

God created humans to be relational, with the greatest relationship being between Him and His people.

Of all the places in the Bible, the *Song of Songs*, also called the *Song of Solomon*, expresses very real feelings of romantic love defined with words describing physical intimacy longed for by those engaged or betrothed to be married, and then fulfilled after the marriage ceremony has taken place. Heightened emotions are conveyed with vivid imagery by the writer of this *Song of Songs*.



Though some commentators stress a teaching from this Book that stresses exclusivity in the marriage relationship, that is somewhat problematic, given that King Solomon at the time of this writing had sixty queens and eighty concubines (**chapter 6:8**). We certainly find elsewhere in the Bible the teaching of exclusivity in marriage, and as Christians, we firmly believe in the monogamous relationship between one man and one woman for life. Solomon was the one and only husband for the Shulamite, and she was spoken of by him as his *dove*, his *undefiled* (**chapter 6:9**). Perhaps she was his only true love, and the other marriages were the result of political alliances or some other reasons. He surely spoke of her as truly standing out among the others. Eventually, Solomon would have 700 wives and 300 concubines. Numerous commentators lean heavily on interpreting this Book from an *allegorical* perspective. *R.A. Ironside* is one of those, whose commentary I will reference at times in this handout. *Matthew Henry* was yet another of many commentators who see this Book as largely allegorical — transcending from the physical/temporary to the spiritual/eternal realms, with their deep and rich meanings. God's love for Israel, and/or Christ's love for the Church, and the reciprocities involved—are thought to be the reason God included this Book as part of the Holy Scriptures. If you would like to view and consider the more literal interpretations, our *Lifeway Adults Commentary* elaborates heavily with such an approach.



Verse 2:15 — *Catch the foxes for us—the little foxes that ruin the vineyards—for our vineyards are in bloom.* The Shulamite's brothers had driven her out to be a vinedresser (**chapter 1:6**). Commentator *H.A. Ironside* takes a view of this verse and relates it to our relationship with the Lord. He says, "What are the little foxes that spoil the vine? I can tell you a good many. There are the little foxes of vanity, of pride, of envy, of evil speaking, of impurity (I think this though is a wolf instead of a little fox). Then there are the little foxes of carelessness, of neglect of the Bible, of neglect of prayer, of neglect of fellowship with the people of God. These are the things that spoil the vine, that hinder spiritual growth. Deal with them in the light of the cross of Christ; put them to death before they ruin your Christian experience,

do not give them any place." I have heard a similar interpretation of this verse from other scholars, preachers, and pastors during my Christian life.

Verse 2:16 — *My love is mine and I am his; he feeds among the lilies.* *H.A. Ironside* comments, "We need to be reminded of this again and again. The most intimate sweet, and unsullied spiritual relationship is brought before us here." He again is commenting on our intimate relationship with the Lord. In the natural/physical sense, the Shulamite was no doubt adoringly infatuated with King Solomon.

Verse 2:17 — *Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn around, my love, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the divided mountains.* The allegorical interpretation suggests that the time mentioned leading up to *Until the day breaks and the shadows flee* is the time the Bride of Christ awaits His return. There are shadows that befall us as believers in this life, and though we have much light in our lives, but still we see through a glass dimly (**1 Cor 13:12**). The *mountains of Bether* (*KJV*) spoken of may figuratively be interpreted as mountains of separation. **Bether** in the Hebrew actually means **separation**. *H.A. Ironside* poses, "He is the object of her soul, she abides upon the mountains of separation until he comes back." It remains an



area where each of us could stand to grow in our longing for our Lord's return, yet that should be balanced with contentment as we labor for Him in this world. Looking for and loving His appearing is encouraged in **2 Tim 4:8**, and those who do so are promised a *crown of righteousness*.

Verse 3:1 — *In my bed at night I sought the one I love; I sought him, but did not find him.* In the literal sense, the Shulamite was yearning for Solomon. It is believed by many commentators that she was dreaming, and did not physically go about looking for him. The dream bore out the reality that he *wasn't* there. Her human emotions under this circumstance were naturally heightened. Allegorically, as relating to our relationship with the Lord, there are times we do not always sense the nearness of God's Presence as at other times. We find in **Psalm 30:7**, David says, *Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.* A famous seventeenth century theologian named Samuel Rutherford poetically wrote, "But flowers need night's cool sweetness, the moonlight and the dew; so Christ from one who loved Him, His presence oft withdrew." R.A. Ironside comments, "For so the soul lose the sense of His presence, nevertheless He abideth faithful. He never forsakes His people though He seems to have withdrawn and He does not manifest Himself. This is indeed a test of faith and of true-hearted devotion."



Verses 3:2-3 — ²*I will arise now and go about the city, through the streets and the plazas. I will seek the one I love. I sought him, but did not find him.* ³*The guards who go about the city found me. I asked them, "Have you seen the one I love?"* It is believed by the writer of our *Lifeway Commentary* that this is still part of the Shulamite's dream. R.A. Ironside interprets it that way as well. He comments, "The more the passage is pondered, the more evident it seems to be that all this happened in a dream. But it tells of the deep exercises of her soul. She misses him; she cannot be happy without the sense of his presence. Her only joy is found in abiding in his love. She finds him when she seeks for him with all her heart." In an allegorical sense, that is reminiscent of **Jeremiah 29:13** which says, *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*



Verse 3:4 — *I had just passed them when I found the one I love. I held on to him and would not let him go until I brought him to my mother's house—to the chamber of the one who conceived me.* Within the context of her dream, the soon to be bride's dangerous search was successful. R.A. Ironside in his commentary says, "Leaving them, she has scarcely gone from their sight ere she comes upon the object of her search. In an ecstasy of rapture she lays hold of him, and clinging to him as to one who might again vanish away, she brings him into her own home where she first saw the light of day." The *Song of Solomon* is known as one of the poetic Books of the Bible. It is not clear where the Shulamite's dream leaves off, and reality begins.

Verse 3:5 — *Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and the wild does of the field, do not stir up or waken love until the appropriate time.* Our quarterly points out that the Shulamite's address to the young women of Jerusalem could also be applicable to the young men as well. It is believed that counsel is being given to the unmarried not to become sexually active until they are married—hence, the *appropriate time*. Her use of the terms *gazelles* and *wild does* conjures up images of love and intimacy. The author or our quarterly aptly states that "The human drive for physical intimacy is strong. Part of what distinguishes human beings from all other created life, however, is the God-given capacity to keep our physical desires under control. As believers, this capacity has been restored to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit enables us to listen and obey the safeguards within His Word."



I CHOOSE TO
WAIT
BECAUSE THIS IS GOD'S WILL.
1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

Jude 1:24

That being said, we are admonished to seek a life of putting God first and having no other gods in our lives. Satan may tempt us to partake of things and have associations with things, or even certain people we know shouldn't be in our lives. Let us keep Jesus as number one in our lives and abstain from that which would dishonor Him. The indescribable bliss we will experience with Him for eternity will be more than worth the wait. Yes, and thank God that He is always with us through the indwelling and empowering Holy Spirit!