte. And, as we grow old together, our friendship grows more and more precious with each passing year. Proverbs 18:24 says, “There is a friend who stays closer than a brother.” A husband longs for that friend to be his wife.

2) There are things you should do. 6:1-3

- Throughout the Song of Songs we see the importance of balancing what we say with what we do. Both are important in building a healthy relationship. Our bride has said some wonderful things about the man in 5:10-16. She will now complement that with her actions. Her acts are subtle, but they still speak loud and clear.

a) Study his tendencies. 6:1-2

- The young women of Jerusalem have another question for Shulammitte (cf. 5:9). They actually ask two. You have told us why you love Him. Now we want to know where he is! “Where has your love gone most beautiful of women?” (cf. 1:8; 5:9). “Which way has he turned? We will seek him with you.” We will be glad to help you if you don’t know.
- Well the fact is she does know where he is because she knows her man. She knows what he likes and where he likes to go. She has become a student of her husband, and in her study she has grown in her knowledge and understanding of Solomon. In verse two, “she uses sexually charged language and essentially says, ‘He is with me’” (Garrett, 415). She informs the young women of Jerusalem, “My love has gone down to his garden,” he has come

back to me (4:16-5:1). He loves me and loves loving me. He is enjoying “the beds of spices,” perhaps a hint at multiple enjoyments of lovemaking. Further, he is right at home when he is with me. He is “feeding in the gardens and gathering lilies.” He is enjoying my body and our lovemaking. We are kissing (see lips as lilies in 5:13) and we are engaging in the joyful intimacies of marriage (see 2:16).

b) Welcome his advances. 6:3

- Once more we have returned to Eden before the Fall. They are in the garden together, naked and with no shame (Gen. 2:25). Shulammitte gladly welcomes and receives the advances of her love. As she boldly proclaims, “I am my love’s and my love is mine; he feeds among the lilies.” I foolishly refused his advances earlier in this dream, this nightmare (5:2-3), but not now. I belong to him and he belongs to me. He is welcome in my garden. I want him there and I want him to know.
- This wife says to her husband, “I am available to you. I am here for your enjoyment. And, I desire you too. I want you too. Our bedroom is again a garden delight. I know sex is important to you, and because it is important to you, it is important to me.

- Sex is important to a healthy and vibrant marriage. Phil McGraw, author of *Relationship Rescue* says, “If you have a good sexual relationship, it’s about 10% of the value of the relationship overall. If you don’t have a good sexual relationship, it’s about 90%” (*God on Sex*, 186).

II. The man has his part to do.

6:4-10

- This woman has done her part to reconcile with her husband after a marital spat one night. I would say she went the extra mile and then some. Now it is the man’s turn to respond and do his part. He does not let his wife down. As a man of God whose poetic description in 5:10-16 points us to the vision of Christ in Revelation 1:13-16(!), he wants to love his wife well. He wants to provide for her and care for her as our Lord does His Bride (Eph. 5:29).
- Solomon knows the way to her heart is through her ears, and so once more he speaks to her with words of love and affection (cf. 4:1-7). He, too, is growing in knowledge and understanding of his lady.

1) Tell her she is beautiful. 6:4

- Solomon begins by saying to Shulammitte, “You are as beautiful as Tizrah, my darling (*ESV*, “my love”), lovely as Jerusalem, awe-inspiring as an army of banners.” These were two great and beautiful cities in that day. Interestingly, Lamentations 2:15 calls Jerusalem, “the perfection of

beauty, the joy of the whole earth.” This woman’s beauty was so captivating and powerful to her husband that it was like he was looking at an awesome army with its banners in full display. Longman puts it well, “The beauty of the woman is so overpowering that it arouses fear as well as joy” (180). He sees beauty and strength in this woman.

2) Tell her she is irresistible. 6:5-7

- Solomon is captivated by his wife’s beauty. Bewitched! Cast under a spell! Her eyes are hypnotic so he pleads with her, “Turn your eyes away from me.”
- He then draws upon prior descriptions of her, praising her hair (6:5), teeth (6:6), and the beauty of her brow or cheeks, perhaps her temples (6:7). George Schwab says, “She singularly overwhelms the boy” (*EBC*, rev. ed., 414).
- When I began dating Charlotte, some of my friends said, “I had been caught in Charlotte’s web!” They were right. Like Solomon, I was captivated, overwhelmed by her beauty. And, I still am! Her eyes, her mouth, her face, and yes the rest of her, ensnared me and I have never been able to escape. The fact is, I have not wanted to. Why? Because I am hers and she is mine.

