

Church Planting Institute
Worship The King



Church Planting Institute

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Worship expressions in the Song of Solomon

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True Worshippers

John 4:21

21 Jesus replied, "The time is coming, ma'am, when we will no longer be concerned about whether to worship the Father here or in Jerusalem. For it's not where we worship that counts, but how we worship—is our worship spiritual and real? Do we have the Holy Spirit's help? For God is Spirit, and we must have his help to worship as we should. The Father wants this kind of worship from us.

TLB

The term "worship" means different things to different people. There are numerous concepts as to what the word truly implies. The dictionary helps us somewhat with suggestions such as "adoration, love, reverence, respect, devotion, adulation, veneration" etc.

However, different religions have various interpretations as to how such worship should be rendered. Even within Christendom there are many different concepts and practices of worship. Which is the TRUE worship and how should it be expressed and practiced? Only the Bible can tell us what true worship is and how it should be expressed. The Song of Solomon is really about devotion and worship expressed through a loving relationship. Through its pages we can deduce many helpful reminders of the true nature of worship. In this ancient book, adoration (worship) is portrayed as the development of a loving relationship, through verbal exchanges and quality time spent in each other's presence.

The Song of Solomon, also known as the Song of Songs, or "the most superlative of songs" is both a charming love song, and a powerful challenge to a new dimension of worship. The basic theme is that of a young woman of humble origins, who falls deeply in love with a shepherd only to discover that he is really the king. A major part of the narrative concerns the problems she has adjusting to the fact that her shepherd lover is actually the powerful king Solomon. She struggles with the bewildering dichotomy of how the man she loves can be both a shepherd and a King. Through their frequent meetings she comes to know him better and to realize that lowly as she feels, he is genuinely in love with her. He constantly encourages her to see herself as he sees her and through this process she is gradually able to realize a compatibility with her royal bridegroom.

When first she met him he appeared to be a humble but attractive and charming shepherd. As a lowly vine dresser, she felt comfortable in the presence of such a shepherd. She gives her heart to him completely only to discover through the process of their developing relationship, that he is in fact a powerful monarch. Initially she is startled and dismayed. She suddenly feels inferior and utterly unworthy of the one who has become the love of her life. She feels embarrassed beneath his gaze because her appearance is both rustic and somewhat neglected. Compared with the pallid daughters of Jerusalem, she feels like a country bumpkin, darkened by her constant exposure to the sun.

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Ultimately, through their mutual communications she is able to relate to him perfectly. Though he is a mighty king and she a former commoner, they enjoy a glorious relationship of mutual appreciation.

Beneath the surface of this charming story lies another even more remarkable romance. The greatest love story ever heard, the remarkable story of God's love for fallen humanity. The story of how the God of eternity entered the scene of time. The great creator focused His love upon His humble creation. The extraordinary fact is that Almighty God is passionately in love with the vulnerable creature he fashioned and called mankind. So deeply in love that he assumes the guise of a slave in order to woo and win his earthly bride. He accomplished this through the incarnation when the eternal God poured Himself into the humanity of Jesus. This romance is soon to be consummated at the marriage supper of the Lamb when the heavenly Groom will be joined in marriage to redeemed mankind, gloriously adorned as a bride, prepared for her bridegroom.

Rev 21:2

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (KJV)

Rev 19:7-8

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (KJV)

One of the great purposes that God is pursuing today is His endeavor to prepare the Bride of Christ for her heavenly Bridegroom. He is earnestly seeking to prepare the Church of Jesus Christ to assume her prophetic role by the side of her Kingly groom. The groom, alias the Lamb of God, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, is soon to be publicly crowned as Lord over all lords and King over all kings.

Rev 11:15

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (KJV)

There are so many Christians who have fallen in love with a Savior Shepherd without fully realizing that he is also the mighty King of the universe. The vision they hold of Him is that of the lowly carpenter from Nazareth who was crucified in Jerusalem. They know that he also rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven. Unfortunately they have little perception of what subsequently happened to Him and of the glorification that has transformed Him from a suffering Savior to the glorious King of the universe. As a result, they are grossly under prepared for His resplendent return and His earthly coronation on the throne of David in Jerusalem. They are also unprepared for their future role as His earthly consort.

The purpose of this article is to trace the love story from its commencement to the climax. We will follow the steps of the Shulamite from obscurity to the throne and in

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doing so we will also understand in a deeper way our developing relationship with Jesus. I trust we will learn something more about praise and worship which is the language of love. May the Holy Spirit anoint the eyes of our understanding that we might see Christ as never before and worship Him in a manner that His glory deserves. May our eyes behold Him in all His splendor, adorned with the glory with which the Father has reinvested Him.

Let me conclude these introductory remarks by quoting a verse from an old and glorious hymn.

O Worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing His power and His love
Our gracious defender, the Ancient of days
Pavillioned in splendor and girded with praise.

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An Introduction To The Song Of Solomon

Everyone enjoys a love song. Some of the most popular and enduring songs ever written have been on this wonderful theme. They have remained popular throughout the ages because people have an in-built capacity for love in all its myriad forms. The Bible is not usually the place that most people look for a great love song, yet within its pages is the greatest love story ever told. The story of God's redeeming love for mankind. And within the book announcing that love, the Song of Solomon, possibly the greatest love song ever composed. A song that joyfully celebrates marriage and human sexuality, God's gift to His creation, which properly used can add incredible enrichment and creativeness to life's experience.

The Song of Solomon is one of the shortest books in the Bible, and one of the most controversial, yet amongst the most sublime. Its pages has been a ground for discussion and dispute amongst Bible scholars for centuries. Many have even argued the legitimacy of its place in the canon of scripture. Others have regarded it as one of loveliest and most insightful books in the Bible. The two major themes of the book are love and adoration. Because the two principal characters love each other passionately and devotedly, they continually adore each other, for praise is the language of love! The exotic language and dialogue used by the two major characters has been the primary reason for dispute. Its critics have argued about the appropriateness of including sensual, romantic conversation in the Holy Bible. The manner in which it should be interpreted has also been a subject of much dispute.

Our purpose in this brief article is to view the song as a pattern for progressive worship, individually and corporately. We want to discover and investigate some of the deeper implications of the worship that God desires from us. I believe that in order to do that we must first understand what God implies in respect of intimacy, love and devotion. When He created mankind, He placed within them His patterns of response. He endued them with the DNA of mutual love and adoration. He fashioned man and woman with inherent instincts of loving response to each other, but those instincts were also to be towards God and His passionate love for them. He programmed mankind for human love and intimacy in such a way that they would also understand God's deeper desires and expectations of worship. Worship is not a performance. Worship is the expression of love. It is a Divinely implanted response to God's eternal, unfathomable love. It is the careful, intimate development of a mutual love relationship. Let's begin by looking at some of the basic facts about this delightful book.

TITLE

The words "Song of Songs" (Heb: Shir Ha Shirim) are a translation of the Hebrew superlative that could be rendered "most excellent of songs." It has also been called "The Song of Songs concerning Solomon." Of the 1,005 songs that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32), this one was regarded as the very finest.

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SETTING

The book describes the dialogue between a king, his wife, and her friends in the king's court. The man and woman described their love for each other, while the friends praised the woman's beauty and expressed their glowing admiration of the king.

AUTHOR

The book itself names Solomon as the chief figure throughout (1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12) and he is generally considered to be the writer. The book's wisdom and its description of the unity and prosperity of the kingdom, fit in well with Solomon's reign and his own abilities as an author. Solomonic authorship places the date during his reign (970-930 B.C.). It may have gone through a final editing process around the time of Judah's exile (around 587 BC)

AIM

As in many of the psalms, the reader of the Song of Solomon is not directly addressed. He is simply told what two lovers (Solomon and his bride) said and is thus drawn into their relationship. But what kind of application of this relationship are readers to make to their own lives? The purpose of the book was manifold.

1. As A Vivid Unfolding Of Solomon's Love For His Bride

The book has obvious authentic historic value as an intimate insight into the life of Solomon and the bride he favored above all.

2. As A Celebration Of God's Gift Of Humanness And Sexuality To Be Experienced And Enjoyed Within Marriage

Through its sublime poetry, God affirms the goodness of married, physical love. It portrays the wonders of a developing and maturing marriage relationship.

3. As A Figurative Revelation Of God's Love For His Covenant People, Israel, The Wife Of The LORD.

(Isa 54:5,6; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:8-14; 20-21; 32, 38; Hosea 2 16, 18-20)

4. As An Allegory Of Christ's Love For His Heavenly Bride, The Church.

(2 Cor 11:1-2. Eph 5:25-32)

It portrays the passionate love response of His Bride.

It guides us along a pathway of worship, into intimacy with God.

5. As A Glorious Insight Into Worship As God Desires It

The Shulamite, (Shepherdess) as a type of the Church, affords intimate insights into the kind of praise and worship that God earnestly desires. It is a handbook for worshippers.

Its structure

1. A Poem

The grammatical structure justifies its place as a unique and beautiful poem. A love poem in which the two main characters introduce us to the intimacy of their relationship.

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A certain amount of poetic license is clearly evident, together with some metabolic embellishment to express the inexpressible qualities and dimensions of their love.

2. A Song, Or Anthem To Love

The title, “*Shir Ha Shirim*”, (Song of Songs) clearly indicates its value as a song. A particular type of song, i.e. a love song to be sung joyfully to celebrate God’s gift of humanness and sexuality. It seems particularly appropriate as a wedding song. Middle Eastern wedding usually featured such songs.

Most recent scholarship supports the idea that the Song is a love poem or a collection of love poems written to illustrate the rich wonders of human love. It celebrates the Creator’s gift of physical love within the unselfish bounds of marriage commitment, thus freeing Christians of a psychological asceticism that has held them in its grip for centuries. At times, the Song describes physical love in bold and explicit language, a reason why so many looked for more spiritual interpretations. But such “spiritual” interpretations seem to miss the point intended by the book: that physical love is one of God’s many gifts to the human race and should be celebrated as such within the proper bounds.

