

The Kind of a Man Every Woman Wants

Song of Songs 6:11-7:10

Introduction: 1) A number of years ago I was scheduled to do a family life conference in another state from where we lived. A week or so before I was to go, I received an anonymous card in the mail from a woman with a broken heart. Here is what she wrote. “Dear Dr. Akin, I hope you receive my card before the marriage conference....I recently married a member of our church. He will be attending your seminar. This past Valentine’s Day he did not acknowledge the romantic holiday, and I was very hurt. I watched as my coworkers received flowers. To make things worse, he joked about it in front of one of my friends. My mom told me I should have known what to expect since he never gave me flowers while we were dating. This may sound selfish and petty on my part. I am just so discouraged! After I come home from my job, I do all the housework and cooking and shopping. I wouldn’t mind so much if he would just occasionally show his appreciation. The only time he has ever given me a gift is on my birthday and Christmas. It would mean so much to me if just once he would give me something just because he loves me. I exercise and try to look nice. I iron all his clothes and cook his favorite meals. He has thousands of dollars to invest in the stock market, but he has never spent one dollar on a romantic gift for me. I know flowers will

eventually wilt, but they are so beautiful. I'm afraid my love will eventually wilt.

Will you pray for me?"

2) Every time I read that card my heart breaks for this wife. Her pain is great and her pain is daily. She has a husband who takes her for granted, and he probably doesn't even know how his wife feels. Whoever he is, he is failing miserably at obeying 1 Peter 3:7 where the Bible says to a Christ following husband, "live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature." The *ESV* says, "Live with your wives in an understanding way." The *KJV* says, "dwell with them according to knowledge," and then adds, "giving honor to the wife."

3) In our Song we see a husband who knows his wife, understands his wife and honors his wife. Here is a man who loves his wife as Christ loves His Church (Eph. 5:25). Here is the kind of man every woman wants.

I. Be sensitive to her longings for love 6:11-13

- Men are sexual creatures, but so are women. God made us this way by divine design. When there is friction in our relationship, things can get out of whack. Often, it is our intimate life that suffers. Solomon and Shulammitte have been in the process of patching things up, of reconciling.
- Now, in verses 11-13, we see the story of their reconciliation from the wife's perspective (Deere, 1022). She knew he was in the garden (6:2, a reference both to a literal garden but also her body) and so she joins him there.

Solomon would be a wise man to watch how she acts and sense what she feels. Body language, tone of voice, these are female signals a man must be sensitive to.

1) Watch how she acts 6:11

- Shulammite says, “I came down to the walnut grove...to see if the vines were budding and the pomegranates blooming” (v. 12). Again, double entendre is probably at work here. She is looking for new and fresh evidences of their love in the grove. She knows he loves her, after all look at what he said in 6:4-9. Still, she wants to be certain the offense of 5:2-8 has been forgiven. She wants to see for herself. So she goes to the garden, she who is a garden. Has Eden been restored?
- Richard Hess believes her actions are clearly erotic and sensual: “The stroll around the garden is a stroll around the body of the lover [a reversal of the garden referent?]. It is a description of the beauty of the lover’s body as well as suggesting the pleasures of love that await the speaker” (207). The wise husband would watch her actions carefully. Here, they are speaking loud and clear.

2) Sense how she feels 6:12-13

- All the commentators agree that verse 12 is the most difficult verse in the Song (Deere, 1022; Gledhill, 199). I like how Deere states the

verse when he writes, “I became enraptured, for you placed me on the chariots of the people of the prince.” (1022). The *HCSB* rendering is not far from this, “Before I knew it, my desire put me among the chariots of my noble people.” The idea is I was overwhelmed, beside myself, with all that has happened (Garrett, 419). I feel like I have been swept off my feet by my king.

