

LIVING IN THE EMBRACE OF GOD'S MARITAL LOVE

TEXT: Song of Solomon 2:4-6; 8:3

This beautiful love story between a man and a woman portrayed in this portion of inspired poetry is mysterious, yet instructive. Prophetically, it tells the great love of our Lord and Savior, as our Bridegroom loves His bride, the Church. Devotionally, there are phrases that, when meditated upon, trigger a deeper love and commitment to our Lord. Practically, as we study closer, we are given insights on the love between a husband and wife. As we read these words, we do understand that the way we see each other and the way we complement one another has changed considerably. For instance, notice these verses: Song of Solomon 1:9; 4:1, 4: 6:6 and 7:2. Looking beyond our cultural differences, let us observe some truths expressed by wise Solomon through the Holy Spirit that are as relevant today as they were when scribed well over 2900 years ago. How can a husband and wife enhance their love? Before we go further, it needs to be said that our love is not true enough, godly enough, long-lasting enough. We need God's love. And that is the love expressed in this book of eight chapters. Let us therefore:

1. EXERCISE THE POWER OF MEMORY.

Song of Solomon 1:4; 4:10

I still recall those touching words Mrs. Buffington said when encouraged by her friends to turn her husband over to the professionals for all his care during those remaining years of his Alzheimer's. She was told, "He doesn't remember you." She replied, "Yes, but I remember him." Let us not let precious memories atrophy. Reminiscing will keep your marriage fresh. This is a good segue to our next point.

2. NEVER FORGET WHERE AND HOW YOUR LOVE BEGAN.

Song of Solomon 1:7; 2:5; 3:3; 4:9

If ever your spouse has become difficult and unattractive, remember the attraction inculcated in the early days of your courtship. Remember how your love went beyond the physical and your souls began to become intertwined as the Holy Spirit activated your spirits together.

3. SPEAK OF THE VALUE OF YOUR BELOVED.

Song of Solomon 1:5, 6; 2:2; 4:1,7; 5:2, 5:10-16; 6:4, 9; 7:6;

Song of Solomon 8:10b says, "...then was I in his eyes as one that found favor." It matters little what others may think of us, but it makes a world of difference how we are esteemed by the one person to whom we are married. We must work on speaking words that edify, not words that criticize. Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Destruction is easier and faster than construction. Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."

4. TRUE LOVE IS NURTURED LIKE THE RISING OF THE SUN, NOT THE FLASHING OF A METEOR.

Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; I Corinthians 7:1-5

We live in an "I've got to have it now" era. Good things come to those who patiently wait. Farmers know this is true. Mark 4:28: "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

5. THERE IS A SWEET VARIETY IN GOD'S MARITAL LOVE.

Song of Solomon 7:13; 4:12-16

Great love will enjoy the reminisces of yesterday as well as the new adventures of today. Variety is the spice of life. And it is never better expressed than in marriage.

6. ALLOW THE TESTIMONY OF YOUR LOVE TO IMPACT THE WORLD AROUND YOU.

Song of Solomon 5:9; Song of Solomon 6:1

When others see the love God has given you, they will desire the same for themselves and their spouse. Also, the godly love can be so attractive to the unconverted, that you become a catalyst for unbelievers to convert to Christ.

7. THERE IS A REST WITHIN A GODLY MARRIAGE.

Song of Solomon 7:10; Zephaniah 3:17

There is security in a godly marriage. Proverbs 31:10: "Who can find a virtuous woman?
for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,
so that he shall have no need of spoil." Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

8. THE MARITAL LOVE THAT GOD GIVES IS AN INDISSOLUBLE COVENANT.

Song of Solomon 8:6,7; Malachi 2: 14-16

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. There is never a marriage that cannot be healed. Song of Solomon 2: 11-13. Jeremiah 8:22: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Luke 5:31: "And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." Matthew 17:16: "And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him." Matthew 17:17a, c: "Then Jesus answered and said...bring him hither to Me."

Hosea was married to an unfaithful wife, but he never gave up on her, and God healed their marriage. Hosea 2:14-20. Hosea 2:15b: "And I will give her...the valley of Achor for a door of hope...." Achor comes to us from the Hebrew word *trouble or disturbance*; Achor was the valley of trouble where Achan and his family were stoned. God can heal a troubled marriage and give resurrection and life to a family that is about to die.

9. KEEP CHRIST PREEMINENT.

Song of Solomon 2:1

Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

When we see the reference of Song of Solomon 2:1, we see such a portrait of Jesus. We would be remiss not to speak of the importance of our Lord as the Preeminent One in the magnificence of marriage. Song of Solomon 2:1 speaks of wildflowers. They are not on the high mountain or hard to get to places where only the athletic or agile can ascend, but they are on the plain and in the valley. On the plains of Sharon, the Rose of Sharon can be gathered by even a child. The same can be said of the Lily of the Valley, which even the lame may gather. Isaiah 33:23c: "...the lame take the prey." Charles Wesley touched on our weakness and accentuated Christ's power to over-compensate in his song *Come, O Thou Traveller Unknown*:

My strength is gone, my nature dies,
I sink beneath Thy weighty hand,
Faint to revive, and fall to rise;

I fall, and yet by faith I stand;
I stand and will not let Thee go
Till I Thy Name, Thy nature know.
Lame as I am, I take the prey,
Hell, earth, and sin, with ease o'ercome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
And as a bounding hart fly home,
Through all eternity to prove
Thy nature and Thy Name is Love.

Our Lord is accessible to all who will come to Him. God has not designed us as individuals, husbands and wives or whole families to overcome without Him. John 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

To live in the embrace of Christ is to live in the embrace of marital bliss. "And what, Lord, is my life, save that embrace wherein Thy delightful sweetness doth so lovingly enfold me?" So wrote Nicholas of Cusa over five hundred years ago.

-Pastor Pope-