3. A Poetic Drama

The book also constitutes a drama that unfolds in several scenes. In fact, all three concepts are undoubtedly true. It is a poetic song that concerns a love drama.

The three main parties with speaking parts in this poetic love drama are:

1. The Shepherd, King Solomon;

Solomon was in casual dress when he visited his northern property, part of which was the vineyard of the Shulamite (6:13). That she first saw Solomon in shepherd’s attire accounts for the shepherdly descriptions of him throughout the song.

Solomon visits a vineyard in Ephraim, just outside Shunnam, about fifty miles north of Jerusalem. The vineyard was leased by a family consisting of a mother, two sons and two daughters.

2. The Bride, A Young Woman Referred To As "The Shulamite" 6:13;

The vineyards that Solomon visited was evidently one of his many possessions. It was leased and tended by a family that included a (widowed?) mother, two older sons and two daughters. The oldest of the girls was the Shulamite shepherdess. There was obviously considerable friction between she and the brothers who were evidently her step brothers.

Her tasks were numerous :-

- a. She kept her flock. (1:8)
- b. She tended her step brothers vineyards. (1:6)
- c. She trapped destructive foxes. (2:15)

Her angry step brothers compelled her to work so hard caring for their vineyards, that she was forced to neglect her own welfare, appearance and vineyard.

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Song 1:6

6 *Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard (garden; personal appearance and beauty) I have not kept.*

Subsequently Solomon likens her charms, beauty, and appearance, to a walled, watered, and well kept garden. (The analogy of a garden is used of the Shulamite several times. S.S. 1:6; 4:11-16; 5:1; 7:6-9.)

She bewails the fact that her heavy work schedule, leaves her no time to care for her own personal appearance. The shepherd assures her that though her skin is darkened by the sun, she is yet exceptionally beautiful.

3. The Bride's maids, -"daughters of Jerusalem" 2:7.

Young women from Jerusalem. Followers and companions of the bride.

It Is A Song Of Love

In which the sexual aspect is implicit, legitimate, and essential to the total relationship.

Dr. C.I. Scofield, a renowned and respected Evangelical scholar and Bible commentator, makes some interesting remarks in his preface to the Song of Solomon.

“Nowhere in Scripture does the unspiritual mind tread upon ground so mysterious and incomprehensible as in this book, whereas saintly men and women throughout the ages have found it a source of pure and exquisite delight. That the love of the divine Bridegroom, symbolized here by Solomon's love for the Shulamite maiden, should follow the analogy of the marriage relationship seems evil only to minds that are so ascetic that marital desire itself appears to them to be unholy. The book is the expression of pure martial love as ordained by God in creation, and the vindication of that love against both plainness and lust, - the two profanations of the holiness of marriage.”

The context is married love. (Don't awaken love before marriage. S.S. 2:7)

- A Covenant relationship.
- A True partnership.
- Unselfish love each for the other.
- A replete and mature relationship.

THE DIALOGUE

One powerful feature of this song is the manner in which the couple describe their love for each other in the second person. This allows the reader to feel that they are being allowed into a very intimate relationship, much like reading someone else's love letter.

Why This Style?

Because it emphasizes the intimate sensual nature and beauty that God intended for the marriage relationship. It provides a definition of love by which people can judge their own love relationships and it leads them to consider the vitality and sanctity of

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their relationship. It indicates the nature of the relationship God wants to share with mankind. It is an allegory, a vivid picture of that relationship.

Some approaches to interpreting the book

Literal

A primary rule of biblical interpretation tells us that when the scripture is obviously capable of literal meaning, we should perceive it as such.

Allegorical

In cases where the meaning of a scripture cannot possibly be taken literally, we should consider the possibility that it is allegorical, i.e. a story with a deeper, somewhat obscure meaning.

Typical

A biblical type is usually some form of allegory or parable that is a shadow of the real thing. As we study the shadow, we determine the shape and significance of the substance.

Spiritual

Spiritual interpretation is the ability to perceive spiritual truths hidden within a story. The spiritual truth is the deeper meaning, beneath the surface. This manner of interpretation needs to be undertaken with proper care, lest we wrest from the story some principles that are not properly substantiated.

The Literal Interpretation

According to the principles mentioned previously, we realize that the song may certainly be initially understood in a literal sense. However, it can also be interpreted by the other methods, i.e. allegorical, typical and spiritual. Nevertheless, we must understand its literal implications first, in order to properly comprehend its further applications. The sexual and physical side of marriage is a natural and proper part of God's plan, reflecting His purpose and desire for the human race. This is the same truth so evident at the beginning of time in the Creation itself. God created man and woman and brought them together to serve as companions and to share their lives with one another: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" Gen. 2:24.

Unless we can properly understand God's highest purposes in the marriage relationship, we will never grasp His true desires in worship. Marriage is an allegory or parable. An earthly story with a profound spiritual lesson hidden within. The Song of Songs tells the "love of a man for a maid" and the nature of God's love relationship with His people.

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Interpreting the book in a literal manner provides us with several important perspectives.
An historic documentation concerning the romance and marriage of King Solomon to the wife he describes as “My dove, my perfect one, the only one.” S.S. 6:9.

A makers handbook on human sexuality, inspired by the One who fashioned mankind as sexual beings.

A Divine endorsement of replete sexual love within the covenant of marriage.

An intimate insight into the languages of love.

A handbook on Praise as the language of love, and its application to our worship of God.

Chapter One

Solomon Searches For A Bride

The literal interpretation of the drama is the story of Solomon's search for a special kind of bride. It outlines their initial meeting, their subsequent courtship, the Wedding ceremony, the deepening and maturing of their relationship and their ultimate marital bliss. It is basically a romance between two specific individuals, Solomon and Shulamith. (the feminine form of Solomon) We are allowed intimate insights into all the stages of their relationship and every facet of its development.

The drama opens with the shepherd searching for a special woman to be his bride. Solomon, king of Israel, is the wealthiest, most privileged and powerful man in the land. He is already husband to many wives and numerous concubines, yet his heart still yearns for the true love of his life. Many of the marriages he has contracted are really unions of political expediency, designed to join two ruling families. They were loveless marriages of convenience in which little true love is involved. They left Solomon longing for a true love. A bride who will marry him for himself and not his position or possessions. A woman who would love him passionately even if he were only a shepherd. He travels north from Jerusalem, attired as an average shepherd. In this effective disguise he first spies the Shulamite maid as she pursues her daily tasks. Standing beneath the shade of an old apple tree he gazes on her across the paddock. Beneath the rustic outfit of a humble vine dresser, he discerns a young woman of true beauty and enormous potential. Closer inspection adds to his pleasure, confirming his initial impressions. She is a woman of considerable beauty, who gives even greater promise of inner beauties of character. He sees in her the dormant beauty of the woman of his dreams.

Her Disadvantaged Background

When Solomon discovered his future bride she was a member of a dysfunctional and disadvantaged family.

There was no father figure in the family.

Her older siblings were step brothers, not sons of her natural father.

The family unity was fractured by resentment and ill will.

They were angry with her, forcing her to work laboriously for them.

Her work load was arduous, onerous and over taxing.

She inherits a responsibility for her younger, immature sister.

She has neglected her own welfare and self image.

She is very dissatisfied with life.

She longs for a new and better life.

From the broken background of her family life she obviously inherited many complexes.

She appears unhappy, disenchanted, dissatisfied with her lot in life. She frequently experiences bouts of longing for a life of love rather than one of contention.

She Was A Vine Dresser

Her occupation as a vine dresser was a servile and rather demeaning one for an attractive young woman. She obviously had potential far beyond this lowly type of occupation. In

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addition to a (small?) vineyard that she possibly inherited from her deceased father, she had responsibility forced on her to care for the vineyards of her step brothers. Whatever reason they gave for requiring this of her, it was essentially because they were angry with her and wished to take out their anger on her.

Her Low Self Image S.S. 1:5,6.

She worked such long hours caring for her brother's vineyards that she was forced to neglect the proper care of her own responsibilities. The long periods she spent in the hot sun each day badly darkened her skin. Perhaps she was not consciously aware of this until she realized that the shepherd was gazing at her so intently. Under his obvious scrutiny she became embarrassed that her complexion was so dark. She begged him, "Please don't look at me too closely, I am embarrassed by the dark color of my skin. The daily heat of the sun has made my skin darker than the tents of Kedar.

She Felt Anonymous And Inconspicuous

Song 2:11 *I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. (NIV)*

She has little sense of self esteem and likens herself to a wayside flower that shepherds would normally pass by without a second glance. The rose and the lily were two of the most common wild flowers in that area. Nobody ever gave them a second thought. No one gathered them as though they were of beauty or great value. The rose to which she likened herself was a humble meadow flower. Shepherds in that region would see many of them everyday in the course of their wanderings. The flowers were so insignificant that they would never warrant a second glance. The lily was also a common, somewhat insignificant wild flower. By likening herself to these particular flowers, she reveals her deep sense of insignificance. She sees herself as a nonentity, a person of little worth.

I well remember a certain lady in Jerusalem standing before me for prayer at the close of a service. When I asked, "What would you like me to pray about?" She replied, "Pastor, even the nobodies think I am a nobody." Her pathetic comment revealed the pain of her perceived insignificance. In addition to praying for her I reminded her of how Solomon, a type of our Beloved Jesus, had transformed a rustic nobody into a royal Princess. I encouraged her to realize that Jesus wanted to do the same for her. I charged her, "See yourself as a princess from now on!" It was a particular joy to meet her again some time later and witness the transformation in her self image and the way this had improved her social relationships.

She Felt Degraded And Unworthy

Song 1:77 *Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?*

The shepherd had disappeared shortly after their initial brief meeting. She feels compelled to find him again and be where he is. She inquires where he usually keeps his flock. She says, "If I have to search for you amongst all the flocks, those shepherds will think I am a prostitute plying my trade. They will despise and perhaps even misuse me."

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She hates even the thought that some of them will think ill of her, for she wants Solomon to see the very best in her.

She Longed For Love And Acceptance

Her family circumstances were such that she longed to be free from them. She dreamed of a knight in shining armor, taking her away from the drudgery, hostility and disdain that filled her life. When the handsome shepherd appears, she wonders if this might be he.

