

## **When A Godly Girl Is Having A Bad Day: What's A Godly Husband To Do?**

### **Song of Songs 1:5-8**

**Introduction:** 1) I am often fond of saying that even a good woman who loves Jesus, her husband, and family can every now and then have a bad day. My wife Charlotte had to live in a male dormitory for 20 plus years with me and our 4 sons. She once told me she was convinced that boys do things a dog won't do! Once in a while she would have a bad day and the boys and I came up with a warning code to put each other on alert. We would simply say, "Momma has got that look in her eye!" That was all that needed to be said. One day I came home only to have all 4 sons meet me outside on the front porch. Immediately they informed me "the look" was back and that it was back big time. I quickly surveyed the situation, found their assessment correct, and then provided the important counsel they needed: "every man for himself!" I told them that the best I could tell mom needed to be left alone for several hours, and so I was going to leave her alone and I suggested they do the same. I ended my sage wisdom by saying if they crossed her path and got into trouble that they should not call for me! I wasn't coming!! We were all on our own!!!

2) Every marriage has its rewards and romance. It will also have in rough spots and reality checks. Two sinners saved by grace through Jesus Christ are still sinners. We are going to disappoint our mate. We are going to hurt our spouse.

That is why we so desperately need Christ. That is why for a husband, the Bible says, “live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature” (1 Pet 3:7a). Unfortunately we often stop here and do not read the rest of the verse which says, “showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered” (1 Pet 3:7b). We must both understand them and honor them.

3) In these verses Solomon highlights two realities that a man must be especially sensitive to when it comes to his wife. One is how she sees herself; her appearance. The other is when he is away; his absence. Both are tender spots in the heart of a woman. She is fragile and vulnerable in these areas. A godly, Christ redeemed husband will exercise TLC as he works to understand her and then minister to her. The image of a Shepherd-King suddenly appears in these verses. This is exactly what she needs. A role model for every man to emulate is before us, as our Shepherd King Jesus is foreshadowed for our meditation. Where he is there is rest and security, the very things a husband following in his footsteps will provide for his wife. Echoes of Revelation 7:15-17 can be heard in the distance.

### **I. A woman of God can still struggle with her appearance 1:5-6**

- 1) Women are sensitive to their physical appearance, far more than a man, though some men are gaining ground in this area. Her sense of self-worth and even value can often be tied to how she sees herself.

2) These verses are different from what goes before and what will follow.

There has definitely been a mood change. Further, the woman is not addressing her man but the “Daughters of Jerusalem.” This is “girl talk.” Shulamite is no longer an aggressive lover. She is an insecure and apologetic female whose past has inflicted pain and left some scars. Every person comes into marriage with some baggage. Sometimes it is the baggage of a particular personality, sometimes it is the baggage of a particular past. Either way, they must be faced and addressed. Only then can their mate better understand them. Only then can God administer His healing grace.

1) She must deal with being defensive      1:5-6

The woman asserts her beauty or attractiveness, but she does so with some hesitation. Shulamite knows she possesses a natural beauty. She believed that she was pretty and attractive, lovely and pleasing in appearance. She was sensitive to the fact that men are creatures of sight and that they are so often moved by what they see. She was confident he would like what he saw when he looked at her. Of herself she can say, “I am...lovely.” However, there is a problem she struggles with. A tan was not grand in Solomon’s day. Women prized fair skin and the “indoor look.” This would signify a more lofty social standing of the well-to-do

city girl. In contrast Shulamite was deeply suntanned and dark. She was a country girl who had been “gazed on,” “looked upon” negatively by both the sun of nature and the sons of her mother (step-brothers?) who forced her to labor in the vineyards. “She had been doubly burned, by the sun, and by her brother’s anger.”<sup>1</sup> “The tents of Kedar” speak of “the Bedouin tribes whose tents, made from the hair of the black goats so common among them, are a frequent sight on the fringes of the deserts.”<sup>2</sup> “The curtains of Solomon” draw a different analogy. These curtains would be beautiful and valuable, of “exquisite craftsmanship....She is both hardened by the elements and yet beautiful.”<sup>3</sup> There are pluses and minuses as she saw things, though the minuses appear to have the upper hand at the moment.

## 2) She must deal with being disappointed 1-6

Shulamite makes a plea, “Do not stare at me because I am dark.” I know my dark Semitic Mediterranean skin is even darker than normal.

