

“Love Is An Essential Thing”  
(Song of Solomon 8:5-14)

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Introduction

Love is a wonderful thing. It can also be a dangerous thing. I heard about the teenage boy who went into the drug store and asked the druggist for a 1 pound, 3 pound, and 5 pound box of candy. When the druggist asked him why he wanted 3 different boxes he said, “Tonight I have a date with the most beautiful girl in our school. She is so hot! I’ve been in love with her for years and I finally worked up enough nerve to ask her out and she said yes. Unfortunately our first date is having dinner with her parents. But after dinner, we’re going to go outside and sit in their porch swing and I have really high hopes about that. If before the night is out I get to hold her hand, I’m going to give her that 1 pound box of candy as a gift. But sir I must tell you, my goal for this night is much higher. If she lets me put my arm around her and hold her real tight, I’m going to give her that 3 pound box. But, if before our date ends, she lets me give her a big wet kiss right on her mouth, I’ll give her that 5 pound box of candy as a gift. Well the druggist sold him his 3 boxes of candy and the young man went home. In preparation for the date he did all the things a man, young or old, married or unmarried, should do before a date. He took a shower and used shampoo and soap. He brushed his teeth and used mouthwash. He put on deodorant and cologne, as well as nice clean clothes. After arriving at his date’s home and visiting for a while in the family room, they went into the dining room for dinner. The father asked the young man to say the blessing and boy did he. He prayed, 5 ... 10 ... 15 minutes for the meal! When he finished his date looked at him and said, “I had no idea you were so spiritual.” The young man looked back at her and said, “Yes, and I had no idea your daddy was the druggist either!”

Yes, love is a wonderful thing. Love is a dangerous thing. Love can also be a confusing thing. It is often the case we get love confused with infatuation and the mistake can be disastrous. I came across an article that contrasts the two. I think you’ll find it is right on target.

“Love or Infatuation”

Infatuation leaps into bloom. Love usually takes root and grows one day at a time. Infatuation is accompanied by a sense of uncertainty. You are stimulated and thrilled but not really happy. You are miserable when he is absent. You can’t wait until you see her again.

Love beings with a feeling of security. You are warm with a sense of his nearness, even when he is away. Miles do not separate you. You want her near. But near or far, you know she is yours and you can wait.

Infatuation says, “We must get married right away. I can’t risk losing him.” Love says, “Don’t rush into anything. You are sure of one another. You can plan your future with confidence.”

Infatuation has an element of sexual excitement. If you are honest, you will discover it is difficult to enjoy one another unless you will know it will end in intimacy. Love is the maturation of friendship. You must be friends before you can be lovers.

Infatuation lacks confidence. When he's away, you wonder if he's with another girl. When she is away, you wonder if she is with another guy. Sometimes you even check. Love means trust. You may fall into infatuation, but you never fall in love. Infatuation might lead you to do things for which you might be sorry, but love never will.

Love lifts you up. It makes you look up. It makes you think up. It makes you a better person than you were before.

Song of Solomon thinks love is important, so important in fact that it constitutes the final theme of the book. Twelve different aspects of love are addressed. Love truly is, according to God's word, "a many splendored thing."

I. Love is public. 8:5

It appears that Solomon and Shulamith are riding again in the royal chariot in full public display. She reclines relaxed and secure "leaning upon her lover" (NIV). Coming up from the wilderness could be echoing the theme of Israel's 40 years of wandering before entering the promised land. This couple has passed through those "wilderness periods" in their marriage and safely arrived on the other side. The wilderness also could convey the idea of cursedness (see Jer. 22:6; Joel 2:3). Their love relationship is a redeemed relationship through God's grace. The effects of the Fall and the Genesis curse (Gen. 3:16ff) have been reversed and the disharmony that sin brings into a relationship overcome. This is what God can do when He is Lord of our marriage. As Frederica Matthews-Green says, "Women need men to call us up toward the highest moral principles; [men] need [women] to call them down to the warmth of human love and respect for gentler sensibilities ... It's clear that we need each other. You would almost think someone planned it that way."<sup>1</sup> The love that Solomon and Shulamith enjoy is something all the world should see and learn from.