Song 1:2-42 *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is more delightful than wine.³ Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you!⁴ Take me away with you-- let us hurry! (NIV)*

She Longed For A Better Life

The fractured nature of her family relationships and the arduous work she must undertake cause deep dissatisfaction with her environment. She dreams that one day, the love of her life will carry her away from it all, to a better environment and a happier life. She recognizes signs within that tell her she is created for better things than she has yet known. Unfulfilled yearnings fill her with frustration. Longings never yet met, cause her to yearn for a life of love and mutual appreciation. For someone on whom she can lavish the pent up love of her warm heart. A special person who will reciprocate her love as enthusiastically as she gives it.

HER TRANSFORMATION

Though Solomon sought an unsophisticated bride, he had no intention of letting her remain as such. Though he wanted her always to retain her initial innocent appeal, he would refine her in many ways, and make her a suitable companion to his throne. His companionship and their experiences together, would refine and transform her until she eventually emerged as an appropriate consort. The ideal is that she might retain her individual uniqueness and all its attractive qualities and yet be transformed into a companion suitable for a king. His treatment of her in their frequent meetings and love trysts, is aimed at accomplishing this delicate metamorphous. God also wants us to retain our unique identity and yet be so transformed into His likeness that we will assume a true compatibility with Him. It is largely through time spent worshipping the Lord that we are actually changed into his likeness. 2 Cor 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (NKJ)*

Her Companions Recognized The Transformation

Throughout the unfolding plot we frequently meet “the daughters of Jerusalem”. They are young women of Jerusalem who are somewhat aware of Solomon through living in the same city as he. They are all filled with admiration of him and frequently speak of him in glowing terms. They also envy the Shulamite because she has so convincingly won his heart. Nevertheless they are willing to form a royal entourage to whom the shepherdess frequently boasts of the attraction and prowess of her husband. When her companions considered the prospect of her being rescued from poverty and obscurity and taken to Jerusalem by a handsome lover, they said,

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Song 1:4 *“If you go, we will run after you. We will follow and pursue you that we might rejoice and be glad with you for we also esteem his love to be better than wine.”*

God longs for the church to have this effect upon Israel. Rom 11:11 *I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. (NKJ)* He longs to see His ancient people become envious of His New Covenant people’s joy to the degree that they will say *“We will run after you. We will rejoice and be glad with you.”*

Does Your Life Attract Others To Christ?

God also longs for non-believers to be so attracted to the life style of His redeemed people, that they will desire to join them. He wants us to have such a joyful life that all who see it will want to share it with us. A life of praise and the transformation it brings can accomplish this.

The Bridegroom’s Love For His Intended

His initial attraction. Song 1:15 *Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove’s eyes. (NKJ)*

Initially He tells her three things

1. Behold, you are fair, lovely, beautiful, attractive
2. You are my love. I love you.
3. Your eyes reflect your innocent beauty. (eyes like a dove, innocent, soft and warm)

The Power Of Her Physical Attraction

Song 1:9-10

I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh’s chariots.

10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold. (NKJ)

Solomon did not compare his lover to Pharaoh’s chariots, but to the stallions that pulled those chariots. He is telling her, *“Your sensual attraction has so powerful an effect on me that I liken your proximity to that of a young mare set loose amongst all of Pharaoh’s stallions.*

His Gentle, Loving Assurances

Whenever the Shulamite made a negative statement about herself, Solomon quickly counteracted it. He consistently caused her to see herself in an entirely new light. He helped her to revel in his own perspective of her. When she protested, *“Don’t look at me too closely because my skin is so dark,”* He replied, *“Dark you may be my love but you are also truly lovely!”* S.S. 1:5. When she further protested that her skin was so dark it was like the Bedouin goat skin tents of Kedar, He said, *“To me, your complexion is more like the curtains of Solomon’s temple than the tents of Kedar.”*

His Consistent Compliments

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When she likened herself to the common wild flowers that appeared by the side of every pathway in that region, he told her, "If you are like a lily, then it is like a lily compared to thorns." He was always complimentary to her. He spoke continually of her beauty, eulogizing her attractiveness at every opportunity. Gradually she began more and more, to see herself as He saw her. She believed his words and was transformed into their image.

Their Rustic Love Trysts (A tryst is a secret place where lovers meet.)

Song 1:16-17:16

Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green. 17 The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir. (NKJ)

The New Translation romantically renders this:

The leaf scattered ground will be our couch. The cedars will be the walls of our house. The cypress trees will be our rafters.

Imagine a lovely glade amongst the forest trees. Overshadowed with dappled shade, quiet and private, a peaceful, tranquil hideaway in which to pursue the development of their relationship. Such was the romantic image she treasured in her heart.

The Shepherd King

The Shulamite falls in love with a shepherd and then discovers he is really a king. Much of the song concerns her problems in coming to terms with this realization. Her subsequent marriage to Solomon takes her from her humble, rustic home to the splendors of the palace. (Psalm 45, which is also a wedding song, the title of which is Shoshannim, "To the roses.")

The two songs have much in common, part of which is their reference of marriage to a king. Ps 45:10-11:10 *Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house; 11 So the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him. (NKJ)*

The dualism reflected in the motif of a Shepherd/King is somewhat reminiscent of the reference to the Lamb of God who is also the Lion of Judah. (Rev 5:1) We also, as Christian believers, fell in love with a shepherd who is also a King.

He Prepares Her To Be A King's Bride

He gradually coaxes her away from her self negative images in order to see herself as he sees her. In the words of Psa 45:10,11. She leaves behind her own people and the family home because the king delights in her beauty. As she positively responds to his constant assurances and words of love she is transformed from a peasant girl to a king's consort. Two ways in which this can happen to us are through: 1. Constantly imbibing and believing his words. She responded directly to his words of love.

Song 1:14-16

THE BELOVED

2. *Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes.*

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THE SHULAMITE

16 *Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green.*(NKJ)

Consistently Gazing Upon Him In Loving Adoration

From the moment of their initial meeting, Shulamith is obsessed with Solomon's handsome appearance. She seizes every opportunity to see him, gaze on him, observe every aspect of his attractive appearance and familiarize herself with every detail of his enormous appeal. She is totally captivated by him. She is filled with admiration. Her lips are constantly speaking highly of him, eulogizing and adoring him. The Bible reminds us of a basic psychological and spiritual principle, that we become like the thing (or person) we constantly admire. Whatever or whoever we consistently give our admiring attention to, we assume the spirit of

2 Cor 3:1818 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (NKJ)

Beauty Is In The Eye Of The Beholder

It has often been said that "love is blind". Meaning blind to the faults and flaws of the loved person. People often say, "What does she see in him," or vice versa. Such remarks emphasize the idea that when someone looks at another, "through the eyes of love" they see images and details that no one else can see. They perceive a beauty in the one their heart adores, that none other may see. This is true of God's perception of us. Sometimes we are forced to wonder, "What did God ever see in me?" King David often entertained such thoughts.

Ps 8:3-43 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?(NIV)

The shepherd saw something in Shulamith that evidently no one else had seen. Until he came along she was an unclaimed treasure. But Solomon saw beneath the sun tan and the rustic exterior. He recognized the raw beauty and the tremendous potential that lurked beneath the surface. He understood what she could become under his loving care and concern. He caught a glimpse of the dormant love that lay within her and realized how wonderful it would be to be loved by so passionate a soul.

She Was Clothed In New Garments

What a contrast between the humble, sun darkened vine dresser and the gorgeous bride dressed in royal finery. The difference is enormous. She is transported from "rags to riches." Her appearance and appeal is enhanced beyond description. We are reminded of the saints in Revelation, adorned in white wedding garments.

Rev 19:7-97 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the

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saints.⁹ Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (NKJ)

She Was Anointed With Precious Ointments And Perfumes

Song 4:10 How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices! (NKJ)

Song 1:12-13 While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance.

- 2. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts.(NKJ)*

Women in that day, frequently carried a small sachet of spikenard between their breasts. The perfume of it would pervade their immediate presence. Solomon was very conscious of it as they sat at the table together. It was symbolic of the manner in which her beauty and appeal invaded his senses. She also sensed a similar fragrance emanating from Solomon. She likens him to a bundle (sachet) of myrrh that she wears constantly, affording her a continual reminder of him. The perfumes are a type of the fruit of the Spirit, the character of Christ revealed in a believer.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJ)

Ripe fruit gives off a pleasant and refreshing aroma.

Adorned With Costly Jewels

Song 4:99 You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace. (NKJ)

The crown jewels, given freely to the Shulamite, typify the riches of the grace of God. *Eph 1:77 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (NKJ)* Her natural beauty and appearance were greatly enhanced by the precious jewels he lovingly lavished upon her. In addition to the attractive glint in her eyes, the jewels also added a sparkle to her appearance that excited Solomon. In similar fashion, God adorns us with the riches of His grace, powerfully enriching our appearance in His eyes. He delights to gaze upon us when we are adorned with His grace.

Betrothed To Solomon

Solomon preceded the consummation of their marriage with a passionate eulogy of his beloved's physical attributes and attractions.

Song 4:1-11.1 Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, going down from Mount Gilead.

- 2. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come up from the washing, every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them.*

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3. *Your lips are like a strand of scarlet, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like a piece of pomegranate.*
4. *Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an armory, on which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*
5. *Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies.*
6. *Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.*
7. *You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you.*
8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards*
9. *You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace.*
10. *How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!*
11. *Your lips, O my spouse, Drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.*

My Lover Is Like A Lovely Garden

12. *A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*
13. *Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard,¹⁴ Spikenard and saffron, Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices—*
14. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

Solomon compares his bride to a glorious garden complete with a perennial fountain that keeps it well watered and fruitful. The garden produces all manner of pleasant things. Some pleasant to look at, other things pleasant both to smell and to eat.

The Shulamite invites him to come into his garden.