However, there is a reason for my situation.

I worked hard to tend the vineyards in the field because of the harshness of my brothers. As a result, my own vineyard, my body, it has been neglected. Unable to give the time, attention, and care I would have

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Gedhill, *The Message of the Song of Songs* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 104.

<sup>2</sup> G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1984), 78.

<sup>3</sup> Duane Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 387.

liked, my physical appearance, at least to my way of thinking, is less than the best. One easily senses her pain, her insecurity. Tom Gedhill expresses her perceptiveness well, “Her vineyard represents everything that conveys her essential femininity. Her looks, her complexion, her dress, her status, her sexuality—all those considerations which would make her attractive to a man...In these verses we are brought face to face with the problems of our own self-image. How do we view ourselves? When we look at our own reflection in the mirror, do we like what we see? Can we accept ourselves as we really are, with all our quirks, idiosyncrasies and limitations? Do we like the way we look? Or are we always wishing we were like someone else?”<sup>4</sup>

A woman’s appearance is an important area in her life. It requires on the part of a man great sensitivity and understanding. We will see her King respond with exactly what she needs in short order (see v. 8). He hears what she says and he knows how to respond! He meets her (all of us) at our point of need.

## **II. A woman of God can still be anxious about his absence 1:7-8**

- 1) Security is an essential element in a happy, healthy and growing marriage.

This is certainly true for a woman, especially if one of her specific “love

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<sup>4</sup> Gedhill, 105.

languages” is time. For her, the beautiful 4-letter word “love” is often best spelt as “T.I.M.E.” Extended periods of separation are painful. It hurts. It confuses. But, it can also motivate a woman into action! This is what Shulamite does.

- 2) The woman returns her attention to her man. However, she shifts the imagery from that of a King to that of a shepherd. Her man is a Shepherd-King, one who pictures and anticipates the messianic Shepherd-King, the Lord Jesus Christ. What an incredible man he is! From the city to the country. From the palace of a King to the shepherds tent. She wants to know where her man is and she does not want to ask for directions or consult a GPS!

1) She can experience sorrow and shame 1:7

With something of a teasing request, Shulamite expresses her desire to be reunited with her man with 3 complementary questions, “Tell me, you, the one I love: Where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you let them rest at noon? Why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of you companions?”

Solomon is gone. Why we are not told, though the imagery implies he is about the normal duties of life. Here the picture is of a shepherd tending his sheep. She misses him. She wants to be with him. To speak so

frankly exposes her heart, but it will also excite the heart of her lover. At noon the sheep would sleep. The other shepherds would be resting.

There would be time just for them. No distractions. No interruptions. A mid-day rendezvous! What a great idea. What a creative lady we see.

Their meeting would be outside in the wide open spaces, perhaps under a shade tree? Perhaps in a temporary hut or shelter? Even as she sorrows over his absence, she strategized about how to make their intimate time together new, exciting, and memorable. But you can't love them if you're not with them. They need to hook-up and get together, and they need to do it now.

To wear a veil as she wandered among the other flocks and shepherds would be embarrassing. It could, in that day, give the impression that she was a prostitute (see Gen. 38:14-15) or that she was possibly in mourning. A prostitute has many men, but if he is absent, she has no man she can call her own. There is no one to whom she can point and say, that man is my man. She did not want there to be the slightest doubt that he was hers and she was his. For there to be even a question of their fidelity and commitment to each other would be shameful. Shulamite knew there was a cost, a price to be paid, in committing herself for a

lifetime to another person, and she was more than willing to make the sacrifice.

2) He can provide her with praise and protection 1:8

The man now speaks for the first time in the Song, and his words perfectly address both her concern of her appearance and his absence. First, he calls her beautiful, something he will do through the Song (1:8, 15, 16; 2:10, 13; 4:1,7,10; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10; 7:1, 6). Second, he tells her where to go in order to find him. In essence he tells her to follow familiar paths or “tracks” which this Shepherd-King is known to walk. Tremper Longman likens the scene to “a playful, sensual game of hide-and-seek” (NICOT, 101). I like that. His precise location is withheld, but a strategy for finding him is put before her. All of this draws our imagination to a romantic encounter far away from the public eye and the hustle and bustle of city life. This is the first time they steal a countryside get-away. It will not, however, be the last. Periodic times away and alone are a healthy tonic for marriage. This is a valuable lesson for all of us here.

