

Relational Investment

Song of Songs 5: 6 - 16

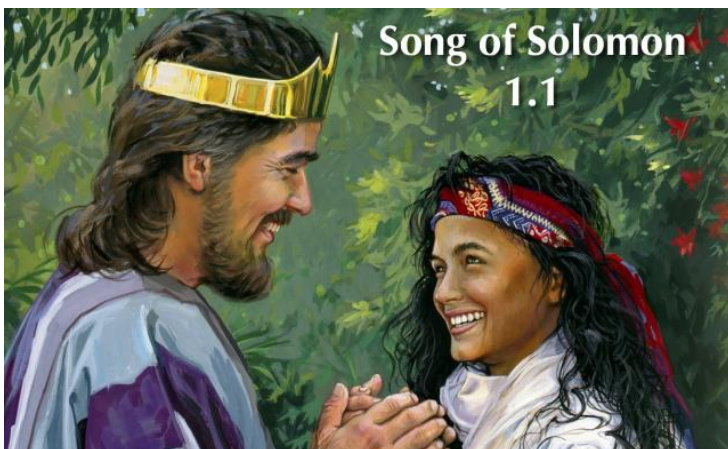
As we come to the last lesson in the study of Proverbs and Song of Songs, we are nearing the end of Solomon's song. We have studied God's plan for the marriage relationship through the romantic love poem written by Solomon to the love of his life. By all accounts, this book of the Holy Bible is very intimate in its topic and language. The woman's background as a Shulamite includes working her family's vineyard where her skin was reportedly bronzed by the sun. Both the bride and the groom offer very personal and sensual descriptions of their adoration for each other's physical characteristics. Looking back in our study reminds us that God's plan for marriage includes saving ourselves for marriage and being fully committed to our spouse. The exclusive relationship between man and woman are clearly depicted in this scripture and lesson.

Using the visual imagery of a dream, the young bride longs for intimacy with her beloved and she sets out to search for him but the city watchmen protect her from acting on her desires prematurely. We also see that she shows her total commitment to the relationship by her willingness to give her family's vineyard to Solomon. As a demonstration of sound counsel to the bride and groom, the song introduces the sly fox as a warning to the couple to always invest in building their relationship through mutual trust. The fox character has the potential to ruin the relationship and trust. This serves as a reminder to keep focus on each other and maintain commitment to each other; when we become distracted or complacent, we risk our gaze being taken by someone else or something else.

While the name of God is not stated anywhere in the Song of Songs, as the church is considered the bride of Christ, I have to wonder if there is also a message regarding the relationship that we are to have as the body of the church with our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly, we must remain committed to continually working on our relationship so that we do not lose focus or stray off the path that is laid out for us. Investing in our walk with the Lord and our work within the body of the church are important aspects when we consider this is a relationship that can become complacent if not fostered.

Consider what you invest in; your time, your money, and your attention? Do your investments focus on your relationship with your spouse, your children/family, God, the church?

As our scripture lesson opens, the bride and groom are now married. They demonstrate their devotion to each other by learning to live as one. This is a fulfillment of the scriptural plan for marriage presented by God in Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. All three state "therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."



Becoming "one flesh" holds significant meaning as it entails giving themselves fully to each other physically and emotionally. The scripture points to how much they enjoy each other and their attraction to each other. **Think about how challenges within a relationship can develop due to physical distance but also through emotional distance.** Absence does not make the heart grow fonder forever.

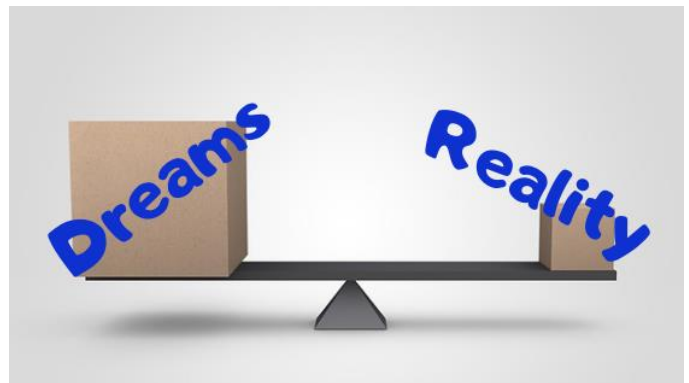
The Cry for Companionship

Song of Songs 5: 6 - 8

The book is called the Song of Songs, which carries with it an automatic understanding that there is something special about this message. Repeating the word in the title informs us of the significance of the message just as the Holy of Holies is understood as the place Most High within the temple. Throughout the Holy Bible, emphasis is made on our relationship with God: the nature of God is presented in many ways. The Song of Songs demonstrates the personal nature of the relationship of Christ to the church, His bride.

The second dream sequence is after the wedding. In this dream, as described by the bride, she hears her beloved at the door but delays responding to his knock. No clear reason for her delay is stated but she is slow to respond; maybe strain in the relationship, perhaps complacency due to her perceived comfort in bed, or maybe she has lost focus on her beloved. When she does arise and go to the door, he has gone. When she realizes that her beloved has departed, she begins an intense search through the city but, unlike her previous dream where the watchmen protected her, in this dream the watchmen abuse and humiliate her. Think about when you have experienced disturbing dreams that present traumatic events or circumstances that you find disquieting. Do you think about these dreamed events? Do they keep you awake to ponder?

When considering the allegory of Christ and His church, we note that the bridegroom came to the door but was barred from entering. Whether the description is of a relationship where the spark of love has dimmed or a church that has lost focus on Christ, we can note that she soon realized her mistake. But her delay resulted in a situation that placed her in great personal danger.



Remember and Celebrate

Song of Songs 5: 9 - 16

Can you think of a time when you most appreciated something after it was gone? When we lose or waste something that we finally realize was precious, it can be heartbreaking. The village women, in asking the bride what made her man so special, made her put to thought the characteristics that made her husband the right one for her. This exercise in describing him helped her to return focus to her love and, in doing so, realize where he was all along. He was never truly gone. In relation to Christ and His church, it's important to recognize that Christ does not change or drift away from us. We drift from him when we lose focus.

Marriage is a commitment to each other in the eyes of God. But it is also a commitment to cultivate our relationship with God through marriage. Christ's love for us is demonstrated in His willingness to die for us. If our love for each other is only based on physical attraction, what do we do when beauty fades? By cultivating the emotional and spiritual relationship we have with our chosen mate, we insure that our relationship withstands the tests of time. By investing in each other, we secure our investment for the future. This same analogy is true in investing in our relationship with Christ, fulfilled through our church. We can insure that we don't become complacent, that we can weather the storms (such as COVID19), and that we can be there for each other no matter what the future holds.