15. *Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.*

She invites him to glide like a gentle breeze through the garden, that its sweet perfumes may fill the air. To sit quietly, eating and enjoy its pleasant fruits. Solomon accepts her invitation

S.S. 5:1 *I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.*

His Beloved is a pleasant garden that Solomon loves to visit. He delights to smell its fragrances and perfumes. To recline on its verdant lawns whilst eating its pleasant fruits. Being with Shulamith is like spending a pleasant afternoon in a splendid sunlit garden. It is refreshing and stimulating, pleasurable and satisfying.

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A dream, or a nightmare?

One night the Bride sleeps and dreams.

Song 5:2-32 *I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, "Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night. I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?" (NKJ)*

She dreams that her beloved visits her one night. She had already retired for the night, when he knocks at her door and expresses his desire to enjoy her company and love. She begins to prevaricate and make excuses, despite his passionate plea for her to open the door and allow him in. Finally she arises and opens the door, but alas, her lover has left, only the dark emptiness remains. Song 5:66 *I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. (NKJ)*

Her Love Revived

Song 5:88 *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am lovesick! (NKJ)*

In the dream the Bride's passion for her beloved revives and she begins to seek him earnestly. She openly declares to her companions that she is "love sick", like a young girl again. Her first love is reviving. The passion of her heart flows again. She cries out for her beloved with great intensity of feeling. Love is a living thing. It needs to be nurtured and fed.

The Challenge Of Secular Cynicism

Song 5:99 *How is your beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others, that you charge us so? (NIV)*

The daughters of Jerusalem, motivated by a degree of envy, demand with some sarcasm, "What is so special about your beloved? What makes you believe that he is better than other lovers?" Critics want to know How? rather than Why? They are seeking experiential reality rather than intellectual rhetoric. They wish to know, HOW is your Beloved better than others? What does he do for you that is superior to what others might do?

The Restoration Of Praise And Worship

After the dream, the Shulamite realizes afresh how much her beloved truly means to her. Even though it was only a dream, the idea that she could lose his love has badly frightened her. She wants to cultivate their relationship again. She longs to win his ardour once more, to feel again the passionate heat of their mutual love. She begins to eulogize him again employing extravagant phrases to express her great delight in him.

Song 5:10-16 *My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand.*

2. *His head is like the finest gold; his locks are wavy, and black as a raven.*

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3. *His eyes are like doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.*
4. *His cheeks are like a bed of spices, banks of scented herbs. His lips are lilies, Dripping liquid myrrh.*
5. *His hands are rods of gold set with beryl. His body is carved ivory Inlaid with sapphires.*
6. *His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of fine gold. His countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
7. *His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem! (NKJ)*

Her Fresh Surrender And Deeper Relationship

Song 6:2-32 *My beloved has gone to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies.³ I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.*

Here we have a restoration of her earlier relationship as she passionately declares, “I am (totally) my beloved's, and my beloved is (totally) mine!”

This is the cryptic message at the very heart of this glorious song. A relationship in which the bride and her groom are completely surrendered to each other.

Her more mature beauty

Towards the end of the song the bride is no longer a young girl. The years have passed and time has altered the appearance of both of them. The bride is no longer a young maid adorned with the beauty of youthfulness. She has become a rather matronly but majestic woman. Her beauty is no longer that of a young gazelle. He likens her now to the awesome image of a great army, resplendent with many glorious banners.

She reminds him of two resplendent cities, Tirzah and Jerusalem.

Song 6:44 *O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners!* He further declares her to be as lovely as the moon, as glorious as the sun.

Song 6:10 *Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners? (NKJ)*

The moon has no light of its own, it owes its glory to its reflection of the sun. So the true church has no real beauty of its own. Its true beauty lies in its ability to reflect the glorious light of Christ, who is our sun. In fact, he sees her as two armies in one giant company.

Song 6:13 *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies. (KJV)*

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Other translations reveal that those armies, or companies, were happily dancing to a song of joyful celebration

Song 6:13-13 *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you! what would you see in the Shulamite-- as it were, the dance of the two camps?* (NKJ)

The Bride's Eternal role -The Wedding procession

Chapter 3: 6-11. Rev 19:6-9; 21:2,3; 9-11.

2. *Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders?*
3. *Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel*
4. *They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night.*
5. *Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin:*
6. *He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.*
7. *Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart.* (NKJ)

a. As seen by her bride groom

Song 7:1-9 *How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a skillful workman.2 Your navel is a rounded goblet; it lacks no blended beverage. Your waist is a heap of wheat set about with lilies.3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.4 Your neck is like an ivory tower, your eyes like the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus.5 Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple; a king is held captive by your tresses.6 How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights!7 This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters.8 I said, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches." Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples,9 And the roof of your mouth like the best wine.* (NKJ)

The maturity of their relationship

Song 7:10 **“I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.”**

The supreme satisfaction she gives him

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Song 7:11-13 *Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages.*

8. *Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open, and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.*
9. *The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved (NKJ)*

The maturity of their seasoned love

Song 8:6-7

2. *Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.*
3. *Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. (NIV)*
4. The Bride beseeches her Groom, set me, and our mutual love, as a seal upon your heart. Lock it into the vault of your heart and seal it that it should never be lost For our love is stronger than death. It burns with an intensity that not even floods can quench. It is so precious that no amount of money could ever buy such love. Any attempt to purchase such love would be met with scorn.

Chapter Two

Worship is a relationship

Love, in its truest form, can only find its fullest expression within an altruistic, covenant relationship. That relationship must be one of covenant commitment in which each party commits themselves totally to each other and the good of the other. The Bible calls this partnership marriage. A concept designed by God for the mutual benefit of mankind. In the Song of Solomon we may watch such a relationship develop phase by phase through the various stages of its growth towards maturity. The relationship we see immediately is between Solomon and the Shulamite maid, but it is also a pattern of human marriage relationship and an allegory of worship aspirations of a believer towards God. True worship can only be presented by one who is in covenant relationship to God in an affinity that is current and healthy.

The phrase “My Beloved” recurs throughout the song as each partner uses it of their lover.

Four of these occurrences are particularly indicative of the progressive stages of the relationship :-

1: 2:16. “My Beloved is mine and I am his.”

At this early stage the emphasis is obviously self centered, “My”, “mine”, “I”.

2: 5:16. “This is my Beloved and this is my friend.” Common interests begin to emerge through more frequent meetings and deepening discussions. The cords of friendship begin to bind them together.

3: 6:3. “I am my Beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” This statement is almost the reverse of the earlier one. From “My Beloved is MINE”, she has progressed to “I am My Beloved’s.”

4: 7:10. “I am my Beloved’s and his desire is towards me.”

A further development on her third statement, and a reversal of that part of the curse which said, “ the woman’s desire shall be towards her husband” i.e. subject to his rule and authority. (Gen 3:16) Now she can say, “His desire is towards me.”

The simple story of their relationship through its developmental stages, to its maturity may be viewed in five phases. Each stage is meaningful and filled with important truths.

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Stage 1. The initial attraction. 1:2.

Song 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is more delightful than wine. (NIV)

Mutual physical attraction

2. When first they met they probably viewed each other from some distance. The effect was mutually rewarding. The attraction was felt by both parties. It encouraged each to make closer contact with the other
3. A closer view enabled them to look into each other's eyes and recognize from those glances, the obvious interest of the other party. They realized that the attraction was truly mutual.
4. Seeking each other's company. They took steps to ensure that they met again and had opportunity to further develop their budding relationship.

Falling in love is a genetic phenomena of mutual admiration and attraction.

Remaining in love is an ongoing choice and decision. This is where the will is strengthened by constant positive decisions. Reaffirmations of the original choice and decision.

Love is esteeming the other more highly than oneself.

The Shulamite found her thoughts constantly turning to her new acquaintance. She was no longer engrossed in her own affairs and problems, every waking thought was of the one who had suddenly filled her life with his presence. Although she frequently spoke negatively of herself, she always regarded her lover in the highest possible terms. Love extols the virtues of the other. He became the theme of her every conversation. They were always extolling the other's virtues. Their verbal tributes served to edify their partner and to further secure and stabilize their relationship. At their initial meeting she is extremely self conscious of her somewhat unkempt appearance and is fearful that sunburn had hidden and spoiled her natural beauty. She compares herself with the tents of Kedar, which were rather ugly black tents of goatskin. He assures her that though she is dark, she is more like the curtains of Solomon than the tents of Kedar.

Love never criticizes or belittles the other

No word of criticism passed her lips. Her purpose was to build the relationship, not to destroy it. She always spoke of her beloved in a positive manner. She constantly eulogizes and compliments him. Compliments help to complement two persons, securing and cementing their relationship. Criticism is always negative and destructive, destroying mutual trust and confidence. There is a place in relationship building, for constructive criticism but this can only be successfully utilized in a loving environment of total trust, where each partner knows beyond doubt that the other has only their highest welfare at heart. The path to constructive criticism is paved with loving compliments and should never be administered without first giving sincere, loving, positive compliments on those traits that are above criticism.

Love delights to make sacrifices. One of the indications and tests of true love is the desire to make some sacrifice for the person you love. Sacrifices are inconsequential when made for the one you truly love. Jacob served seven years for the hand of Rachel,

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and the Bible says that it seemed just a few months because of the great love he had for her. (Gen 29:20) Though he worked hard long hours for seven whole years, his days and hours were so filled with loving anticipation of his coming marriage that they seemed to pass very quickly. Every sacrifice made for the person you love seems a very small sacrifice. Love submits itself to the good of the other.

1 Cor 13:4-8 *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.8 Love never fails. (NKJ)*

Love does not seek its own (satisfaction, benefit, or good). It seeks the good of the object of its affection. Thus husband should not seek primarily his own fulfillment. He should seek to fulfill the good of his wife. In doing so, he will also discover his own fulfillment. Likewise, the worshiper does not worship for their own enjoyment or fulfillment. They worship to satisfy the heart of God but in doing so they also discover sublime rewards.

Stage 2. Developing the relationship S.S. 5:16. *“This is my Beloved and this is my friend.”* Their earliest eulogies. (The lovey-dovey phase) 1:15. The earlier, heady days of their romance were what we often call the “lovey-dovey phase.” She called him a dove, (2:14), He called her a dove, (6:9) It was the phase in which lovers often have pet names for each other. The names emphasize their intimate endearment to each other. They also express some intimate characteristic of the other person to which reference is flattering and enjoyed.