II. Love is private. 8:5

Shulamith again initiates lovemaking (The "I" is feminine). Apparently they have left the chariot and are now alone. Three times in the Song we have been told not to awaken love until the time is right (2:7; 3:5; 8:4). Well the time is now right according to Shulamith. The apple tree was often associated with sexual activity and romance in the ancient world. "It was the sweetheart tree of the ancient world."<sup>2</sup>

The last part of verse 5 is an example of Hebrew parallelism. "There your mother conceived you, there she in labor gave you birth" (NIV) Garrett points out, "she calls her beloved an apple tree in 2:3 and thus the figure of his mother being "under the apple tree"

<sup>1</sup> Frederica Matthews-Green, "Men Behaving Justly," *Christianity Today* (11-17-97), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Glickman, 96.

means that his mother was with his father. Similarly, the place where his mother conceived and gave birth to him refers to the female parts ... The woman means she and he are now participating in the same act by which the man himself was given life.”<sup>3</sup>

As we have seen throughout this book, sex is an important and significant part of a good marriage and with good reason. Married sex is more satisfying than recreational sex and cohabiting sex for both men and women.<sup>4</sup> Indeed Linda Waite, co-author of *The Case For Marriage* says, “Just being married seems to improve women’s satisfaction with sex ... while marriage works for men sexually by giving them an active and varied sex life.”<sup>5</sup> However, we do need to be fair and honest about this area. Sometimes, as we have seen in this book, the sparks don’t fly and the flame is barely at pilot-light. Why? The reasons vary. Barbara DeAngelis, author of *How to Make Love All the Time* warns us of 5 traps we must avoid.

- Trap #1: Waiting until late at night to have sex
- Trap #2: Falling prey to statistics paranoia
- Trap #3: Stalling until you’re in the mood for sex
- Trap #4: Getting completely out of the habit
- Trap #5: Using fatigue as a cover-up for other problems

Barbara quickly counters, however, with a 4-fold strategy to turn things around.

- Solution #1: Plan time for sex
- Solution #2: Plan decompression time after work
- Solution #3: Give yourself permission to have “quickies”
- Solution #4: Stop trying to fill a sexual quota; enjoy the sex you do have<sup>6</sup>

This is sound counsel and coupled with the advice we receive in the Song, we can confidently and expectantly look forward to those private times for love.

### III. Love is personal. 8:6

Shulamith asks her husband to set her as a seal upon his heart. A person’s seal was extremely important and personal. In part, it indicated ownership and was placed upon a person’s most valued possessions. This wife wants to know she is her husband’s most personal and valuable possession. She wants to be a seal, but a seal placed in a very particular location: upon his heart. In the world of Solomon it was often customary to wear a signet ring or cylinder seal on a cord or necklace around the neck and near the heart. For Solomon to love his wife in such a way that she felt she was his valued seal located near his heart would speak of unbreakable devotion and commitment.

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<sup>3</sup> Garrett, 426.

<sup>4</sup> Karen S. Petersen, “Quick Lessons for a Long Marriage,” *USA Today* (7-3-00).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara DeAngelis, “Are You Too Tired For Sex?,” *Family Circle* (10-16-90), 32-37.

How can we demonstrate this personal component of love to our mate so that they know they are indeed a precious seal upon our heart? Perhaps a little marital intimacy test might provide some assistance. Answer the following 10 questions and use a basic 4 point scale like we do in school.

### Marital Intimacy Test

(Answer: 4-often, 3-often enough, 2-not enough, 1-rarely, or 0-never for each.)

1. How often do you show affection for each other? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How often do you laugh at each other's jokes? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How often do you say something nice to each other? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How often do you compliment your partner in front of others? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How often do you enjoy sexual intimacy? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How often are you playful with each other? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How often do you look each other in the eyes while talking? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How often do you give each other a little surprise? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How often do you say "please?" \_\_\_\_\_
10. How often do you say "I'm sorry?" \_\_\_\_\_

Add up your points and divide by 10. You will get your score per a 4.0 scale. You will also get some insight into the personal aspect of your love.