3) Tell her she is special. 6:8-9

- This man wants this lady to know she is one of a kind. Special. Unique. As a lady, a woman of God, she transcends all others in his eyes. She is his standard of beauty. There is no lady like his lady.
- In 6:8-9 he says there may be “60 queens and 80 concubines without number, and young women without number.” None compare to her. She is his dove (1:15; 4:2; 5:2), his virtuous one (*ESV*, “perfect one”), she is unique (*ESV*, “the only one”). This favorable opinion is also shared by her mother and other women as well. Indeed they all “sing her praises” (6:9c).
- Solomon is masterfully cultivating an environment of romance for his wife. No one compares to her. She is utterly unique. All who know her bless her and praise her. Those who know her best, love and admire her most, beginning with her husband. Tom Gledhill well says, “Happy is the girl who receives so much extravagant praise” (194). No doubt she is a happy girl. Her husband has seen to it.

4) Tell her she is awesome. 6:10

- We are not certain of the speaker in verse 10. It could be Solomon, but most Old Testament scholars think it is the women. There is no problem as to the meaning. All who know her see her in this light, her husband and everyone else. As a person and in appearance, four things are said

about her: 1) she “shines like the dawn”; 2) she is “as beautiful as the moon”; 3) she is “bright as the sun”; 4) she is “awe-inspiring as an army with banners” (also 6:4). We might say she is celestial in her beauty and powerful in her presence. I love Duane Garrett’s take on this verse, “In a Cinderella motif, the woman who was very ordinary is now extraordinary in her beauty and breathtaking to behold” (418). Douglas O’Donnell simply adds, “She is out of this world” (102).

Practical Applications:

1) Marriage is hard work. It is also worthwhile work. One of the ways we work through difficult times is by seeking to bless our mates. This is a wonderful path to reconciliation, and it gives evidence of our Lord’s redeeming work in our lives. As we have seen in our study, a woman has her part and a man has his part. What follows are some specific ways we can bless our spouse. Make sure to pay attention to your responsibilities! Let the Lord Jesus work on your mate!!

5 Ways to Bless Your Husband

A wife can be a blessing to her husband by honoring him as the Church honors Christ and giving him specific gifts of love:

1. Give him admiration and respect.

Work to understand and appreciate his value and achievements as his wife. Remind him of his capabilities and gifts and help him maintain

his walk with God and also his self-confidence. Be proud of your husband, not out of duty, but as an expression of sincere admiration for the man you love and with whom you have chosen to share your life (Ephesians 5:22-23, 33).

2. Provide sexual fulfillment.

Become an excellent sexual partner to him. Study your own response to recognize and understand what brings out the best in you; then communicate this information to your husband, and together learn to have a sexual relationship that you both find repeatedly satisfying and enjoyable (Proverbs 5:15-19; Song of Solomon 4:9-5:1; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Hebrews 13:4).

3. Cultivate home support.

Create a home that offers him an atmosphere of peace and quiet and refuge. Manage the home and care of the children. The home should be a place of rest and rejuvenation. Remember, the wife/mother is the emotional hub of the family (Proverbs 9:13, 19:13, 21:9, 19, 25:24).

4. Strive to be an attractive wife.

Pursue inner and outer beauty in that order. Cultivate a Christlike spirit in your inner self. Keep yourself physically fit with diet and exercise, wear your hair, makeup, and clothes in a way that your

husband finds attractive and tasteful. Let your husband be pleased and proud of you in public, but also in private (Song of Solomon 1:8-10, 2:2, 6:13-7:9; 1 Peter 3:1-5)!

5. Become his best friend.

Develop mutual interests with your husband. Discover those activities your husband enjoys the most and seek to become proficient in them. If you learn to enjoy them, join him in them. If you do not enjoy them, encourage him to consider others that you can enjoy together. Become your husband's best friend so that he repeatedly associates you with the activities he enjoys most (Song of Solomon 8:1-2, 6).