Song 1:15 *How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are like doves eyes. (NIV)* He constantly complimented her. “You are beautiful! He consistently assured her. You are My love. He appreciated her inner beauty. “Your eyes are like dove’s eyes”. The eyes are the window of the soul, revealing the innocent, meekness, and loving nature of his loved one.

Seeking out each other

Part of the excitement of the new relationship is discovering ways to meet.

Song 2:14 *“O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”* The lovers tend to discover places where it is feasible and convenient to meet. Certain places become symbolic of their love and they delight to resort to those secret places, known only to them. These are their trysting places. (a tryst is a private meeting between lovers in a quiet, secret place)

Love’s progressive development

Visual The initial, mutual attraction is visual, as they each see the other for the first time from some distance. Closer investigation increases their mutual admiration.

Verbal The opportunities to speak to and about the objects of their love, increases their affection enormously. The foundations of their relationship are built with complimentary

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words of loving appreciation. Their comments range from public declarations, to private, and personal ones, and to intimate disclosures. Their dialogues were both complimentary and complementary. (reciprocal)

Emotional Emotions blossom beneath the sunshine of their frequent meetings and warm verbal exchanges. Passions are fired and fuse two hearts together in mutual respect, admiration and love. Love springs from the heart, the center of our emotions. It is here that love finds its earliest expression. Love making, in all its progressive stages, would be impossible without some measure of emotional expression.

Physical. Inevitably, emotional passions give rise to physical contact. A physical element of reciprocal enjoyment grows ever stronger and increasingly more rewarding. Emotions can be expressed verbally but mere words alone are often inadequate and insufficient. They require the accompaniment of physical reinforcement. Holding hands is often an initial expression of love but as a relationship develops and deepens, physical contact requires more adequate and intimate expression. An ultimate expression is frequently the coupling of sexual intercourse.

Spiritual

True love is spiritual in nature. It originates in what the Bible frequently calls “the heart.” Not the physical organ, but that mysterious, inner, deepest and most intimate part of the human being. It is the centre and essence of God’s Being and the deepest capacity of our being. To be truly “one” there must be a perfect compatibility of spirit.

Intimate bonding

Intimate reciprocity forges a mystical bonding. The Bible clearly indicates the powerful bonding that occurs through sexual intimacy. 1 Cor 6:16-17 *Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.”* It also reveals the nature of spiritual bonding that occurs when a believer is joined (coupled) to the Lord in deep worship. *17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (NKJ)* Through the medium of intimate worship, we become “One spirit” with the Lord.

Their Shared life “I am my Beloved’s and he is mine!”

We finally see the ultimate merging of the two lives into one. The complete blending of those lives into a unity symbolic of what God desires to establish with us. They become one in heart, thought, and desire. Their life together is one of constant and consistent mutual reward. The two, previously separate beings, are merged into one expression. This is the kind of oneness the Godhead knows and shares. John 10:30 *I and my Father are one. (KJV)* God also desires us to be One with Him. The relationship becomes more personal, intimate, and all embracing. Following the earlier stages of development, the relationship assumes deeper, more intimate expression. The relationship is a living one, growing and developing continuously with every rendezvous and loving exchange. It is further fostered and strengthened by verbal exchanges, physical contact and emotional expressions. The more time they spend together the more intimately they know each other. Many pleasant hours are spent discovering each other. Every rendezvous enriches their knowledge each of the other. The more they learn, the

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deeper their attraction. Their relationship proceeds from the superficial to the profound. Every new discovery multiplies their mutual admiration.

Song 4:1-5 Solomon to Bride. *1 How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. 2 Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. 3 Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate. 4 Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. 5 Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. (NIV)*

Stage 3. The Covenant of Marriage 3:6-5:12:16. “*My Beloved is mine and I am his.*” **Marriage is the merging and joining of spirits.** As the relationship deepens, the spirits of the partners merge ever more closely. The human spirit is that deepest, most intimate and mystical aspect of the human being. The merging of spirits has a mysterious quality that is difficult to fully understand with the finite mind. Within the merging of spirits there are inner dimensions that border on the mystic. Telepathic dimensions that go far deeper than the rational mind can comprehend. These are dimensions of the human spirit that are also able to join with the Spirit of God.

The relationship deepens

A newly introduced couple with mutual attraction, usually endeavor to see much more of each other. They want to know more about the other party. They want to be in their presence and enjoy conversations with them. They want to ask all the questions that arise in their mind about the other person. They want to satisfy their newly aroused curiosity and learn much more about this person towards whom they feel such a strong attraction.

Lovers long for privacy Song 1:44 *Take me away with you-- let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers.* (NIV) Lovers long for opportunities to enjoy private, intimate times together. Away from all others in a special place where they may be alone with each other. The home circumstances of the Shulamite were far from idyllic. She often longed for a knight in shining armor to carry her away to a more pleasant and conducive environment. When the shepherd appears, she soon sees him as the answer to her longings. She pleads with him, “Please, take me away with you. Let us enjoy the privacy of just the two of us.” The prospect of sharing his company is far more appealing than remaining at home in a fractured social structure with brothers who were angry with her.

They engage in frank conversations “*I am dark. Like tents of Kedar.*” (S.S. 1:5) In the early stages of their relationship they engaged in many frank and personal conversations and disclosures as they shared with each other the details of their lives. This included an unveiling of their deepest most private view of themselves. The Shulamite in particular had many complexes and inhibitions that threatened her ability to relate to Solomon. They subsequently talked through these issues and he was able to help her resolve them. Each such experience afforded a further strengthening of their

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relationship. Their lives became intertwined by their mutual disclosures and experiences of hearing and helping each other.

Destroying the little foxes. (S.S. 2:15) Song 2:15-15 *Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes. (NKJ)*

The Shulamite knew from experience how much damage even little foxes could do to a vineyard. She realized too that relatively small problems, unresolved, could inflict irreparable damage on their relationship. She wanted to kill those foxes before they could grow and become an even bigger danger. The foxes represent potential differences and problems that could easily spoil and ruin the relationship. These should be recognized, disclosed and dealt with as soon as possible whilst they are but small ones, before the couple have entered into argument and conflict over them. If dealt with early and strongly they can be eradicated. If left alone they may grow too strong to overcome and the damage they inflict may be irreparable.

Achieving mutual understanding and security

“I am my Beloved’s and He is mine.” (S.S. 2:16) As their understanding and appreciation of each other grew, so did her sense of security in each other’s love. Her earlier doubts disappeared and she was able to enjoy the great sense of security that his often stated love provided.

Marriage is like a glorious tapestry, woven by two dedicated persons. Such a thing of beauty takes many years to complete but ultimately all the effort is worthwhile and the tapestry has immense value. Chains do not hold a marriage together. It is threads, hundreds of tiny threads that sew people together through the years. SIMONE SIGNORET (1921–1985)

1. The Physical aspect develops Gen 2:21-24.

Two halves make One Whole.

Leaving. The first aspect of a successful marriage concerns the willingness of both parties to re-prioritize their relationships. Part of the marriage vows declare, “And forsaking all others, cleave only unto you.” The new partnership takes first priority above all previous loyalties and commitments. This means that all previous relationships must take a distinctly secondary place to the marriage relationship. In the case of relationships that could challenge the integrity of the marriage or even destroy it, they must be dissolved and abandoned. Until that essential step is taken the marriage cannot begin to function properly. In the spiritual realm, the same principle holds true. Our relationship to Christ must have pre-eminence above all others. This can usually be achieved by focusing our heart and affection fully on Christ and promoting our relationship with Him to the highest priority. In the words of an old chorus,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

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Instead of taking a negative approach of endeavoring to eradicate all earthly interests, take the positive step of focusing the attention on the Lord. Be wholly taken up with Him as much as possible so that the former interests fade from one's attention span.

Cleaving. Cleaving has two, distinctly different meanings.1. To separate or divide something. To cleave in half.2. To join oneself to someone with strong feelings of loyalty. Through these definitions we may see the full import of "cleaving." The first meaning is to separate or divide something. This refers to previous relationships and partnerships. Their intensity must be axed. The tentacles must be severed. The second aspect can only then be achieved, i.e. leaving MUST precede cleaving.

Becoming One Intertwined so closely as to become One together. God's intention was certainly not simply the uniting of two bodies. He always intended that the activities of sexual intercourse would result in the complete union of two lives in every aspect and dimension. The God intended union is not merely the coupling of two bodies in sexual intercourse. It is the coming together of two minds, to think as one. It is the flowing together of two emotive beings, mutually enjoying a common experience. The coupling of the bodies is but one aspect, incomplete and unsatisfying without the other aspects. It is the blending and fusion of two persons into one. Jesus confirmed this principle Matt 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; It holds true in respect of the marriage union. The remarkable phenomena by which two persons may truly become one in heart, spirit and desire.

It describes the ideal relationship of the believer to Christ

1 Cor 6:17 *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (NKJ)*

It is true of the believers spiritual relationship with the Lord, by which, one "joined to the Lord" in commitment, submission, and loving, intimate worship, actually becomes one with Him. Frequent and consistent worship substantiates and undergirds that oneness

It applies to church growth

It is necessary for the proper growth and development of the church, in which the various members grow and increase through the edifying of mutual love exchanges. Eph 4:15-16 *15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (NIV)*

Eph 5:24-27 *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (NIV)*

The sexual quotient is integral and indispensable

Song 7:6-10 *6 How beautiful you are and how pleasing, O love, with your delights!7 Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit.8 I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit." May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples,9 and your mouth like the best wine.*

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May the wine go straight to my lover, flowing gently over lips and teeth.10 I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me. (NIV)

It is unlikely that God, the architect and creator of sexuality, and the marriage relationship, should offer no guidance on this vitally important subject. Some Christians are embarrassed and reluctant to broach the issue of sex, but “To the pure, all things are pure.” Matt 6:22-23 *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (KJV)*

Mature married love is an analogy of Christ and the Church Eph 5:31-33

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (NKJ)

Stage 4. The refining and deepening of Love

6:3. *"I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine, he feedeth among the lilies."*

Refining the relationship 5:2-7:10

Before any substance can be fortified and strengthened it must first be refined. To refine, is to purify something by removing all contrary substances from it. Refining is often accomplished in a smelting furnace, exposed to fierce heat. Isa 48:10 *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. (NKJ)*

Psalm 12:66 *And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. (NIV)* Before love can be considered strong, it must be tested. It must be subjected to the fires of a severe challenge. When love survives the challenge and even thrives because of it, that love is refined and purified. The superficial aspects are lost. The love becomes pure and strong.

