

# Song of Solomon 2 - How to Fan the Flames of Love; Preparation for Marriage

## II. Courtship (Song 1:2—3:5)

- (2) Expression of love between the King and his bride (Song 1:9—2:7)
  - (E) Bride praises her handsome King (Song 1:16—2:1)
  - (F) King praises his bride on account of the supremacy of her beauty in comparison to the others (2:2)
  - (G) Bride praises King due to his protective care (2:3-4)
  - (H) Bride desires to consummate her relationship with her King (2:5-6)
  - (I) Bride exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem to abstain from premarital sexual relations (2:7)
- (3) Both lovers yearn for each other (2:8-17)
  - (A) Bride describes her lover's desire for her (2:8-9)
  - (B) Bride recalls the King's invitation for her to come to him (2:10-13)
  - (C) King expresses his desire to be with his bride (2:14-15)
  - (D) Bride expresses her desire to be with her lover (2:16-17)

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**1** "I am the rose of Sharon, The lily of the valleys."

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**1** I'm a flower from Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

**1** I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

- The woman is speaking here, giving a self-assessment...

— Solomon's praise has lifted her heart and self-worth to new heights. Because of his praise, she now sees herself as a beautiful wild flower, free and untamed by any gardener. She is unique, and uniquely Solomon's.

— No one has cultivated this unpicked flower, that is an assignment and privilege reserved for her husband and him alone

- (F) King praises his bride on account of the supremacy of her beauty in comparison to the others (2:2)

2 "Like a lily among the **thorns**, So is my darling among the young women."

2 "Like a lily among the thorns, So is my darling among the maidens."

2 Like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the young women.

2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

- Solomon adds that she is utterly unique, rare and special to him

— His comparison is not her with other flowers, but much greater than that: she is a lily, a beautiful wild flower, among thorns. She is a flower, all other women are thorns. By this comparison, all other women bring pain and are totally undesirable. She is his only love. She is the only flower in a world of thorny weeds.

— Such praise will not cause other women to applaud him, but it will cause his woman to love and adore him

(G) Bride praises King due to his protective care (2:3-4)

3 "Like **an apple tree among the trees of the forest**, So is my beloved among the young men. **In his shade I took great delight** and sat down, **And his fruit was sweet to my taste.**

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3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I take delight and sit down, and his fruit is sweet to my taste.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

- This verse is erotic and sensual...the passion of love is running full throttle

— Solomon has told his woman of the real joy that she brings to him and how she is the only woman in his life. The confidence she now feels in their relationship frees her to give herself to him in unreserved abandonment.

— Solomon has created a romantic atmosphere. He has built up his bride by focusing on her positive features and gifts. Her response is awesome!

- "...an apple tree among the trees of the forest" - an apricot or apple tree would be rare, if not unheard of, in a forest. However, if you did find one, it would be sweet to the taste and would provide needed sustenance.

— Solomon said she was a flower woman among thorns; she said he is a special tree in a common forest.

- "...In his shade I took great delight" - finding him brought her "great delight" and she decided to sit down in his shade. She is comforted by him. She is protected by him and only him, as never before.

— Solomon's "shade" is his watch-care. Now that she feels loved, safe, and secure, she longs for physical intimacy, lovemaking and sexual union.

- "...his fruit was sweet to my taste" - highly suggestive and erotic language; she says I like what I taste, smell, and feel, and it causes me to want more
- As they anticipate their wedding night (4:1—5:1), the flames of passion are burning, but under control

### **Prepare for Passion (v4-7)**

There is both an encouragement and a warning here. Sex is a powerful gift. It has unbelievable potential for good or evil, to build up or tear down, to delight or destroy. In this passage, Solomon gives us some additional instruction to ensure maximum sex, maximum safety, and maximum satisfaction. This is sex God's way.

4 "He has brought me to *his banquet hall*, And **his banner over me is love**.

4 "He has brought me to *his* banquet hall, And his banner over me is love.

4 He has brought me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

- "...banquet hall" - "house of wine"; a common reference to the bridal chamber

— This scene anticipates the wedding night and the marriage bed

— It is a safe place; it speaks to the protective love he has for his lover

- "...his banner over me is love" - could be translated "and his wish regarding me was love-making" or "his intentions were to make love"

— It also testifies that the love he has for her is evident to everyone. He doesn't speak to her and treat her one way in private, then completely different in public. He is secure in his love for her and glad for all to see it. No wonder she grows more and more secure in his love.

— Solomon wants her, and she wants him

— "banner" - a banner was a device to find your place in a crowd. It was also used to acknowledge a victory or triumph.

(H) Bride desires to consummate her relationship with her King (2:5-6)

5 "Refresh me with raisin cakes, Sustain me with apples, Because I am lovesick.

5 "Sustain me with raisin cakes, Refresh me with apples, Because I am lovesick.

5 Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, for I'm weak with love.

5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

- In the midst of a great feast, her mind turns to lovemaking. Her mind carries her away to the joys of marriage, which are just around the corner.