7 Ways to Bless Your Wife

A husband can be a blessing to his wife by loving her as Christ loved the Church and giving her specific gifts of love:

1. Be a spiritual leader.

Be a man of courage, conviction, commitment, compassion, and character. Take the initiative in cultivating a spiritual environment for the family. Become a capable and competent student of God's Word and live out before all a life founded on the Word of God. Lead your

wife in becoming a woman of God, and take the lead in training the children in the things of the Lord (Psalm 1; Ephesians 5:23-27).

2. Give her personal affirmation/appreciation.

Praise her for personal attributes and qualities. Praise her virtues as a wife, mother, and homemaker. Openly commend her, in the presence of others, as a marvelous mate, friend, lover, and companion. Help her feel that, to you, no one is more important in this world (Proverbs 31:28-29; Song of Solomon 4:1-7, 6:4-9, 7:1-9).

3. Show personal affection (romance).

Shower her with timely and generous displays of affection. Tell her how much you care for her with a steady flow of words, cards, flowers, gifts and common courtesies. Remember, affection is the environment in which sexual union is enjoyed more fully and a wonderful marriage developed (Song of Solomon 6: 10,13; Ephesians 5:28-29, 33).

4. Initiate intimate conversation.

Talk with her at the feeling level (heart to heart). Listen to her thoughts (i.e., her heart) about the events of her day with sensitivity, interest, and concern. Conversations with her convey a desire to

understand her not to change her (Song of Solomon 2:8-14, 8:13-14; 1 Peter 3:7).

5. Always be honest and open.

Look into her eyes and, in love, always tell the truth (Ephesians 4:15). Explain your plans and actions clearly and completely because you are responsible for her. Lead her to trust you and feel secure (Proverbs 15:22-23).

6. Provide home support and stability.

Take hold of the responsibility to house, feed, and clothe the family. Provide and protect, and do not feel sorry for yourself when things get tough. Look for concrete ways to improve home life. Raise the marriage and family to a safer and more fulfilling level. Remember, the husband/father is the security hub of the family (1 Timothy 5:8).

7. Demonstrate family commitment.

After the Lord Jesus, put your wife and family first. Commit time and energy to the spiritual, moral and intellectual development of the children. For example, pray with them (especially at night by the bedside), read to them, engage in sports with them and take them on other outings. Do not play the fool's game of working long hours,

trying to get ahead, while your children and spouse languish in neglect (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:19-20).

How Does This Text Point to Christ? There Is No King Like My King/How the King Loves His Bride

1) The vision our bride has of her husband (5:10-16) is almost apocalyptic. It draws us to consider another vision in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation. There in 1:13-16 we see a vision of “One like the Son of Man,” our Great Shepherd-King, the Lord Jesus. Schwab notes we have here in our Song “an almost theophonic picture similar to Revelation 1:13-16. The young man is larger than life” (410). I think he is exactly right. The young man is larger than life because he points us to Christ! Comparing Song of Songs 5:10-16 to Revelation 1:13-16, we see a magnificent description of Christ’s head and hair (v. 14), his eyes (1:14), his face (1:16), and his mouth (1:16). He is majestic and awesome, much like our Bridegroom in the Song of Songs, but so much more. Interestingly, one can count ten features of the one being described both in Song of Songs 5:10-16 and Revelation 1:13-16. There is no King like this King. He is larger than life and other-worldly. Again, Israel must have wondered, “I know the song is poetry, but will there ever be such a man, such a King, on this earth?” The good news of the gospel is yes! His name is Jesus!

2) And, what about the Bride? Oh how this King loves His bride. She is unique, his special possession. His praise for her is unparalleled. Why? Because he sees her as he has made her, He has imparted his life to her. He has given his heart to her and received hers in return. She is “my perfect one, the only one” (ESV, v. 9). He has sacrificed for her and sanctified her. He has been sensitive to her and he is satisfying to her. This is the love that this man has for his wife. This is the love that Christ has for his Bride. Ephesians 5:25-33 runs through this Song, but it is especially evident here.

3) In our Song, the Garden of Eden has been regained, but it anticipates even more. We wait for a King like no other. We long to be a Bride loved like no other. For those who know Christ, what we long for has already arrived (Rom. 5:10-11).