The deepening of love

Something is deep that extends a long way under the ground. E.g. the hidden root system of a tree. Love is frequently made deeper and stronger through adversity and testing. One such testing for the Shulamite occurred through a dream. (S.S. 5:2-8) She dreamt that her husband came home unexpectedly and knocked at her bedroom door. She had already retired for the night and in her sleepy stupor she was slow to respond to him. She was even reticent to make the effort of responding to his knock. When she eventually opened the door, he had already departed. Though it was late at night, she ran into the streets searching for him. Alas, he was nowhere to be found. The shock of losing him had a profound effect on her. She suddenly realized how painful such an experience would be. It served to renew and refresh her love for him.

Immediately after this she delivers what is surely her strongest eulogy of her Beloved. S.S. 5:10-16.

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Song 5:10-16

10 *My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.*

11 *His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven.*

12 *His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.*

13 *His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.*

14 *His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires.*

15 *His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.*

16 *His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

(NIV)

Her love for him has received a powerful stimulant. She loves him more dearly and more passionately than ever. She rejoices in his masculinity, contrasted to her femininity. Recognizing how much she values their profound differences and how powerfully they combine to make them one.

God requires mutual submission. Eph 5:21 *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Let none be so stubborn in their personal opinions as to disturb the peace of the church.* Eph 4:1-3 *As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*² *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*³ *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* (NIV)

Renewing their First Love

The passion of early love may grow cooler with the passage of time. The fires of romance that once burned fiercely may be substantially cooled when so many other matters demand the attention and time of the lovers. It is sadly possible for the earlier heat of passion to be left behind as one journeys on through life. God charges us to recognize this and to passionately regain our first love.

Rev 2:3-5 *You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*⁴ *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.*⁵

Remember the height from which 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. (NIV)

They take a second honeymoon

The immediate solution appears to be to take a second honeymoon and go back to their beginning. Begin afresh as at the commencement of their romance. Consequently they return to her homeland, to the place they first met. Under the apple tree, where she had been conceived and born, and he had first met her, they renewed their first love

Song 8:5-7 *Who is this coming up from the desert leaning on her lover? Under the apple tree I roused you; there your mother conceived you, there she who was in labor*

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gave you birth.⁶ Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.⁷ Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. (NIV)

Enjoying their second honeymoon S.S. 7:10-12

Song 7:11-13 *Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages.¹² Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open, and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.*

Their return to the fields and the old apple tree, transports them back to the scenes of their first love. They delight to visit the vineyards, (which have lost their old dread) to see if the vines are yet in bud. They enjoy running through the fields together, recapturing the memories and joys of their earliest time together.

Their first love is renewed

Beneath the apple tree, they experience and enjoy again pleasures new and old. Song. 7:13 *The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved. (NKJ)* This is a second honeymoon for the excited couple. They return to the countryside where first they met. They re-enact their earlier rendezvous, beneath the apple tree and renew their vows there. They gambol together through the fields, delighting in each others love. This is a second honeymoon for the excited couple. They return to the countryside where first they met. They re-enact their earlier rendezvous, beneath the apple tree and renew their vows there. They gambol together through the fields, delighting in each others love. Like the Ephesian believers in Revelation, there was a real need to renew their first love.

Rev 2:4-5 *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent. (NKJ)*

Stage 5. The Maturity of their Love

SoS 7:10. *"I am my Beloved's and his desire is towards me."*

His later perspective of her. Song 6:44 *O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! (NKJ)*

Stage five transpires some years later. Delightful years together have quickly passed but their mutual love and their appreciation and enjoyment of it is as strong as ever. His bride is no longer a slim youthful beauty. She is now a majestic and splendid matron. He no longer likens her to a young filly among Pharaoh's stallions. She is now likened to Tirzah and Jerusalem, two impressive cities, and to an army, resplendent with banners. In fact, he likens her to two companies or armies, (Hamach Naayim) engaged in a joyful wedding dance. Although her image has changed, his admiration of her has not diminished. In her maturity, her beauty is different, but none the less attractive in his eyes.

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Song 6:1313 *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies. (KJV)* It is in this later, more mature phase of their relationship that the Bride declares the most glorious statement about love. Song 8:6-76 *"Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol; its flashes are flashes of fire, the {very} flame of the LORD.7 "Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it; if a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised." (NAS)*

Chapter Three

Biblical marriage principles

The song of Solomon in particular, and the Bible in general, has much to teach us in respect to our sexuality and its impact upon our marriage relationship, and our worship of God. Until we understand what God is saying about the ideal physical expression in marriage, we will never fully understand what God is requiring in our worship of Him. Many Christians have uttered a vow in marriage, “With my body, I thee worship”, without realizing its full implications before God. In a similar manner many Christians know that God desires their worship, yet never fulfill their highest purpose in this regard. Because they never “worship their spouse” with their body, they never fully understand the measure of intimacy God longs for in our worship. The Bible frequently uses the phrase “to know” a person is used to describe sexual intercourse and the intimacies this can foster. E.g. Gen 4:11 *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD."* (NKJ) The phrase emphasizes the concept that to have sexual relations with a person ideally means to “know” that person in a deeper, more intimate and fruitful manner. The total relationship should be strengthened and enhanced by the acts of physical intimacy. It is very rare for a marriage to blossom when the physical factor is lacking or inadequate. In a similar manner God wants us to “know” Him in a deeper and more intimate dimension that derives from frequent intimate encounters. Part of our worship of God is fulfilled in the way we treat our spouse. This proper, God ordained attitude, also teaches us much about what constitutes true worship from God’s perspective. In addition, a healthy understanding of the divinely ordained marriage relationship also gives us important clues to the development and deepening of worship. Marriage is an analogy of the relationship between Christ and His Church. The prescribed roles of marriage partners helps us understand our ministry as worshippers.

What does the Bible teach about marriage?

The first biblical mention of marriage is found in Genesis 2., the verse that encapsulates the biblical definition is:-*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24, NIV)

Marriage was designed by God

The marriage relationship that God designed has three basic aspects: Leaving, Cleaving, One flesh

1. the man leaves his parents and, in a public act, promises himself to his wife;
2. the man and woman are joined together by taking responsibility for each other’s welfare and by loving their mate above all others;
3. the two become one flesh in the intimacy and commitment of sexual union that is reserved for marriage. Strong marriages include all three of these aspects. The concept of marriage was in God’s mind from the beginning. It was neither an afterthought, nor an expedience. God determined from the

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very beginning that humanity should be comprised of men and women who would perpetuate their species through procreation practised within a marriage covenant relationship. The initial prototype of humanity, “H’Adamah,” was created “male and female”. (Gen 1:27; 5:1,2.) At a later time God separated the genders naming the female aspect “woman”, because she was taken out of man. (Gen 2:23) God’s eternal plan for man and woman was for them to relate to each other for life in a physical and spiritual monogamous relationship. An essential aspect of this mystical union would be the joining of their persons through sexual relationship that would also facilitate a union of spirit, soul and body. Although physical intercourse was designed for the joining of man and wife, the union that results is far deeper than the mere physical act. By participating in that physical union, the two are also joined spiritually and emotionally. In the course of regular union, there is an ever deepening development of many other dimensions of their relationship. Each time they participate in true intercourse, they learn something more about each other. Their total relationship development is accelerated in the course of that act by which, “with their body, they worship each other.”

Human sexuality was designed by God

Gen 2:18 *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an appropriate and suitable companion, compatible to him."*

Gen 2:24 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* (NKJ) Mankind, (man and woman) were designed and created by God to find completeness together. Their anatomical, physiological design clearly indicates the nature of their intended relationship. They are physically incomplete without each other, -two halves of the one whole. Their psychological sexual disposition also gives strong proof of their divinely ordained relationship. Both man and woman has inherent desires one for the other. God gave them a powerful disposition to know each other in a manner that would encompass every aspect of their beings. The sexual union portrays ultimate oneness. The sexual joining of man and wife was designed by God to express His concept of unity. The unity of Elohim is just such a unity. It is the mystical union of persons, relating so intimately that they are ultimately one person. Deut 6:44 *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* (NIV)

Shema Israel, Elohim Eloheynu, Elohim echad. Echad: (Strong’s 258, and 259) a compound plural; = “properly united as one” **It is precisely this quality of unity that God desires between the believer and Himself.** John 17:20-21 *20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* (NIV)

Marriage is a gift from God

God gave the relationship of marriage as a gift to mankind. Adam and Eve were created perfectly compatible one for the other. A vital, integral aspect of their compatibility included their sexual reciprocity. Marriage, incomplete without sexual joining, consummated in physical union, is a powerful symbol of the desired relationship between

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God and mankind. As a sublime and glorious gift it is to be enjoyed and celebrated between man and wife. Its spiritual counterpart is to be enjoyed between man and his God. The fact that marriage is a gift from God to mankind does not in any way eliminate our responsibility to tend and nurture the relationship. The whole process of agriculture and horticulture is also a gift from God, but that gift can only be properly enjoyed when we work in cooperation with God's laws and principles to cultivate and grow particular crops.