#### IV. Love is protective. 8:6

Shulamith also desires to be a permanent possession upon her husband's arm. The arm speaks of strength and security. This woman understands that in true love there is always a feeling of safety. There is rest in the relationship we enjoy with our mate.

True love does have a protective attitude. You desire to shield the one you love from any harm, from any injury, from any damage, from anything that will in any way be detrimental.

Food for thought: One of the most lethal weapons in a relationship is the little chipping at one another with sarcastic barbs. This is especially hurtful when done in front of

others. You develop a person by magnifying his strengths, never his weaknesses. Take pride in each other. Learn to protect each other.

One key to this protective component of love is knowledge. The better we know our mate the better equipped we are to give them “protective love.” So let’s ask the question, “How well do you really know your spouse?” A deep and genuine knowledge leads to friendship, and being best friends is crucial to a satisfying marriage. So, let’s take another little quiz.

Answer the following either True or False:

1. I can name my partner’s best friends.
2. I know what stresses that my partner currently faces.
3. I know the names of those who have been irritating my partner lately.
4. I know some of my partner’s life dreams.
5. I am very familiar with my partner’s spiritual beliefs.
6. I can outline my partner’s basic philosophy of life.
7. I can list the relatives my partner likes least.
8. I know my partner’s favorite music.
9. I can list my partner’s favorite three movies.
10. I know the most stressful thing that happened to my partner in childhood.
11. I can list my partner’s major aspirations.
12. I know what my partner would do if he/she suddenly received 10 million dollars.
13. I can relate in detail my first impressions of my partner.
14. I ask my partner about his/her world periodically.
15. I feel my partner knows me well.

Scoring: If you answered true to more than half, this is an area of strength in your marriage. You know what makes your partner “tick.” If not, you have some work to do. Take time to learn more about your spouse to make your relationship stronger.<sup>7</sup>

#### V. Love is possessive. 8:6

Love is said to be as strong as death, jealousy as cruel or unyielding as the grave. Love is both universal and unavoidable just like death. This is the only occurrence of the word “strong” in the Song. The word means “an irresistible assailant or an immovable defender.”<sup>8</sup> When love calls, its siren sound is so compelling you cannot resist it. Love “never releases those whom it has once seized.”<sup>9</sup>

“Jealousy” may not be the best English translation given the negative meaning we normally attach to it. In this context the idea is parallel to the phrase “strong as death”

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from John Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles For Making Marriage Work* (New York: Crown, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Carr, 170.

<sup>9</sup> Garrett, 426.

and means a strong emotional attachment to a particular person or thing. Love is possessive and exclusive. It swallows down men and women once it has laid hold of them just as possessively and certainly as does the grave.<sup>10</sup> “In godly love a righteous jealousy is as hard or inevitable as the grave.”<sup>11</sup> It will not let go.

When I played football our coaches tried to motivate us with a saying that went something like this: “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” That may well be true. However, of one thing I am certain: “When the going gets tough, love keeps going.” It refuses to quit, drop out of the race, throw in the towel, or let go of the object of its affection. As Paul says in his beautiful chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13:7-8, “love bears all things ... endures all things. Love never fails.”

In true love there is a feeling of belongingness. The person in love always thinks of himself in relationship to the other person, and it’s a beautiful way to love. What is he doing? What is she doing? What is he thinking? What is she feeling? Real love is possessive. It is not, as one skeptic on marriage said, “A couple, in reality, is two singletons living under the same roof.”<sup>12</sup>

#### VI. Love is powerful. 8:6

Love “burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame” (NIV). The emphasis is on the power and intensity of the fire. It is interesting to point out that the last syllable of “flame” in the Hebrew text could refer to the divine name of the Lord, “Yahweh.” The Jerusalem Bible, American Standard Version (1901) and the NIV (marginal reading) all take it this way. If this is correct God Himself is seen as the source of this love. The power of its nature would therefore, only be strengthened. The love God kindles in a marriage over which He is Lord is such a fervent flame that nothing on earth can extinguish it or put it out. Like a raging forest fire it burns with an intensity that no one can control it. This is a passionate love, a red-hot flame.