- Verse 13 informs us that others are privy to this scene. They too are caught up in the moment and plead with her four times to “come back.” Each is in the form of an imperative. She, however, is gone. The name “Shulammite,” the feminine form of Solomon, appears only here in the Song. Literally it is “Solomoness” and it can mean “O perfect one” (Garrett, 419).
- They want her for a public viewing, but her husband wants her for a private viewing. He asks them, almost as a taunt, “Why are you looking at the Shulammite as you look at the dance of the two camps”, “the dance of the Mahanaim?” The exact meaning of this phrase is unclear, but her actions are not. They have praised her beauty, and she is appreciative. But there is another whose praise means even more. That person is her husband. His praise has freed her to express herself with unhindered abandonment. She will now dance, and dance

nakedly and seductively. However, this dance is not for many, but only for one. It will be a private performance reserved only for her husband. He has brought her to the bedroom because he sensed he could. He was right, and he will not be disappointed with what happens.

II. Grow in your knowledge of your mate 7:1-6

- For the 3rd time in our Song the husband describes his wife. He did so previously in 4:1-7 and 6:4-10. Here, however, we have the most personal and detailed description of all. His words are more intimate and sensual. He will draw from his previous praises, but he will also advance into new territory. This would bless her heart. It would delight her soul.
- There are a couple of valuable lessons here we must not miss. First, we cannot praise our mate too much or too often, especially a woman. It feeds and nourishes her (Eph. 5:29). Second, we cannot know too much about our mate. In fact a lack of knowledge and understanding of how she thinks and feels about certain things can be dangerous. It may approach the deadly! I learned this the hard way in our first year of marriage. It was a painful but memorable experience!!! We sat down one Saturday to eat sandwiches. As my wife Charlotte placed a wonderful sandwich on the table, she also put beside it a Tupperware container that had inside it, if you used your

imagination and a magnifying glass, something that remotely resembled potato chips. Once these crumbs were placed in your mouth, you could easily have assumed it was a new variety of chewing gum. They were awful.

I turned to Charlotte and said, “Honey, I don’t like these. They’re too small and stale. I want some new fresh, crispy, potato chips.” She responded, “Sweetheart, when all of these are gone, we can get some more.”

That was not the answer I was looking for! I quickly responded, “But darling, I saw in the pantry on the way in here a brand new bag of fresh, crispy potato chips that has never been opened. I want those!”

Quick as a flash she shot back, “Well, sugar dumpling, when this container is empty, we can get those.”

I then did something that a man would only do in his first year of marriage. I stood up, took her Tupperware, and dumped the chips in the floor! I then said, “This one is empty now. You can go and get the others.”

It probably won’t surprise anyone that she did not go get the other chips. It was rather chilly at our house (and in our bed) for several days, and I learned the danger of assuming I knew my wife and that she would appreciate my creative object lesson. No, we must grow in our knowledge of our mate, and Solomon highlights two specific areas.

1) Grow in your knowledge of her physically 7:1-5¹

- Starting with her dancing feet and moving to a woman's glory, her hair (1 Cor. 11:5), Solomon draws attention to and describes characteristics and features of his wife that he found attractive and beautiful. It is clear that she has removed her outer garment, and that she dances in the light clothing of a shepherdess, or fully naked.

What follows favors the latter.

Solomon focuses on 10 aspects of his wife's beauty. Though attention is on the physical, certain features also highlight the attractiveness of her personality and character as well.

She dances before him, and so he mentions first her feet. Her "sandals" (gentlemen, he noticed her shoes!) would have left the top of her feet nearly bare. This would have been alluring and particularly attractive (Snaith, 100). His reference to her as a "princess" or "daughter of a nobleman or prince" (lit. translation) is a symbolic way of praising her noble character and testifies to how her husband viewed her and treated her. He honors her as God commands (again see 1 Peter 3:7). There are no demeaning glances, no rude

¹ This section draws heavily from *God on Sex*, 213-15.

snapping of the fingers, no harsh words of contempt or criticism. She is a princess, a queenly maiden.