Practical Applications from Song of Songs 1:5-8

One of the ways to help your mate get over a bad day and to limit those bad days in the future is to work at communication. This is a theme we will see repeatedly in

the Song of Songs because it is so important to a growing, healthy relationship. We need to be available. We need to talk. And, this is crucial, we must cultivate the art of listening! Ours is more of a telling culture than a listening culture. We have to push back against its seduction. Below are 10 suggestions to help keep open good lines of communication between a husband and wife. Walk through the list together, and then talk through what you each see individually as strengths and weaknesses. Work hard at listening to your spouses' perspective! It will be worth it.

- 1) Develop common interests. Start with the spiritual. Learn about each other's occupations and interests and try to put yourself mentally into your mate's situation to foster mutual understanding.
- 2) Sharpen your sensitivity radar. Observe your partner for signs of satisfaction, frustration, happiness, weariness, etc., and react appropriately.
- 3) Learn to listen. Be intentional. Focus! Don't try to pry open a closed mind, but when your spouse voluntarily talks, listen attentively and intelligently.
- 4) Make yourself an interesting and desirable person. Keep mentally and physically fit and fresh so that you are magnetic to your mate (Watch out for those tired late-night conversations).

- 5) Avoid “sore spots” in conversation. Always approach “danger” areas with proper timing. Work at saying the right thing at the right time and in the right way.
- 6) Learn to accept criticism in a spirit of love and meekness. Try to examine yourself realistically from the viewpoint of your partner. Develop a teachable spirit.
- 7) Discuss problems with a willingness to settle for limited objectives (not having your way!) if necessary. Your overall relationship is more important than winning a temporary “victory.” In this context, “compromise” is a good word.
- 8) Blend your recreational program, so that you can relax and “let off steam” together. Taking a 30 minute walk on a regular basis is an excellent strategy and habit.
- 9) As a wife, recognize that you need to siphon off tension. Work at being calm and cool-headed. As a husband, be decisive and reassuring in your love.
- 10) Take at least an annual time-out for a husband-wife “retreat” away from home. Evaluate the past and set goals for the future. Ask the Lord to help you learn from the past even as you plot a path for the future.

Where is Christ in these verses? The security of knowing my Shepherd-King

- 1) The theme, promise, and hope of a Shepherd-King is a rich one that runs through both testaments. It begins when the Lord called the youngest boy of a man named Jesse, his son named David (1 Sam 16-17). David was a shepherd who would slay Goliath, because Israel's greatest King and receive a promise from God that he would have a descendent of whom God said, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13). Later David would pen the beautiful Psalm 23 which speaks of the Lord as our Shepherd. Then in Ezekiel 34:22-23 the Lord promised His people, "I will save My flock, and they will no longer be prey for you. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will appoint over them a single shepherd, My servant David, and he will shepherd them, He will tend them himself and will be their shepherd." Finally the Old Testament unfolding of this portrait reached its end in Micah 5:2-4 where we read of Messiah, "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; One will come from you to be ruler over Israel for Me. His origin is from antiquity, from eternity. Therefore, He will abandon them until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of His brothers will return to the people of Israel. He will stand and shepherd them in the strength of Yahweh, in the majestic name of Yahweh His God. They will live securely, for then His greatness will extend

to the ends of the earth.” Promise becomes fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of David, whom the Bible calls “the Good Shepherd” in John 10:11, “the great Shepherd” in Hebrews 13:20 and “the chief Shepherd” in 1 Peter 5:4. In Revelation 7:17 we discover this Shepherd is “the Lamb who is at the center of throne” who guides his people to springs of living waters.

- 2) This glorious future Shepherd-King is anticipated in the Bridegroom-Shepherd-King of the Song of Songs. He is the One who pastures well His sheep and gives them rest. By His presence all fear and insecurities are done away with, for He has promised those who love Him, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb. 13:5; cf. Deut. 31:6). We may draw near to this Shepherd-King and find protection, provisions, security and shade. First Peter 2:21 teaches us to follow in the steps, the tracks (S.S. 1:8), of the one who is “the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (1 Pet 2:25). Here in Song of Songs, we find a faithful and loving Shepherd, a Shepherd-King, whom the people can love, trust, draw near to and follow. Here we find a Shepherd-King who points us to Jesus.