Marriage is a mystical union

The union of marriage is far more than the mere joining of two bodies in the sexual act. Even coupling with a prostitute achieves this union. 1 Cor 6:16 *Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." (NIV)* Though the sexual union is an integral, indispensable aspect of it, the unity of marriage goes much further and deeper than this. It is also the joining of minds, soul and spirits. In a similar, yet more profound manner, we achieve true oneness with God when our spirit is truly joined to his in the deep spiritual intercourse of worship. 1 Cor 6:17 *But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. (NIV)*

Marriage is a committed partnership between a man and a woman

God's creative work was not complete until he made woman. He could have made her from the dust of the ground, as he made man. God chose, however, to make her from the man's flesh and bone. In so doing, he illustrated for us that in marriage, a man and a woman symbolically become one flesh. This is a mystical union of the couple's hearts and lives. The goal in marriage should be oneness. Woman was made from a more refined material than was man to illustrate her refined nature compared with man's.

God requires total loyalty within the relationships

He requires absolute fidelity in marriage Deut 5:18 *You shall not commit adultery. (NKJ)* Lev 20:10 *The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. (NKJ)*

He also requires total fidelity in worship

Exod 20:33 *"You shall have no other gods before Me. (NKJ)* The worship of other gods includes worship of self, materialism, pleasure and any other thing that takes the place of God in our affections and loyalty.

Marriage is a cooperative effort between equal partners

God forms and equips men and women for various tasks, but all these tasks lead to the same goal—honoring God. Man gives life to woman; woman gives life to the world. Each role carries exclusive privileges; there is no room for thinking that one sex is superior to the other. The manner in which God created Adam and Eve confirms their original equality. Ancient Rabbi's have described the creation of woman in this manner, Woman was not taken from man's head, to rule over him. Nor from his feet to be ruled by him. But from his side to be equal to him. From under his arm to be protected by him. From close to his heart to be loved by him.

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Marriage is intended to be a relationship of openness

Adam and Eve in their innocence, were not embarrassed by their nakedness.

Gen 2:25 *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*(NKJ)

But after they sinned, shame and embarrassment followed, creating barriers between themselves, and with God. We often experience these same barriers in marriage. Ideally a husband and wife have no barriers, feeling no embarrassment in exposing themselves to each other or to God. But, like Adam and Eve (3:7), we put on fig leaves (coverings) because we have areas we don't want our spouse, or God, to know about. Then we hide, just as Adam and Eve hid from God. In marriage, lack of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intimacy usually precedes a breakdown of physical intimacy. In the same way, when we fail to expose our secret thoughts to God, we break our lines of communication with him. *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.* (Ephesians 5:32-33, NIV)

Marriage requires submission by both partners.

Submitting to another person is a concept that is often misunderstood. It does not mean becoming a doormat. Christ—at whose name “every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10)—submitted his will to the Father, and we honor Christ by following his example. When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey his command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs.

In a marriage relationship, both husband and wife are called to submit. For the wife, this means willingly following her husband's leadership in Christ. For the husband, it means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife. The activities of physical intimacy should always be of mutual willing submission each to the other. The very act of sexual intercourse should epitomize this. Submission is rarely a problem in homes where both partners have a strong relationship with Christ and where each is concerned for the happiness of the other. True worship is the submission of ourselves to God in willing surrender. We submit in obedience because He has commanded us to worship Him. We submit to the various ways in which he has required our worship. We submit through the very act of worship, placing ourselves afresh at His disposal.

Marriage is a challenge to each partner

Why did Paul tell wives to submit and husbands to love? Perhaps Christian women, newly freed in Christ, found submission difficult; perhaps Christian men, used to the Roman custom of giving unlimited power to the head of the family, were not used to treating their wives with respect and love. Of course both husbands and wives should submit to each other (5:21), just as both should love each other.

Marriage is a relationship in which both partners are servants

Paul emphasized the equality of all believers in Christ (Galatians 3:28),—wives to husbands and also husbands to wives; slaves to masters and also masters to slaves; children to parents and also parents to children. This kind of mutual submission preserves

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order and harmony in the family while it increases love and respect among family members.

Marriage is a diversity of roles within a partnership of equals

According to the Bible, the man is the spiritual head of the family, and his wife should acknowledge his leadership. But real spiritual leadership involves service. Just as Christ served the disciples, even to the point of washing their feet, so the husband is to serve his wife. A wise and Christ-honoring husband will not take advantage of his leadership role, and a wise and Christ-honoring wife will not try to undermine her husband's leadership. Either approach causes disunity and friction in marriage.

Marriage is each helping the other partner to grow

The union of husband and wife merges two persons in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean losing your personality in the personality of the other. Instead, it means caring for your spouse as you care for yourself, learning to anticipate his or her needs, and helping the other person become all he or she can be. The creation story tells of God's plan that husband and wife should be one (Genesis 2:24), and Jesus also referred to this plan (Matthew 19:4-6).

Some potential Marriage problems

What solutions does the Bible offer for common marriage problems? The men of Israel had married girls from these heathen nations, and had taken them as wives for their sons. So the holy people of God were being polluted by these mixed marriages, and the political leaders were some of the worst offenders. (Ezra 9:2, TLB)

Marriage must be a spiritual as well as emotional and physical union

Some Israelites had married pagan spouses and lost track of God's purpose for them. The New Testament says that believers should not marry unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). Such marriages cannot have unity in the most important issue in life—commitment and obedience to God. Because marriage involves two people becoming one, faith may become an issue, and one spouse may have to compromise beliefs for the sake of unity. Many people discount this problem only to regret it later. Don't allow emotion or passion to blind you to the ultimate importance of marrying someone with whom you can be united spiritually. *It has been said, "Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce." But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.* (Matthew 5:31-32, NIV)

Look for ways to restore a marriage rather than leave it

Jesus said that divorce is not permissible except for unfaithfulness. This does not mean that divorce should automatically occur when a spouse commits adultery. The word translated "unfaithfulness" implies a sexually immoral life-style, not a confessed and repented act of adultery. Those who discover that their partner has been unfaithful should first make every effort to forgive, reconcile, and restore their relationship. We are always to look for reasons to restore the marriage relationship rather than for excuses to leave it. Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there

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is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. (1 Corinthians 7:1-2, NIV)

Satisfying Sex within marriage is a safeguard against temptation

Sexual temptations are difficult to withstand because they appeal to the normal and natural desires that God has given us. Marriage provides God's way to satisfy these natural sexual desires and to strengthen the partners against temptation. Married couples have the responsibility to care for each other; therefore, husbands and wives should not withhold themselves sexually from one another, but should fulfill each other's needs and desires. Spiritually, our bodies belong to God when we become Christians because Jesus Christ bought us by paying the price to release us from sin (see 6:19-20). Physically, our bodies belong to our spouses because God designed marriage so that, through the union of husband and wife, the two become one (Genesis 2:24). Paul stressed complete equality in sexual relationships. Neither male nor female should seek dominance or autonomy.

Husbands and wives

The New Testament emphasizes the ideal relationship for husbands and wives in this manner. *Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church.* Eph 5:25, 28; Col 3:19. *Wives, submit to your husbands, as the church should submit to Christ.* Eph 5:22,24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1,7. **A simple paraphrase of this injunction might read like this**

Wives should submit to the leadership of their husband, as the Church submits to Christ. But that husband must also love his wife as Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for her.

The ideal quality of husbandly love. The love that best describes Christ's love for His Church is the "agape" (agapay) quality of love. Christians are fond of describing this quality of love as a divine love that is super human.

Human love, is often defined in the following categories.

Storge: Family love.

Phileo: The love of friends.

Eros: Sexual love.

In contrast to these, the agape quality of love is spiritual, ethereal, bodiless, non-sensual love and almost unattainable for mere humans. However, the Septuagint appears to contradict this idea. In the Septuagint, (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) the phileo family of words is often used to translate the Hebrew ahava family. In the Tenaach, (Old Testament) the Hebrew root word "ahava" and its derivatives, is often used of passionate, sexual love between man and wife, being the word most commonly applied to marital relations. For example, it is used of :-Isaac and Rebekah. Gen 24:67; 26:8. Samson and Delilah. Judges 16:4, 15. Hosea and Gomer Hosea 3:1.

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The relationship between God and His people is described by identical words

Deut 10:12, 15 *12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love (ahavah) him to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved (ahavah) them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. (NIV)*

Hosea 11:4 *I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love;(ahavah) I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them. (NIV)*

The Septuagint uses the “agape” word group as the common translation of the “ahavah” word group. This clearly indicates that Agape love, at least in the Old Testament, is not limited to a spiritual, non-sensual type of love. It is a word filled with all the Hebrew concepts of passion, sexual attraction, sexual expression as well as friendship, loyalty and commitment to the other person.

Submission

The action of submitting.

1. to give over or yield to the power or authority of another
2. to yield oneself to the power or authority of another:
3. to defer to another's judgment, opinion, decision, etc.: I submit to your superior judgment.—Synonyms. comply, bow, obey, agree, resign, yield. —Antonyms. Fight, oppose, withstand, argue, obstruct, refuse to comply.

Eph 5:22-28 *22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.28*

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (NIV) 1 Pet 3:7 *7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (NKJ)*

Chapter Four

Images of Christ in the Song

Matt 2:11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. (NKJ)

It was when the Wise men, “saw the Lord” that they bowed down and worshiped Him. The Song of Solomon is a multi-media presentation featuring dozens of exotic, graphic images of both the Bride and her splendid Groom. It provides a kaleidoscope of images that we are able to view and in them see the beauty of our Beloved. As we vividly envision him, we are able to respond in enthusiastic worship. Solomon, a type of Christ as our Bridegroom, is addressed by numerous titles, and likened to many images within this song. As a Biblical type of Christ they afford us various views of the beauty of our Lord, as seen through the eyes of a lover.

Solomon, a type of Christ

This shepherd image of King Solomon speaks of the incarnation of Christ. Just as Solomon visited the rural area adjacent to Shunness, disguised as a shepherd, so Christ visited this earth in the guise of a carpenter's son. The Prince of Glory came to this world, concealed in the person of a carpenter. Beneath His carpenter's garments beat the heart of a shepherd, frequently moved with great compassion towards those whose lives revealed the need for shepherd-like care.