Her thighs are shapely (curved) and priceless (like jewelry), the work of a skilled craftsman (the handiwork of a master). The word refers to the upper part of the thigh where the legs begin to come together (Carr, 156). Like priceless jewels they are attractive to see and precious to hold.

Verse two is badly translated in my judgment in virtually every English version including the *HCSB*. The problem is with the word “navel.” It simply does not fit the upward progression or description. The Hebrew word is rare, occurring only three times in the Old Testament (cf. Prov. 3:8; Ezk. 16:4). Here the word almost certainly is a reference to the innermost sexual part of a woman, her vagina (vulva) (Carr 157; Snaith, 101). Solomon’s description makes no sense of a navel, but it beautifully expresses the sexual pleasures he continually receives from his wife. Like a rounded goblet, it never lacks missed wine; she never runs dry. She is a constant source of intoxicating pleasure and sweetness. The idea of blended or mixed could refer to the mingling of male and female fluids in the appropriate place of a woman’s body (Snaith, 103). Shulammitte was

an exotic garden (4:12, 16) and an intoxicating drink (7:2) in her lovemaking. Seldom, if ever, was her husband disappointed. She was his dream lover and amazingly, he wasn't dreaming! The more he learned about her the more he loved and enjoyed her.

In verse 2 he compares her waist to "a mound of wheat surrounded by lilies." This could refer to her gentle curved figure and also to the fact she was like food to him. She is wheat and wine, food and drink. She nourishes and satisfied him as he has sought to nourish and satisfy her.

He again describes her breasts like two fawns (cf. 4:5). They are soft and attractive, enticing him to pet them. Her neck (v. 4) is an ivory tower (cf. 4:4). She is majestic, stately, a confident and dignified lady. Her eyes are beautiful, pure and refreshing (cf. 1:15, 4:1), like the Moabite city of Heshbon (cf. Numb. 21:25), a city known for its reservoirs. The location of Bath-rabbim is unknown, though it is possible that the gate in Heshbon led to the pools. Her nose is "like the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus." She is strong in character and there is a genuine sense in which he draws strength and security from her. He may also be saying "her nose complements and sets off her facial beauty." (Garrett, 422).

“Her head crowns her like Mount Carmel” (v. 5). The Carmel range was considered to be one of the most beautiful in all of Palestine. She is beautiful and unique, majestic and awesome (cf. Isa. 35:2; Jer. 46:18). Her hair is like purple (or deep red cloth), and her husband is held captive by its beauty. He has been ensnared by her. A king has been captured. The more he knows her, the greater is her hold on him.

2) Grow in your knowledge of her particularly 7:6

- Solomon summarizes his detailed description of Shulammitte by again telling her how beautiful she is (cf. v. 1). This forms something of an inclusio to his song of praise in this section. It adds weight and emphasis to his declaration of her beauty. He then tells her “how pleasant” she is, “my love, with such delights!”
- This wife is beautiful in his eyes and she pleases him. Her delights, and note the plural, are many, some of which he just listed. Garrett points out this verse is best read as “daughter of delights” (i.e., “delightful woman”) [p. 422]. Everything about her, every detail, every particular of her person, is a delight, a joy, a blessing to his soul. The more he knows her the more he loves her.

- Noting that it is the king who is speaking and in view here, George Schwab says, “before the charms of the formidable lady the otherwise sovereign ruler is held fast and helpless....It is because she is so delightful that she captivates the king” (*EBC*, rev. ed., 419). This is a remarkable lady indeed. She is not the same shy and insecure girl we first met in 1:5-7. The love of her king has transformed her!