In his book *Sustaining Love*, David Augsburger notes that marriages move through stages. In fact he speaks of 4 marriages in a marriage. For example in stage #1 we dream, in state #2 we become disillusioned, in stage #3 we discover, and in stage #4 we experience depth. It is this 4th stage for which we should aspire as it is here that we find the true power and promises of love. In addition to depth we also find true communication, celebration, acceptance, intimacy, interdependency and hope. Here we are not “blinded” by love, we are “bound together” by love. We create “sacred times” for each other because the power of love has made us “soul-mates.”

#### VII. Love is persevering. 8:7

And You Wonder Why It Didn’t Last

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Patterson, 117.

<sup>12</sup> “Deconstructing the Myths of Marriage,” *The London Times* (12-2-99).

She married him because he was such a “strong man.”  
She divorced him because he was such a “dominating male.”

He married her because she was so “fragile and petite.”  
He divorced her because she was so “weak and helpless.”

She married him because “he know how to provide a good living.”  
She divorced him because “all he thinks about is business.”



He married her because “she reminds me of my mother.”  
 He divorced her because “she’s getting more like her mother every day.”

She married him because he was “happy and romantic.”  
 She divorced him because he was “shiftless and fun-loving.”

He married her because she was “steady and sensible.”  
 He divorced her because she was “boring and dull.”

She married him because he was “the life of the party.”  
 She divorced him because “he never wants to come home from a party.”

Marriage is meant to last, and so is love. It is not for a season, but for a lifetime. Solomon teaches us that the love God gives cannot be stopped, its flame cannot be put out. Though many waters or even floods come against it, it will not be quenched. It will persevere. “The tenacious staying power of love is set against these tides and perennial rivers which are unable to wash love away or put out its sparks.”<sup>13</sup>

Bob and Gloria Cooper have been married for over 50 years. They are just a regular kind of couple. Concerning their own marriage Bob said, “This marriage is a covenant. It isn’t anything you walk away from. You just make it work.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed love may mean staying even when you want to leave. David Sanford provides valuable counsel in this context when he writes,

“Why should you stay in your marriage if you really want to divorce? Quite possibly reasons for staying will include 1) honoring your spouse, 2) respecting your children’s needs, 3) caring about family and friends, and 4) property, support and separate housing. You will probably not be asked to consider that you should stay in your marriage in order to learn how to love, despite the fact that this reason for honoring the marriage commitment is one of the most compelling of all. You remember love. If you were typical of most people love was one of your prime reasons for getting married. You were much in love back then. You had a partner who loved you and, you believed, would go on loving you into the future. That was your expectation in getting married. Of course, you loved your partner, too. Doing so was part of being in love and probably was a pleasure, rather than a difficulty. What a shock to learn that loving is primarily not what you receive but what you do – and do even when boredom, resentment, or a hunger for novelty tells you that life can be better somewhere else.”<sup>15</sup> True love, God’s kind of love, is persevering.

#### VIII. Love is priceless. 8:7

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<sup>13</sup> Carr, 171.

<sup>14</sup> Jason Millstein, “A Vow of Hard Work,” *The Spokesman Review* (3-6-00).

<sup>15</sup> David Sanford, “Learning to Love Means Staying When You Want to Leave,” *Marriage Support* on-line newsletter #681 Couples Place web site (accessed 12-28-99).

True love cannot be bought. It has no price tag. It is not for sale. If a person were to give all that he owned to try and buy love he would be despised and scorned, subjected to public ridicule and mockery. “By its very nature love must be given. Sex can be bought, love must be given.”<sup>16</sup>

What are some clear and concrete ways in which we can give the priceless gift of love to our mate? Joanna Weaver helps us out with her “25 Ways to Love Your Lover.”

