

WOMEN'S SUMMER BOOST WEEK 5

1.5. The woman in Song of Solomon

The song of Solomon could be described as a wisdom musical, teaching us an important lesson.

There are two main ways to understand the story of Song of Solomon. The first is that a young girl falls in love with what she believes to be a shepherd. When her lover comes to pick her up for the marriage celebration, it turns out he was actually a king (King Solomon). Shepherd lover returning as King makes a strong theological point.

Another interpretation is that the shepherd and the king are 2 different people. In that case, the young woman only has eyes for the shepherd, and he only has eyes for her. However, she is very beautiful, and taken to the palace of king Solomon, who tries to buy her. She refuses, the bridal price is returned and she returns to her lover shepherd.

*Song of Solomon 8:12 But my own vineyard is mine to give;
the thousand shekels are for you, Solomon,
and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.*

Because there is no role division, it is not possible to decide with 100% certainty who says what in the poem. Some of it can be attributed to "her", some to "him" due to the context, but the original role division is lost to us. Different translations hint at different interpretations:

For example: Song of Solomon 1:4 from the NIV translation:

*Take me away with you—let us hurry!
Let the king bring me into his chambers.*

Now let's look at Song of Solomon 1:4 from the Darby translation:

Draw me, we will run after thee!—The king hath brought me into his chambers—We will be glad and rejoice in thee, We will remember thy love more than wine. They love thee uprightly.

The first translation indicates that she wants to be with the king in his chambers. The second translation paints a different picture, as if the girl is shocked and wants her lover to come take her away, remaining faithful to him. Confusing.

However, if the first is the correct interpretation, it makes for a very sad story. King Solomon already had a hundred wives at the time of this Shulamite woman.

Yes - but once he met her, he only had eyes for her, right? Unfortunately, no. We read that at the end of his life, he had a thousand wives (and concubines without number). So if he only had eyes for her, he got bored real quickly.

If the second scenario is the truth, we see a woman passionately and faithfully loving wholeheartedly. When presented with the riches of the palace, this girl remains loyal to the lover she gave her heart to, and can't be bought.

This woman is fictional, there is no other reason to include her in the Bible than for the lessons she teaches us. Primarily, these lessons are about sexual desire and love, and they set an example of how God sees it as "very good". Her extravagant, wholehearted, single focused love are what should inspire us, and the fact that she focuses her strength on doing things God's way.

But There is another layer to this, and that is that God wants to be loved this way by us. Not the sexual part. That is a specific guidance for godly couples (and a cure for those repressing their desires or wishing them away, and a bundle of wisdom on choosing the right partner and not looking at outward appearances). But He clearly describes how He wants to be loved.

When Jesus was asked what was the most important rule of the whole law, we read: *Mat 22:37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.*

In the much-ness of the Law, and the overwhelming amount of advice just coming out of the book of Proverbs, how do we express our love towards God? The Song of Solomon woman reminds us of the joy of loving extravagantly. The Bible calls this "the love we had at first". It is very precious to God, and He never wants us to lose it.

The letter to the church of Ephesus in revelations 2 describes a church that is in just about every way doing great:

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel^[a] of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

This sounds like a devoted Church, loyal to God. There is little wrong that can be said about it, right? Wrong. God loves first love. God loves when we love with passion. And so we read as the letter continues:

⁴Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

That is how much it matters to God!

Consider the difference: imagine trying this part on love below from a position of dry self-discipline only.

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it

keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Now for just a minute, re-read the part and imagine trying this from a position of (re)new(ed) first love for God. It's easy to say which one will bear lasting fruit!

To narrow it down to two awesome choices of the Shulamite:

She is **not overly preoccupied** with the work in the vineyard (=obsessive serving in the Church??? Obsessive anything really),
It says that she had to work really hard in the vineyard. It is tough work, and it made her skin very dark, leaving her exposed to harsh elements. However, working hard never stopped her from finding passionate joy and love. She does not “disappear” in the work. **Her main focus is her lover**, and getting God's seal of approval in marriage.

Song of Solomon 8:8 We have a little sister,
and her breasts are not yet grown.
What shall we do for our sister
on the day she is spoken for?
⁹ If she is a wall,
we will build towers of silver on her.
If she is a door,
we will enclose her with panels of cedar.

She

¹⁰ I am a wall,
and my breasts are like towers.
Thus I have become in his eyes
like one bringing contentment.
¹¹ Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon;
he let out his vineyard to tenants.
Each was to bring for its fruit
a thousand shekels of silver.
¹² But my own vineyard is mine to give;
the thousand shekels are for you, Solomon,
and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.

She is also not distracted by the comforts and splendor of the palace (obsessive performance based Church/self??? Or just anything outward appearance focused or fake, really; even our social media can be that). She remains **unimpressed, unwavering and** though a bit shocked initially, she remains **unintimidated**. These shiny things disappear to the background. We, too, are free to focus on Jesus only.

Back to our passage from 1 Corinthians 13 on love: Paul says that no matter how “shiny” all the things are that he could do, they would be utterly ridiculous and meaningless without love.

1 Corinthians 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Word of encouragement:

What is the greatest secret this young woman has to be so passionate?

“Come away with me”!

This phrase sounds throughout the song, and it is our secret today as well. He still says: “Come away with Me”. Regular encounters with her lover, leave her wanting more. They confirm to her heart that this is indeed the man to fully let down her guard with; to trust completely. Regularly hearing the voice of our Shepherd, will do the same.

Stand in awe of the beauty of your Shepherd. Grab His hand, sit at His feet, and allow His goodness to rekindle your fire of your first love. Praise Him with words straight from your heart. Remember His kindness towards you from the early days. Sing it out to Him. Do something crazy. Love big. Let everyone know there is no one like the true Shepherd! Taste of His love for you. And even when the watchmen come and beat us, it will not be able to stop us from the one thing we want: to find Him when we seek Him with our whole hearts and to come away with Him!

Prayer pause

What do you want to retain from this passage on the woman in Song of Solomon?

What caught your attention to chew on more? Take time to do so.

Pray about what spoke to you.