III. Remain passionate in the pursuit of your mate 7:7-10

- In recent years research on marriage and family has revealed some very interesting facts. To a secular minded culture the conclusions proved surprising. To those of us committed to a biblical worldview, what was discovered was not surprising at all. It was found that, “the most emotionally and physically satisfying sex was between committed partners.” Furthermore, “emotional and physical satisfaction from sex increases with sexual exclusivity, with emotional investment in the relationship, and a longtime horizon for the relationship.” (Andrew Greely, “Privileging Marriage,” Aug. 6, 2000 in *Smart Marriages E-letter*).
- The husband and wife in the Song of Songs would say to us, “we already knew this! We learned this in the real life laboratory of marriage, and what a joy it is to share what we learned. A persistent passion for your mate is a

healthy tonic for a happy, growing relationship. So, as you move forward growing old together, keep a couple of things in mind.”

1) Keep on expressing your desires for her 7:7-9

- Solomon compares his wife to a stately, swaying palm tree (v. 7). It would seem she has continued her seductive dance and he is mesmerized. He also tells her that “her breasts are clusters of fruit.” They are an attractive, sweet and tasty fruit that he finds irresistible. In verses 8-9 he quickly and passionately expresses his desires for her, “I said, “I will climb the palm tree and take hold of its fruits.” He then adds, “May your breasts be like clusters of grapes, and the fragrance of your breath like apricots (or “apples”). Your mouth is like fine wine.” Everything about her entices him. Their love has not grown stale.
- It is time for the dance to end and lovemaking to begin (again). Solomon has watched his wife dance naked before him as long as he can. His passion for her is at a fever pitch and he tells her so. He is picturesque in his description of her, but he is also direct in his desire for her. Her body, her breasts, her breath and her mouth are all

objects of his desire and passion.² That he describes her mouth like “fine wine” recalls the fact that Shulammitte said the same about his mouth in 1:2. He is glad to return the compliment as they enter into intimacy. Theirs is a sweet and intoxicating love.

- In our day we too speak of beautiful, graceful palm trees. This is what this husband sees in his wife, and he must have her. Schwab says with frankness, “After mounting the palm tree, he will vigorously denude its fruit.... The girl delights in his designs and expresses her desire to see that his foretastes are not disappointed” (*EBC*, rev. ed., 420). This leads us to our final observation.

2) Keep on receiving her affection for you 7:9-10

- John Gries says, “Jesus intended marriage to be happy for you. God expects regular sex in marriage, and sex is a learning process” (*God on Sex*, 219). Gries is right, and we have seen this truth lived out in our Song. This couple has grown in their knowledge of each other. They have learned both how to give and to receive.
- Shulammitte gladly gives herself to Solomon in response to his request, and he, no doubt, is happy to receive her gift of lovemaking. Picking up on the imagery of wine, Shulammitte expresses her desire

² Carr (162-63) notes that breath could be a reference in the Hebrew language to the nipples of her breasts. Garrett concurs (422).

to satisfy and bring pleasure to her husband. The wine flows smoothly for my love she says, “gliding past my lips and teeth!” The NKJV says, “The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved, moving gently the lips of sleepers” (i.e. the lovers). They are making love to one another and it is delightful; like sweet, intoxicating wine. They exchange kisses and intimate expressions of love that each finds satisfying and then they restfully fall to sleep in a warm embrace. His goal is to satisfy and please her and he does. Her goal is to satisfy and please him and she does. The marvelous result is when there is mutual giving with the goal of pleasing our mate, both spouses experience the joy and pleasure God intended (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3-4; Phil 2:3-5).

Practical Application

PROVERBS 32

“The Husband of Noble Character”

A husband of noble character who can find one? He is worth more than winning the Publisher’s Clearinghouse Sweepstakes or the lottery.

His wife has full confidence in him and she lacks nothing of importance.

He brings her good, not harm, all the days of her life.

He works hard to provide for his family. Getting up early he helps get the children ready for school, then dashes off to work.

With his shoulder to the grindstone he works with energy and vigor, as one who is working for the Lord (Col 3:23). And while busy, he always finds time to call his wife during the day just to say, "I love you."

He promptly comes home from work and immediately pitches in with the chores, helping the children with their homework, or with making dinner if he can cook! While hot dogs and baked beans are his specialty, he doesn't fear the microwave, remembering nothing metal should be in there. He does this with such ease that all are amazed and in awe.

