



gracefellowship

Song of Solomon 2
Deepening Love
February 29, 2020

Last week we looked at the first chapter of the Song of Solomon. We talked about the attraction that was felt between Solomon and the Shulammitte woman. I even gave some homework assignments! By show of hands did anyone attempt any of the homework from last week? If you missed that message, I would love for you to catch up with us on our website or on our app; all the messages from our worship services are there.

Today we are going to look at two more snapshots from their relationship- the deepening love they share in an exclusive relationship and what I believe is their engagement, as we would think about it in our culture.

As the chapter opens up we see the woman once again exposing an inner struggle that we saw last week- she is not confident in her physical appearance. She has some self-doubt concerning her beauty.

:: Song of Solomon 2

She

1 I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

He

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

She

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

4 Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.

5 Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.

6 His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me.

7 Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

8 Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills.

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

10 My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.

11 See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.

12 Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

He

14 My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

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

She

16 My beloved is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies.

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

Just like in chapter 1, the Shulammite woman speaks first and opens the discussion:

She

1 I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

In Song of Solomon 1:5-6 she described how she felt she was unattractive due to her dark skin- an unwelcomed thing in her culture because it meant she worked outside in the sun and was from a humble background- not like the fair skinned maidens in the royal court. However, what I didn't point out last week is that even though she has some self-image issues she knows beauty is more than skin deep. She says, "Dark am I, yet lovely, daughters of Jerusalem..."

Ladies, please don't buy into the lies our culture feeds us about beauty coming solely from your physical appearance. In our Instagram filter and Photoshop world it seems we only see the "perfect" version of women.

Beauty that is skin deep usually reveals a character that is deeply lacking!

Now in chapter 2 she shows some growth, but also still shows self-doubt. She recognizes that she has beauty- like a flower- but she still feels very common. In fact, she feels like one flower among many. She describes herself like two flowers in Israel...

- **Rose of Sharon:** (not actually a rose, but translating to English depicted a beautiful flower) **a wild autumn flower, which grows out of season.** I think she feels out of place around the women of the palace. When she looks around at everyone else she feels her value is underwhelming.
- **Lily of the valley is a common flower that grows all over the hillsides of Israel.** She feels like a common woman among the beauties of Israel. You can just sense the insecurity she faces. Solomon hears her and he doesn't try to fix it, but he does reassure her as he speaks for the first time in this chapter.

He

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

Solomon says, "There may be others, but you are a flower among thorns!"
This is a call to exclusivity in their relationship.

He is telling her, I've looked and you're the only one I see and want to be with. Solomon knows how to speak to her needs and he provides knowledge that she is the only one for him. Guys, we need to make sure our wives know that while there may be other women who exist in our lives, none of them have our eyes, our affection or our devotion. When you get married, the promise to your wife is exclusive love. Reassure her often that no one else captivates your heart- or your eyes- like your wife does.

Men, give your wife the gift of feeling preferred!

She

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

The Shulammitte woman may have thought of herself as a humble flower, but she thinks of Solomon as a noble tree. This probably wasn't an actual apple tree. But it was a fruit tree of some sort. Our English translations miss this a little bit. But here is what is unmistakable: He is special to her among all the other trees of the forest- in other words he isn't like the other men in her life.

There are men throughout the book who don't treat this woman very well. We already heard about her brothers who made her work in the sun and do manual labor. Later, we will see some interactions with other men who are cruel to her.

In the first chapter she worked long hours in the sun, but now she sits under the protective shade of her relationship with Solomon. He covers her and protects her with his presence and she feels safe with him. She was also too tired in chapter 1 to take care of her own garden, but now she is refreshed by her beloved.

Ladies, when was the last time you said to your husband, “You’re not like other men in my life- you’re special.” ?

Women are not the only ones who struggle with self-doubt. Men like to put on a tough exterior and look like we have it all together, but many men are insecure internally. We constantly worry if we measure up to other men at work. We wonder if we are doing a good job as husbands and fathers. We compare ourselves to others and often feel like we aren’t worth much. Wives, your husbands need to be reminded often that they are valued by you. They need you to give them a boost in the ego department that they are special as husbands and fathers. Wives, be a source of constant encouragement to your husband. You can make him feel 9 feet tall by simply telling him how special he is to you and what a good job he is doing loving you and leading your home. Don’t take for granted the role God gives you as a wife to bring encouragement to your home!

Not only does he stand out, he refreshes her. That’s what fruit trees provide: refreshing fruit that is sweet. In other words, when he speaks his words aren’t bitter to her! He speaks in pleasant, gentle, loving tones.

- **Homework #1: Men, write your wife a note this week using words that will refresh her soul. Tell her how much you love and appreciate her and remind her of the exclusive love you promised her.**

4 Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.

The banquet hall would be better translated “house of wine.” This could be either a place of production or storage of wine, but she is essentially saying their relationship has reached the point of total intoxication- they are fully in love.

She says: “His banner over me is love.”

His banner isn’t lust. They aren’t infatuated with each other based on lustful desires; they are in love.