— The Bible teaches that we should "feast" on our mate, and that God smiles when we do

— She is so overcome with passion ("lovesick") at the moment that she feels faint

- Does she want this feeling to stop? No way! She asks for raisin cakes and apples to sustain her so that she may enjoy more

- "Refresh" and "sustain" are imperatives; she is demanding the necessary nourishment she needs to continue in the passion of their lovemaking.

6 "His left hand is under my head, And his right hand **embraces** me."

6 "Let his left hand be under my head And his right hand embrace me."

6 I wish that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand were embracing me!

6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

- In the passion of their love, she has not lost sight or sense of the warmth, intimacy, and security of their relationship. With one hand he cradles her head, with the other hand he gently caresses her

- "...embraces" - used both as a friendly greeting (Gen 48:10) and of the sexual union (Prov 5:20), showing that he is her friend and her lover. Both are important to her.

(I) Bride exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem to abstain from premarital sexual relations (2:7)

7 "Swear to me, you daughters of Jerusalem, By the **gazelles** or by the **does** of the field, That you will not disturb or awaken *my* love Until she pleases."

7 "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, That you do not arouse or awaken *my* love Until she pleases."

7 Swear to me, young women of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, that you won't awaken or arouse love before its proper time!

7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken love, till it pleases.

- This verse is a recurring theme in Song of Solomon (Cf. 3:5; 8:4); its repetition reflects its importance. It's so crucial that it takes the form of an oath.

- The woman is directing her words to the sorority of females ("daughters of Jerusalem") as she warns them to keep passion in its proper place.

- "...gazelles...does" - both beautiful female animals, vigorous and sexually active in season. She understands that while males are usually more sexually active and interested, God created women as sexual beings too.

- To "disturb" or "awaken" is to be aroused sexually or to excite sexual passion

— She warns these other women to not stir up or arouse your sexual passions until the appropriate time (under the bonds of marriage)

— Essentially, the girls should not allow themselves to be aroused sexually until the proper time and person arrives. The natural joy of sexual awakening is ruined by premature experimentation.

— Sexual experimentation outside of marriage misses the maximum sex that God desires for us. When husband wife are believers, they see sex as one of the most beautiful aspects

of life. They come to understand that it is more enjoyable to give than receive, that bodily pleasure can also be spiritual, that men and women have equal rights to sexual pleasure, and that the quality of a sexual relationship is more than physical pleasure (but it is not less than physical pleasure).

Some commentators see the following section (Song 2:8—3:5) as retrospective reflections on the courtship period.

### **Preparation for Marriage (2:8-17)**

The scene has shifted from the city and the palace back to the country and the woman's home. The wedding day for the couple in love is just a few days away. Marriage is the second most important decision a person can make in this life, and one can never have too much information. You can, however, not have enough information, which usually has tragic results.

The Shulammitte is a wise woman. She is a student of Solomon, she watches every move he makes. Was Solomon the real deal? Is their love authentic? What were the clues she gathered?

(3) Both lovers yearn for each other (2:8-17)

(A) Bride describes her lover's desire for her (2:8-9)

8 "Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming, Leaping on the mountains, Jumping on the hills!

8 "Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming, Climbing on the mountains, Leaping on the hills!

8 The voice of my beloved! Look! He's coming, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.

8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

- Actions speak louder than words. When Solomon acted, the woman was watching. His actions were in concert with what her heart was telling her.

- She hears his voice calling out for her as he comes for her. She compliments his agility ("leaping" and "jumping") and his attractiveness (v9)

9 "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he is standing behind our wall, He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice.

9 "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he is standing behind our wall, He is looking through the windows, He is peering through the lattice.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice.

9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart [stag]: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at [through] the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

- Solomon is not creeping on the woman here...they communicate his obsession with her and his desire for her. He wants her, but he approaches her with honor and respect.

— He comes close, with penetrating glances, but he will maintain his distance until the right time, until they unite their lives in marriage

— She is more than a sex toy that he wants to play with...she is a precious woman who deserves his best behavior both now and later. His present actions are a good indication of what his future behavior will be.

(B) Bride recalls the King's invitation for her to come to him (2:10-13)

**10** "My beloved responded and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along.

**10** "My beloved responded and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along.

10 My beloved spoke to me: Get up, my darling, my beautiful one, and come on.

10 My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

- Notice Solomon's words and tone as he invites his woman to come away with him (also v13)

- "My beloved...my darling, my beautiful one" - his words express that she is a joy to his heart and his eyes

— He does not keep his thoughts to himself; he does not assume that she knows how he feels. He gives her public and specific praise.

11 'For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over *and* gone.

11 'For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over *and* gone.

11 Look! Winter is past. The rain is over and gone.

11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

- He is inviting her to take a romantic walk in the countryside

— Solomon is so struck by his woman that he begins to not talk like a man...he begins to recognize things, like here in nature, that men typically don't see or comment on

— When you are in love, you see things and notice things that you previously missed or overlooked

12 'The blossoms have *already* appeared in the land; The time has arrived for pruning *the vines*, And the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land.

12 'The flowers have *already* appeared in the land; The time has arrived for pruning *the vines*, And the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land.

12 Blossoms have appeared in the land. The season of songbirds has arrived, and cooing of turtledoves is heard in our land.

