

A LOVE STORY

Of our famous stories of the Bible, we would be remiss if we left out the love story from the Song of Solomon. An entire book of the Bible is dedicated to the love between one man and one woman! We can look at it historically, chronicling the most important love in the life of King Solomon and tell of its significance in the Kingdom of Israel. We may also look at it prophetically, looking into the future showing the love between Christ and His bride with the culmination of the church age with the rapture. We may also look at devotionally, showing the nuances, i.e., the ups and the downs, the frustrations and the ecstasies of our relationship to our risen Lord until His return. Today, on what has been called Valentine's Day, I want to look at it practically. Let us see the insights that lie within the pages of divine inspiration that will help us in our love to the people whom God has placed or shall place into our lives within the bonds of holy matrimony.

There are different interpretations to this great love story. The interpretation I most appreciate is that Solomon is working as a field hand, learning the value of hard work before he is exalted to the throne of Israel. From an accompanying field he falls deeply and madly in love with a young maiden. In their courtship centering around farming and shepherding, a genuine romance is begun that blossoms in the love of a lifetime. On a particular day he explains to her that he must go away for awhile, but one day he'll return to her again. To her surprise, some time after the young shepherd had gone, an entourage from the palace comes by her field explaining that plans are being made to bring her into marriage with the king. She insists that one day her true love will come and her heart belongs to him. And I'll not give you the ending of our story until the end of our message. In the interim, allow me to share some truths of love.

1. Love is not self-centered.

Song of Solomon 1:5,6. Here we see the young lady working hard for what appears to be her family who is living just below the comfort zone, which is why the young lady is working manual labor. But we do not hear her complaining about her job. She is caught up in helping to provide a living for her family. She is no prima donna.

Any marriage where a spouse is self-centered is already in trouble. When both the husband and the wife are self-centered, they are in double-trouble. I Corinthians 13:4 and 5 says, "Charity (God's agape love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself (is not on parade), is not puffed up,

doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own (is not selfish), is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.”

2. Love begins with the real you.

Song of Solomon 1:7; 3:3; and 4:9. We see the phrase “whom my soul loveth” which gives us insight that love is so much more than what we see, feel, hear or touch; it begins in the soul. The starting point is in the deep inside of you. “Never tell a child,” said George MacDonald, “you have a soul. Teach him, you are a soul; you have a body.” Song of Solomon 4:9 says, “Thou hast ravished my heart” The word for “ravished” comes to us from the Hebrew word “shagah,” which means to be enraptured or figuratively to reel under the influence of intoxication. This harmonizes with Song of Solomon 2:5, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of (with) love.” Recently I came across a true beautiful story. A grandmother had lost her keys and her little grandson was helping her look for them. After the relief of having found them, the little grandson approached his grandmother and said, “Grandma, whatever you do, don’t lose your heart. Because I am in there!” Is there any wonder that we often use the phrase toward someone we love, “I love you with all my heart and soul.” Love is an “inside job.”

3. Love accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative.

Song of Sol. 2:2-4, 5; 4:1 ,2, 7. We find these phrases within these verses: “As the lily among thorns...” (Song of Solomon 2:2), and ‘Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song of Solomon 4:7). These are not the words of someone looking for the bad in their beloved; they see the good and advertise it! I love the expression found in Song of Solomon 2:4: “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” This reminds us of the compassionate truth of Prov. 10:12: “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.” Proverbs 17:9a, says, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love....”

I am always touched by a story given by a plastic surgeon that tells of a young lady who became deformed after the tumor threatening her life was removed from her cheek. It caused some serious facial disfigurement. When the young lady, with tears, said to her doctor, “Is this the way I’ll look for the rest of my life? Is this the way my husband must see me?” The husband quickly spoke up, “I like it, Doc; I think it looks kind of cute!” Then the doctor said he was on sacred ground as he saw the young man twist his lips to touch her deformed mouth, to show her their kiss still works. Love looks beyond the physical, eliminates the negative and accentuates the positive.

4. Love can wait.

Song of Solomon 2:8, 9; 3:1-5; 4:6, 12-15; 8:4. From these verses we see clearly that these young lovers are longing to become married, yet there is the insisting to wait for the right timing. True love can wait! Lust does not wait. Love gives. Lust takes.

It should also be noted that within marriages, couples often get in trouble because they cannot wait for their finances to improve so they can comfortably afford certain things, so they get head-over-hills in debt. Then often disagreements come from financial struggles. Impatience after marriage can bring trouble even as impatience before marriage.

5. Love sees hope in the future.

Song of Solomon 2:10-15. One reason the young couple can wait so patiently is because in their hearts they know the wait will be worth the reward. Their future is likened to a beautiful springtime.

6. Love is satisfied with the simple pleasure of each other's company.

Song of Solomon 2:14,15. Just seeing each other and hearing one another's voice is satisfying. And the expression that has even worked its way into the secular world, "the little foxes that spoil the vine" comes from Song of Solomon 2:15. In essence, the couple is saying they will let nothing, even the so-called little things stand in the way of their fellowship.

7. Love is exclusive.

Song of Solomon 2:16; 5:9, 16; 6:3, 8, 9; 7:10. We hear the same similar refrain repeated, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Great marriages are exclusive marriages. No one compares to your beloved. No one competes with your beloved. No one comes between you and your beloved.

8. Love marries with parental blessing.

Song of Solomon 3:1. We see Solomon's mother approving his marriage by giving him a crown of blessing on his wedding day. Proverbs 17:6, "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."

9. Love is enduring.

Song of Solomon 8:6, 7. These are two of the most beautifully poetic verses found in the Bible. And they are not only beautiful because of how they are said, but beautiful especially because of what they say. These verses are saying love is

stronger than life itself. It is a fire that cannot be put out. Release the Niagara Falls on it and true love will not be washed away. If you took all your money and hocked everything you own, including your house and added your worth of those things, you still have not matched the value of God's true agape love that He, in His mercy, gives to a man and a woman.

Conclusion:

And they lived happily ever after!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, circular initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.