The Hebrew word for love in this verse is “ahava;” it’s a love of the will.

Ahava = Love of the will.

The first time this word shows up in the Bible is in Genesis in the story of Jacob and Rachel. Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, and worked for her Dad, Laban for 7 years in order to get her. The day after the wedding, Jacob woke up and realized Laban had tricked him and substituted Rachel’s older sister, Leah, to be his wife. Genesis 29:20 says Jacob worked another 7 years for Laban in order to marry Rachel, but they felt like mere days to him because of his love (ahava) for her. His will wasn’t broken because of the deception against him. He didn’t give up, because his willful love for Leah was so strong.

Solomon and the Shulammite woman are in a mutually exclusive relationship and she recognizes that he chooses to love her over anyone else that is out there available to him. In fact, she says he displays their love publicly, like a banner

flying for everyone to see! He doesn't promise her love privately and then act differently in public. He wants the world to know he is off the market. We don't fly banners when we fall in love; we have a different way of showing we are off the market. Our dear friend, Beyonce, would say if you like it than you better put a ring on it! The engagement ring is our banner, so to speak, showing that we are in an exclusive love relationship leading toward marriage.

Married love is exclusive love.

- When you said your vows at the alter on the day you were married, you may have said something like this: "Forsaking all others, I cling to you."
- Don't give your spouse a reason to ever think there is someone competing for your love.
- Something I appreciate about Heather is that she doesn't have that many guy friends on Facebook that she follows. If a guy we know sends her a friend request, she accepts it, but she doesn't seek out guys on Facebook. She has access to my Social Media and has permission to see who I'm friends with and has permission to tell me if she is uncomfortable with anyone on my friends list.
- To make sure I keep things exclusive in my marriage I have boundaries for when and how I spend time with other women.
 - In my life and ministry I don't meet privately with women outside my office. In fact, even in our offices within the last year we had windows installed in the doors so we could be private, but still be seen if we need to be with people of the opposite gender. I don't meet women one on one for coffee or have a woman ride in my car. If there is a time that dictates being private with another woman I make sure Heather knows who I am meeting, when, where and for how long. I usually also call an accountability partner to let them know and call them when I finish the meeting. My marriage is precious to me and I don't want anything to sneak in that might challenge the exclusive nature of my love for my wife. Some people may think that's old fashioned. In fact, it was big news a couple years ago that our Vice President has some of those same standards. I don't do this because I don't trust women, I simply follow these standards to show my wife I'm serious about not letting another woman into my life.

Now that exclusive love has been established and an engagement has occurred, Solomon's fiancé begins dreaming about future physical intimacy.

5 Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.

6 His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me.

The Shulammitte is expressing a growing desire for sexual intimacy as they are getting closer to marriage. It's right for her to feel this way! God gives us the gift of sexual attraction. You probably would not have married your spouse if you weren't sexually attracted to them! Hopefully, that's not what your relationship was built on entirely, but as you got closer to being married, you probably also grew in your desire to be sexually intimate. Here's how we know this is what she is feeling:

- Raisins and apples were seen as aphrodisiacs in this culture- they were even thought to help women get pregnant! In 1 Chronicles 15 King David brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem after it had been in the hands of the Philistines for years. He danced into town in his underwear as the ark came into the city. Then in chapter 16 the Bible says David gave every man and woman a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins. It was a joyous time- so he blessed everyone by sending them home to make love!
- The Shulammitte is at a place in her desire for Solomon that she is saying, "When can a girl get some raisins?"
- Her mind continues to play forward to their wedding night as she daydreams about future intimacy and she says, "His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me."
 - She can just imagine at this stage of their relationship being side by side with her husband and having him embrace her. She is dreaming of cuddling with her lover.
 - Guys get the bad wrap in our society as being sexually aggressive, and unfortunately, women are often portrayed as being sexually calloused. But the Shulammitte woman is a great example of a godly woman with a strong sexual desire who longs for and craves that sexual touch from her husband. She isn't afraid to initiate the sexual conversation.
- **Homework #2:** Married ladies, since the woman is driving this conversation and initiating sexual desire, this homework is for you. **Put some raisins and apple slices on a plate by your husband's side of the bed.** You'll figure out the rest together! And he will be excited that you initiated sexual intimacy.

Now, remember, she is daydreaming about the future and hoping for physical intimacy, but she also knows there is a time and place for that God-given gift to be opened. Listen to what she says next as she addresses other young women.

7 Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

She offers a warning to all those listening- there is a time and a place for physical intimacy: Marriage! Sex is great, she's longing for that season with Solomon! But sex is great in the context God designed it to be enjoyed most and best. At this stage of their relationship the feelings they are experiencing are right. As you move toward marriage it's only natural to desire the physical intimacy marriage creates.

Prior to marriage our feelings about sexual intimacy are right; the timing is wrong!

The warning here is to not awaken love until the appropriate time.

We are now coming to a new scene as we look at verses 8-17.

8 Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills.