When his wife prepares a meal he always eats with gusto and when finished, never forgets to smile and tell her how great the meal was. Of course, he is always the first to volunteer to do the dishes or at least to volunteer the children to complete the task!

All in all, he is a joy to have in the kitchen.

As a father, there is no equal on the face of the earth. No matter how exhausted from work or chores, he always takes time for his children.

Whether it's making funny faces at the baby, tickling the small child, wrestling or watching football with his sons, or making pained and disbelieving expressions at his teenagers, he is always there for them.

He is a whiz at math, science, spelling, geography, Spanish, and any other subject
his children are studying at school.

And if he should be totally ignorant of the subject at hand, he skillfully hides his
ignorance by sending the child to their mother.

He can fix any problem from a scraped knee to loose bicycle chains, from
interpreting rules for a kickball game to referring sparing matches
between his kids.

More importantly, he is also the spiritual leader in the family. He loves Jesus, and
he always takes the family to church. He shows his children, by his
example, what it means to be a man of God.

He teaches his children how to pray and the importance of knowing and loving the
Lord Jesus. He often rises early to pray for his wife and children and
reads from his Bible at night before sleeping.

He disciplines his children with loving firmness; never yelling or with humiliating
words. He is always more interested in teaching a lesson than in
simply punishing.

During the day he meditates on God's Word and on how to live it. He shows
Christ in all his dealing with others and is considered a valuable
employee by his bosses. His co-workers respect his hard work, his
integrity, and his kindness.

He always shows his wife the utmost respect, even opening the door for her. He is always quick with a word of encouragement, and is constantly telling her how beautiful she is, even when she isn't wearing any make-up. A day seldom passes that he doesn't tell her of his love for her. Praise for her is always on his lips.

Anniversaries and birthdays are never forgotten and gifts and flowers are often given, 'just because.'

He even makes superhuman efforts to be nice when her family is visiting. He is full of compassion for the pain of others and willingly helps those in need. Whether it's changing a stranger's flat tire, helping with a friend's home improvement project, or feeding the poor at the local soup kitchen, he is the first to volunteer.

He is not afraid to shed a tear with a friend in pain or to be rowdy in laughter at another's joke.

He loves life and lives it with passion.

His children, while not always calling him "blessed," have no doubts about his great love for them. His wife also calls him many things, among them, "the best man there is," and she thanks God for him.

Many men do great things but he surpasses them all. There is no man better than this man, but Jesus.

Flattery is deceptive and good looks, like hair, is fleeting; but a man who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give him the reward he has earned, and let his deeds bring him praise. His Lord is pleased, his wife loves him, and his children are proud of him. He is a blessed man indeed.

Michael M. Jones
Louisville, KY 1996
(Adapted and revised)

How Does This Text Point To Christ? How The King Sees His Bride

- The King (7:5) in our text sees his bride as beautiful (7:1, 6). She belongs to him, and his desire is for her (7:10). She is virtually flawless, with no imperfection (4:7). Of course she is not flawless and perfect. There has never lived on this earth such a bride. I guess a good question to ask is, will there ever be such a bride?!

Well, the good news, gospel answer, is “yes!” There will indeed be such a bride that will not only appear perfect, she will be perfect. This will not be an earthly bride, but a heavenly one, one made perfect by the Bridegroom who has cleansed her by his blood and made her pure and spotless from head to toe.

Once more our Song prepares us for the awesome and glorious truth of Ephesians 5:25-27, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to

present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless.”

This is what this bride is destined to be, and the good news of the gospel is you can be a part of this bride as you repent of sin and look in faith to the

Bridegroom, King Jesus, who loved you and gave Himself for you. His love for you is great. His cleansing power cannot fail. He longs to make you beautiful.

He longs for you to be His.

- “Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and pow’r.

I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
Oh, there are ten thousand charms.”

Joseph Hart, 1759
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