### 25 Ways to Love Your Lover

1. List the top 10 reasons I’m the most fortunate husband/wife in the world.” Read them aloud to your spouse.
2. Surprise your mate by doing one of his or her chores. When asked why, give a smooch and say, “because you are worth it.”
3. Don’t just show – tell! Say, “I love you.”
4. Communicate your plans to each other. On Sunday night, go over your schedules for the coming week.
5. Use the T.H.I.N.K. method to determine whether an issue needs to be brought up. Is it true? helpful? important? necessary? kind?
6. Plan an appreciation celebration for your mate, complete with his or her favorite meal.
7. Look at your schedule. Make time with your spouse a weekly priority.
8. Bring back those dating days. After picking up the sitter, walk back outside and knock on the door with flowers in your hand.
9. Don’t turn on the TV until after dinnertime, if at all. Wait for a conversation to break out.
10. Pray together. Thank God for your mate, then pray for his or her special needs.
11. On your spouse’s birthday, send your in-laws a thank-you card.
12. Set boundaries in outside relationships. Don’t let anyone take away too much of the time you spend with your spouse.
13. Are you seeing eye to eye? Experts have found the deeper the love, the more frequent the eye contact.
14. Pull out old love letters, taking turns reading and reminiscing.
15. Take turns reading from the Bible each night.
16. Stretch out birthdays with special activities, fun surprises and a whole lot of hoopla.
17. Be a student of your spouse. Learn what he likes. Learn what she needs.
18. Treat your wife like a lady. Open doors and hold chairs.
19. Throw away fighting words like “you never ...” and “you should ...” Use healing words like “I’m sorry ...” and “you may be right.”
20. Make church attendance a joyful priority.
21. Instead of making a joke at your spouse’s expense, give a sincere compliment.

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<sup>16</sup> Glickman, 101.

22. Create traditions as a couple by budgeting money for special times together.
23. Be affectionate. Back rubs and tender hand-holding communicate love.
24. Choose your battles carefully.
25. Be a person of integrity. Give your spouse no reason to doubt your word or question your commitment.

IX. Love is pure. 8:8-9

Verses 8-12 probably should be understood as a flashback to Shulamith's youth and initial meeting of Solomon. She grew up in a family where her brothers had been hard on her (1:6), but they were also protective as well. They watched over her and gave attention to her moral development and maturity. Even at a young age when she was "a little sister" who had "no breasts" they kept an eye out for her as they considered the time when she would give herself to a man. "If she is a wall" speaks of moral purity and unavailability. If she demonstrates such character they will honor her as a tower of silver. She would be given freedom and responsibility. On the other hand "if she is a door," indicating moral vulnerability and weakness, they will enclose her and board her up in order to protect her. If she is reckless and irresponsible in her behavior, they will of necessity restrict her freedom and opportunities for sexual misbehavior and foolishness. Shulamith's family was wise in their guidance of this young lady. Unfortunately far too few families provide this much needed guidance in our day. The fallout has been tragic indeed. In an article entitled "Modern Women Get No Respect," Dr. Laura Schlessinger addresses the moral cesspool into which too many women have fallen. She writes,

Once again we are confronted by feminist outrage at "vicious male behavior" without even a passing nod to the kinds of behavior "sexually liberated women" exhibit. Why shouldn't males in the audience shout at performers such as Sheryl Crow to bare her breasts? Madonna has done it. There are women in Los Angeles and other major cities who go to events to have their breasts signed and who flash their breasts at other drivers on the road. There are scads and scads – legions – of skuzzy, skanky women. Sexy fun is the new norm in America, but I guess that depends on what side of the breast one is on. I know for a fact that people who don't think sexual degradation and license are fun or funny are considered the villains in this country's unfolding immorality play. There is little reason left for society to respect women as it once did. Women get knocked up. They don't marry. They have abortions. They go to bars. They get knocked up again. Major movie stars proudly get knocked up out of wedlock. Television stars contribute to our attitudes about women. Watch prime-time television: How many women behave with dignity? Where is the feminist outcry about these portrayals, hour after hour, night after night? ... How is it that the feminists still don't get it? They once believed that if women were free to drop their drawers as often as men, something wonderful would happen. How did they miss that sexually transmitted disease, abortions, out-of-wedlock births, lack of respect, and increased vulnerability and exposure to violence also were going to be part of this package? I hold no respect for crude male animals. But the male gender isn't the only one that knows how to oink. As a general rule, women in our society do not behave in ways that engender respect. There is a huge population out there that thinks that's just fine and is ready to excoriate women who behave in more