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

Let me tell you what is NOT happening in this moment: he is not creeping on her! He's not a peeping Tom! She's speaking figuratively here and saying that Solomon is looking to the future of their relationship and inspecting her interior life.

- Remember, she has had some issues of self-confidence and feelings of being inadequate in her life.
- Solomon has taken note of these things, looked in on her and still felt good about continuing forward with the relationship. He knew these things would remain after they are married, but he loves her in spite of what she perceives as problems. She knows Solomon sees the crazy in her life and the mess in her life, both real and perceived, but she tells us what he said to her next:

10 My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.

11 See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.

12 Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

I have to tell you that as I read these verses this week in the middle of one of the most rain filled winters I can remember, I was thinking this needs to be what all of us are praying! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone! It's been a mild winter in East Tennessee and all the rain mixed with mild temperatures has led to some flowers and trees budding early! I'm afraid we are going to get a late snow

storm or winter freeze and kill everything! But Solomon isn't having a conversation with her about the weather! This isn't small talk.

He tells her that the crazy season of her life, filled with winter and rain, is over and the spring of her life has come! He reassures her again that she is the only one for him and invites her to come with him for the rest of her life. This is essentially Solomon's proposal as she remembers it.

Then we see the proposal from his perspective:

14 My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

He tells her she doesn't have to hide from him. He sees her and accepts her just as she is.

We aren't sure exactly who says these next words, they are attributed to Solomon, but we can't know for sure. But they are powerful words:

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

If it is Solomon who says this, he is asking for help from a 3rd party: "Catch for us..." There will always come times in your marriage that you need the help of someone outside your marriage to deal with something within your marriage. Lions and bears were big problems for a shepherd who was guarding livestock. But for a vineyard owner the problems were smaller- foxes! They would dig around in the soil and keep the vines from getting nutrients; they would also eat the grapes before they fully ripened, ruining the health of the vines.

What are some things that could be considered little foxes in our relationships?

- selfishness; distrust; broken promises; unforgiving attitudes; isolation; insecurity; fear of rejection, feelings of not being valued, busyness/ mismatched schedules, etc...
- The opposite qualities listed in 1 Corinthians 13
- You may have big obvious problems to deal with in your dating relationship or your marriage, but sometimes the most destructive problems are the small ones that seem harmless, yet eat away at your relationship.
- **Homework #3: Have a time you agree to sit down and talk about the "little foxes" in your relationship.**
 - Don't be judgmental or defensive toward one another, just listen, pray for God's guidance and then do what is necessary to create space between you and whatever person or thing (technology) may be causing the issue.

She

16 My beloved is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies.

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

Now that the engagement has taken place the Shulammite makes a declaration of mutual belonging: He's mine and I'm his!

In Chapter 5 she will reference Solomon's lips like lilies, so she may be dreaming of him covering her with kisses.

Then finally I think this is what is happening in verse 17: He is leaving to go prepare their home for the wedding and she encourages him to hurry, to overcome the space that divides them (rugged hills) and to turn back and come get her.

Customarily the husband would go prepare a home (usually a room on his parent's house) for the couple to live in. When it was finished he would return to get the bride. She would not know when the day of his return was coming, so she waited daily in anticipation of his return and was preparing herself for the wedding.

This is where we, as Christians, turn our attention toward Jesus, our Bridegroom and the lover of our souls. Jesus died for our sins and then rose from the dead, then He ascended back to Heaven with the promise that He was going to prepare a place for us so that where He is we can one day be. We don't know when Jesus will return, so we live daily in the anticipation of His coming and we need to be prepared for Him to take us home to begin our eternal life with Him in the glory of His heaven. I hope you long for that moment of being united with Jesus in the same way a wife and husband long for the moment they stand at an altar together for marriage!

[Next week: The Royal Wedding!](#)

Life Group Discussion Questions

Ice Breaker: Gary Chapman wrote a book called *The Five Love Languages.*" In it he describes the five ways we primarily express and receive love:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

What is your primary love language? If you haven't read the book, can you guess your love language from the list?

Read Song of Solomon 2 together as a group. Have men read the “He” parts and women read the “She” parts.

1. Did anyone follow up on any of the homework assignments from this week or last week (and would you be willing to share)?
2. What stood out to you from this passage and/or the message on Sunday?
3. Joel said married love is exclusive love. What kinds of things do you already do or do you need to do in order to maintain exclusive love between you and your spouse (or future spouse if you are single)?
4. What are some things that may be considered “little foxes” (things you need to keep out of your marriage) in our relationships? As a group think critically about things that can cause problems in a relationship if left unaddressed?
5. In verse 4 the Hebrew word for love is “ahava,” the love of the will. How is that type of love useful in maintaining a strong marriage?
6. Was there a specific homework assignment or anything you felt God was saying to you or leading you to do this week in response to the chapter?

Prayer: Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 together. Pray for one another to display these characteristics in their life, dating relationships or marriage. You may either want to divide up the men and women to pray for one another in their like genders or let married couples find a place to pray these things over one another.