12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle[dove] is heard in our land;

- Flowers were blooming, birds were singing, spring was in the air

— Love could be found anywhere and everywhere they looked

13 'The fig tree has ripened its fruit, And the vines in blossom have given forth *their* fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along!"

13 'The fig tree has ripened its figs, And the vines in blossom have given forth *their* fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along!"

13 The fig tree has produced its fruit, the grapevines have blossomed and exude their fragrance. "Get up, my darling, my beautiful one, and come on.

13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

(C) King expresses his desire to be with his bride (2:14-15)

**14** "My dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the hiding place of the mountain pathway, Let me see how you look, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is pleasant, And you look delightful."

**14** "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your form, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your form is lovely."

14 My dove, in the hidden places of the rocks, in the secret places of the cliffs, show me your form, and let me hear your voice. For your voice is pleasant, and your shape is lovely.

14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

- When two people are in love, they want to spend time alone, just the two of them

- "...dove" - Solomon again calls her his "dove" (Cf. 1:15)

— Doves are gentle and beautiful; they often nestle in the crevices of the rock, out of sight and safely hidden

— He desires to spend quality time with her, seeing only her face and hearing only her voice

— Solomon wishes to discover all about her whom he loves so much. No detail seems too trivial. He cared so much about the details because he cared so much about the person.

**15 "Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, While our vineyards are in blossom."**

15 "Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, While our vineyards are in blossom."

15 Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that destroy the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom."

15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

- "Catch" - an imperative (command); God issues a strong word about a danger to the marital relationship

- "...foxes" - unwelcome intruders who sneak into a marriage and can destroy the purity of our love and the pricelessness of our relationship

— Foxes are small animals; you hardly notice them and they are good at hiding. Only when the damage is done do you even realize they were there.

— A happy and healthy relationship must be protected; we must always be on guard for anything that could harm the tender and vulnerable union of marriage

— Some examples of "little foxes" that can sneak in and neutralize or destroy an marriage include:

(1) Role reversal - when God's role for the husband and wife are reversed

(2) Intimacy stagnation - when initial sensual love never develops into true intimacy; when sexual intimacy becomes uncommon and unimaginative.

(3) Silence / stonewalling - when the relationship is not being nourished by regular and genuine communication. There are five area in marriage that require consistent attention:

(a) communication

(b) finances

(c) sex

(d) children

(e) in-laws

- If b-e have broken down, communication has broken down.

(4) Time ill-spent - when outside forces encroach on the precious time a couple needs alone to build and maintain a healthy relationship.

- A marriage is headed for hard times if the best time is given to things that only promise a small return on the investment.

(5) Outside interference - when real and personal needs begin to be met more and more outside the marriage.

(6) Fatigue - when wedding vows are considered conditional, marriage is no longer considered sacred before God, and divorce begins to be a consideration as a possible solution to an unhappy situation.

(7) Misunderstanding - when a husband and wife fail to understand and appreciate and enjoy just how different they are from each other

- These types of issues never simply work themselves out in a marriage, they must be addressed and worked through on an ongoing basis for a marriage to grow and develop
- "...our vineyards are in blossom" - the vineyards were blooming, meaning they were vulnerable to attack, just like marriage
- We must provide necessary and essential protection. In actions and attitudes we must, with dogged determination, resolve to nurture and tend to our relationships with great care and concern

(D) Bride expresses her desire to be with her lover (2:16-17)

**16** "My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures *his flock* among the lilies.

**16** "My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures *his flock* among the lilies.

16 My beloved belongs to me and I belong to him. He is the one who shepherds his flock among the lilies.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth (shepherds) among the lilies.

- A healthy relationship shows confidence and commitment. Each will be confident in the love and devotion of the other.

- Because she is confident of their relationship and his love for her, she freely gives herself to him. Security is essential for maximum sexual and marital enjoyment.

**17** "**Until the cool of the day, when the shadows flee**, Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle Or a young stag on **the mountains of Bether.**"

17 "Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether."

17 Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn around, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the rugged mountains.

17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

- "Until the cool of the day, when the shadows flee" - all night long

- "...the mountains of Bether" - the "mountains of separation"; a not-so-subtle reference to her breasts (Cf. 4:6)

- The couple long for marital union and sexual consummation. They long for and want each other with no barriers standing in the way

- Thinking ahead to what they will enjoy, the woman invites Solomon to come to her with the agility, strength, and beauty of a gazelle or young stag (Cf. v9). Her invitation includes an episode of all night lovemaking.

## **Application**

Couples in courtship often defer potential problem areas with the attitude that "we can work these things out when we are married." This brings unnecessary baggage into the union and result in tensions.

Little "foxes" need to be identified and dealt with. It is a question of priorities. This includes the need for the husband to attend to "earning the bread." The coin can be flipped over—there is another side to this issue: The husband also needs to put suitable boundaries around the demands of his work to reserve quality time for the family.

But both need to schedule their activities to provide for quality time for the love relationship. This is especially difficult for the self-employed and for those in ministry, where demands placed have little to do with "economic" boundaries. But this goes for the girls and housework, too. Among of the biggest rivals for the husband are the children!