traditional female ways. The guys, especially, endorse “the equality of scuzz.” It sure gets them off the hook and releases them from all responsibility. They can count on women to abort the results of indiscriminate sex or to raise the illegitimate offspring all by themselves. I said a few paragraphs back that we are “almost at the end” of the sexual revolution. There’s one group left for sexual liberation to conquer: our children. The campaign, tragically, is well under way.<sup>17</sup>

But the price paid in the loss of female virtue is not merely a private matter for individual women. The cost runs much higher and infects the very fabric of the family and the health of the culture. In 1842 Catherine Beecher, the sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a book entitled *A Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School*. In it she wrote,

The formation of the moral and intellectual character of the young is committed mainly to the female hand. The mother forms the character of the future man; the sister bends the fibres that are hereafter to be the forest tree; the wife sways the heart, whose energies may turn for good or for evil the destinies of a nation. Let the women of a country be made virtuous and intelligent, and the men will certainly be the same. The proper education of a man decides the welfare of an individual; but educate a woman, and the interest of the whole family are secured.<sup>18</sup>

#### X. Love is peaceful. 8:10

Shulamith provides a personal word concerning her chaste moral disposition and value to her husband. She had kept herself morally pure for her husband. She was a virgin when they married. Further, she is now a vibrant, sensual, mature woman of God whose breasts are like towers. When the time came for marriage, she was ready in every way, and her husband reaped the benefits. The text says in his eyes she brought “contentment” or “peace.” The Hebrew word is *shalom*. It means wholeness, completeness, and wellness in every part of life. Shulamith made him complete. She was the “helper suitable just for him” (Gen. 2:20). In her presence he was set at rest. He found peace and favor, pleasure and rejuvenation.

In a recent survey when asked whether they considered their spouse the only person they could have ever married, a surprising 58% answered yes. And, knowing what they now know about their spouse, 89% said they would marry him or her again. 63.8% kiss their spouse more than once a day, 25% once a day and only 3.8% once a month or less. Does marriage get better over time? For 91% of the respondents the answer is yes! Responses include: “It deepens the partnership”; “You grow closer, respect each other, understand differences, feel comfortable together.”<sup>19</sup> And 99% said they expected to stay married to their current spouse. All the marriage news isn’t bad, is it?!

<sup>17</sup> Laura Schlessinger, “Modern Women Get No Respect,” *The Washington Times*. National Weekly Edition (Aug. 23-29, 1999), 27.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *World Magazine* (5-20-99), 12.

<sup>19</sup> “The Trust About In-laws, Reasons for Marrying and Sex, Fidelity and Children.” *Town and Country Magazine* (1-21-99).

XI. Love is privileged. 8:11-12

The exact meaning of these verses is vague at best. It seems that the main point is a contrast between Solomon's right to administer his possessions as he chooses (v. 11) and Shulamith's right to give herself as she determines (v. 12). "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon" (location unknown). "Keepers" or "tenants" oversaw it and they were to grow enough from the vineyard to produce 1000 pieces of silver. In return they would receive 200 pieces of silver. This constitutes a 5 to 1 profit for Solomon and it is within his rights as the land belongs to him and he has entered into a mutually agreeable contract with the tenants of the vineyard. Shulamith also has a vineyard. It is herself, her body to be specific (cf. 1:6). She belongs to no one and therefore has the right and privilege to give herself and her love to whom she chooses. Solomon's vineyard is a possession and impersonal. Her vineyard is a person and thus intimately personal. Gladly, freely and willingly has she given herself to Solomon to be his wife. Solomon may have thousands of possessions, but she came as a gift.

True love involves a responsiveness to the "total self" of the one loved. You do not fall in love with a body. You fall in love with a person. Indeed it is better stated: "You grow in love with a person." In a proper love relationship you enrich the totality of the other person's life. Furthermore, in true love there is not only a feeling of pleasure but also of reverence. Do you ever look at your wife, or your husband, and think, God gave her to me? God hand-tooled him for me? And, true love has a quality of self-giving. God so loved the world that He GAVE. Many people are in love only with themselves. It has been well said that the smallest package in all the world is the person who is all wrapped up with himself. But in true love, a person thinks more of the happiness of others than he does of himself.<sup>20</sup>

XII. Love is particular. 8:13-14

An English teacher was explaining to his students the concept of gender association in the English language. He stated how hurricanes at one time were given only feminine names and how ships and planes were usually referred to as she. One of the students raised their hand and asked: What "gender" is a computer?

The teacher wasn't certain which it was, so he divided the class into two groups, males in one, females in the other and asked them to decide if a computer should be masculine or feminine. Both groups were asked to give four reasons for their recommendation.

The group of women concluded that computers should be referred to in the masculine gender because:

1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.
2. They have a lot of data but are still clueless.

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<sup>20</sup> From an article by Howard Hendricks, "Yardsticks for Love."

3. They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they ARE the problem.
4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have gotten a better model.

The men, on the other hand, decided that computers should definitely be referred to in the feminine gender because:

1. No one but their Creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
3. Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it ...

We have arrived at the end of our Song and the last 2 verses. Appropriately both the husband and the wife speak and not surprisingly, the woman gets the last word! Shulamith is in the gardens, she who herself is a garden (cf. 4:12ff). She is a source of perpetual life, joy, excitement and pleasure to her husband. Friends or companions listen carefully for the voice of this unique and gifted lady. Solomon however wants to hear her. His request is exclusive and particular. Others may long to hear her and see her (cf. 6:13), but she is his, and his alone. He asks her to call out to him. She is not a possession but a person. She is not a slave but a partner. The love she gives is freely given. She responds by inviting him again to go away with her, and she tells him to hurry! She tells him to be free in his sensual feelings for her like a gazelle or young stag. She invites him to the mountains of spices, a reference no doubt to her breasts and the pleasures he will find there. Only her lover, her beloved, is welcomed there, and he is always welcomed. They have been married for some time, but the passion and intensity of their love has not waned. This is God's intention. This is God's plan.

### Conclusion

We began this study trying to understand the difference between love and infatuation. It is probably a good place to end as well.

The following list of questions can help you analyze your feelings about a possible love relationship. There are no right or wrong answers. Indicate your answer to each question by circling the "Yes," "No," or the "?". Use the question mark only when you are certain that you cannot answer "Yes" or "No." The inventory will be more helpful if both you and your fiancée take it and then discuss it.

### LOVE OR INFATUATION – WHICH?

answer yes or no:

1. have the two of you ever worked through a definite disagreement or conflict of interest to the complete satisfaction of both?
2. do the two of you progress in your conversations to new views and ideas?
3. do you find yourself storing up experiences and ideas to share with your friend?
4. are there certain things about your friend that you plan to reform after you are married?
5. do you find yourself organizing your plans around this person?
6. are you proud to have other persons for whom you have a high regard to meet your friend?

7. does the presence or influence of your friend stir intellectual activity or provide inspiration for you?
8. are the two of you in agreement on your feelings toward, and the handling of, children?
9. would you have full confidence in trusting your friend in the presence of another attractive person of your sex for an evening?
10. do you at times feel uncertain, uneasy or possessed in your relationship?
11. when outside trouble develops, does it tend to pull you closer together rather than further apart?
12. have you established sexual standards, by open discussion and cooperatively, so that each feels satisfied with the decision reached?
13. do you enjoy each other's company when you are together for an evening with no specific activities planned?
14. do you ever wonder if she (he) is sincere in what she (he) tells you?
15. do you feel pangs of jealousy when someone else of your sex pays attention to your friend?
16. do you find generally that you like the same people?
17. are there certain things you need to avoid saying or doing lest there be hurt feelings?
18. can you mention specific things or characteristics about your friend that you like?
19. do you like her (his) outlook on life and the values that she (he) holds?
20. have you come to understand each other mainly through talking or through experiences you have had together?