His Shepherd heart

John 10:11 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*(NIV) Luke 15:3-6 *So He spoke this parable to them, saying:4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?5 "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.6 "And when he comes home, he calls*

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together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' (NKJ)

2. The Seeking Savior

Luke 19:10 *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*" (NIV)

The primary purpose of God's coming to earth in the form of Christ, was to seek and save those that are lost. That is the bottom line of God's intention. It was the driving force of Christ's mission.

Searching for a true Love

Though Solomon had some 700 wives and 300 concubines, it is thought that most of these marriages and relationships were of a political nature undertaken to further and cement political alliances and treaties. This situation left him longing for a true love to be his bride. He evidently also desired a young, unsophisticated and innocently uninhibited maid. Someone to love him freely, irrespective of his exalted position and great wealth. Solomon's excursion to the vicinity of Shunem, some 50 miles north of Jerusalem, was undertaken incognito. His dress and appearance was like that of a shepherd, of whom there were many in that region. When the young woman first sees him she believes him to be a shepherd. Nevertheless she is dazzled by his handsome features and appearance, falling passionately in love with him. Her first vision of him arouses ardent love within her. As she gazes at him, she says, "Oh that he would smother me with his kisses, for they would be sweeter than wine."

S.S. 1:2.3. My Beloved

The word Beloved is the most frequently used title, occurring some 32 times within the song. On twenty seven of these occasions it is used by the Shulamite Bride as a term of endearment for her husband. It is used as a term of affection to express His loving nature and her passionate love for Him. Beloved is a term with warmth yet dignity. A term of affection that may be freely used in the hearing of others. It is a phrase that immediately identifies our deepest feeling for the one we address. The Hebrew word translated beloved, is the word "dode" (doday). In modern Hebrew this word is most often used for "beloved uncle", usually the beloved brother of one's father. The inference is one of respect and loving appreciation, such as one might hold for a loved and kindly uncle. However, it is very obvious from the fervent dialogue of the Song that this was not the idea to be conveyed then. The use of the word in the original version of the Song, derives from the earlier meaning of this ancient Middle Eastern word, meaning "love-making" i.e. physical, sexual union. The Song retains its ancient, original meaning of "beloved (sexual) partner."

4. Shepherd of my soul. 1:7; 2:8-14.

Song 1:7 *Tell me, you whom I love, where you graze your flock and where you rest your sheep at midday.* (NIV) When first she saw the love of her life, he appeared as a shepherd and it was in this role that she fell in love with him, desiring to pursue and find him at noon, in the heat of the day. God has the heart and sentiment of a true shepherd and Jesus is also identified as The Good Shepherd. King David clearly saw God in this

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capacity when he penned the memorable twenty third psalm. Jewish tradition tells us that this Psalm represents the musing of a sheep concerning its shepherd. The sheep gratefully considers all the marvelous ways in which the shepherd shows his loving care and concern. Ps 23:1-61 *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*2 *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,*3 *he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*4 *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*5 *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*6 *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*(NIV) Meditating upon God's shepherd heart and His care towards us as His sheep, should quickly provoke streams of praise and worship from our grateful hearts. Psalm 23 is a soliloquy of praise that has become a hymn of worship for millions of people. All the attributes of God are referred to and admired in this delightful psalm. God is exalted and praised in every line. It is truly an instrument of worship.

5. A Name like ointment poured forth. 1:3.

The Names of the Lord provide copious fuel for the fire of our devotion and worship. They all express the various aspects of His nature, grace and power. Reflecting on them in an attitude of loving devotion will bring forth torrents of praise from our innermost being. The Names of God announce His greatness, glory and winsomeness. As we meditate on them and their meanings we are able to worship Him fervently for who and what He is to us. The effect of such worship will soothe and heal one's spirit for its aftereffect is like that of a sweet, fragrant, medicinal ointment, poured on the wounds and bruises of our spirit.

6. My spikenard 1:12

A costly oil derived from the dried roots and stems of the nard, an herb of Asia. This oil was used as a liquid or made into an ointment. Solomon praised the fragrance of spikenard. Song 1:12; 4:13-14. Since he obviously appreciated the smell of spikenard and remarked upon it, she likened him to that pleasant aroma. Spikenard was imported from India in alabaster boxes. These were stored and used only for special occasions. Jesus was anointed on two occasions as an honored guest Mark 14:3; John 12:3. Spikenard therefore became symbolic of loving worship, poured out at the feet of Jesus and filling a whole house with its fragrance. Because spikenard was so expensive we are reminded that true worship will invariably cost us dearly.

7. A bundle of myrrh. 1:13.

An extract from a stiff-branched tree with white flowers and plum-like fruit. After myrrh was extracted from the wood, it was an essential ingredient used in the holy anointing oil Ex. 30:23. It signifies that we need an anointing of God's Spirit in order to worship Him acceptably. Myrrh always typifies meekness, one of the fruits of the Spirit. It reminds us that worship should issue forth from a meek and contrite heart and not from boldness and brashness of the flesh. It was often used as a beautifying agent, the purpose of which was to remove wrinkles, the signs of care. In Psalm 149:4b, God says He will "beautify the meek with His salvation." The use of myrrh (meekness) in worship accomplishes this.

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An aspect of worship is the realization of our “nothingness” in comparison to God’s “everythingness.” Myrrh was also used as perfume Ps. 45:8; Prov. 7:17; Song 3:6, in purification rites for women Esth. 2:12. It was also presented as a gift for the infant Jesus Matt. 2:11, and also used in embalming of Christ. John 19:3

8. Pleasant. 1:16. pleasing, agreeable, or enjoyable; giving pleasure: Ps 16:6, 11.6

*The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.11
You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* (NKJ)Worshiping God should always be a pleasant and pleasurable experience. It should be a joy and delight. We should always enter His presence with such an attitude and anticipation. It should never be irksome nor painful.

9.An apple tree 2:3

The apple was described as sweet and fragrant. Song 7:8; they were often used to make a primitive but highly enjoyable sweet wine. It was probably to this that the Shulamite referred Song 2:3-53 *Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.5*

Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick.(NKJ)
The Shulamite is thinking of her lover in his absence. She sees him as an apple tree, tall, handsome, bearing delicious fruit. This in contrast to the other trees of the wood that were not fruit bearing, nor providing delicious morsels on which to nibble. Many of the forest trees are tall and handsome but only the apple tree produces so sweet a fruit. His height and profusion of leaves offers protection, especially from the fierce rays of the sun that had so damaged her complexion in earlier times. He is her shelter from the burning heat of the day. She is lovesick for him, perhaps a little morbid and sad when thinking of him. She needs a pleasant snack to distract her from her morbid thoughts and to cheer her spirits a little. A pleasant and refreshing snack would be raisin cakes and apple wine.

10.A roe and a young hart upon the mountains.

Song 2:1717 *Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether.* (NKJ)

The mountains of Bether were particularly rugged in nature. A gazelle or young stag was particularly well suited to coping with such conditions. Its feet were ideal for clinging to rocky outcrops. He was able to leap and bound from rock to rock. The sight of such a young stag was awesome to watch. His skill and agility were so energetic and lovely. She compares her lover’s skills and energy to this and begs him to stay with her until the day dawns and the shadows flee before the rising sun. She longs to be with him. To experience his love making. To dance with him upon the majestic mountains until their energy is expended at the break of another day.

11.My dove. 2:14 Innocence and purity

In this analogy, she describes the purity, patience, and gentleness of her Beloved. His nature is characteristic of the dove. The eyes are a window to the soul, through which we may see the true nature within. His nature is as His eyes. He is inwardly true to His

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outward appearance. He has frequently used this phrase to describe her beauty because she has used it to describe His. God reciprocates in like kind to our praise of Him. This phenomena reflects the interesting idea that our praise of God affects His response to us. As we exalt and eulogize God, lifting Him high with our praises, He tends to respond to us in the same form in which we see Him exalted. The dove is also given to hiding itself in the clefts of the rocks so that those who would find it must search diligently to do so. In a similar manner, our bridegroom tends to hide himself sometimes. Not because he does not wish us to find him, but to encourage our ardor by searching for him. Ps 91:11

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (NKJ) Sometimes, God purposefully hides Himself so we will diligently seek for Him with all our heart. Worship is part of the process of finding Him.

12. He who feeds among the lilies. 2:16.

Her Beloved does not “feed among the lilies” rather he feeds his flock amongst them. Earlier in their relationship, prior to their marriage, she had been concerned as to how she might cope with his frequent journeys away from she and the palace. Now she is confident and content, even when he is absent. She knows where he is and what he is doing and is happy with her lot. She has a much deeper sense of security in his love. The Beloved and the Shulamite used lilies to describe their love Song 2:1; 2:16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:3. References to lilies was evidently a code word between the lovers, referring to their relationship, its development and growth. “Feeding among the lilies” may have been a lovers code phrase for exchanging kisses or other intimacies. She consoles herself that even when he is absent from her, his loving thoughts are with her. He thinks of her kisses and caresses and longs for her presence. The lily was used as an ornament for the Temple reminding us of worship I King 7:22 *The tops of the pillars were in the shape of lilies. So the work of the pillars was finished.* (NKJ) 13. His mouth is most sweet. 5:16. His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. 5:13.

Worship and communion is important not so much because of what we tell God, but because of what He tells us. It is in the course of worship encounters that God so frequently speaks to the deep parts of our being. In such times “His mouth is most sweet and his lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh.” The lily excretes a sweet smelling substance that exudes the heady smell of the lily. It is a pungent, powerful yet pleasing odor, that has a very calming affect on one. She likens his mouth to a sweet lily that sweet smelling myrrh, quietly and gently on the one who listens to His voice in a posture and spirit of worshipful surrender.

14. He, whom my soul loves. 3:3,4.

The soul is the deepest part of our natural being. It is the seat of all our emotions. From the soul spring all the emotions of life whether negative or positive. Whilst true worship is primarily a spiritual activity, God longs for us to pursue it with all our soul too. He wants us to pour forth our emotions in a display of heart affection that goes far beyond the merely spoken word. We are to love Him with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength.

15. My Beloved is white and ruddy, Chiefest among 10,000.

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(S.S. 5:10) White and ruddy means radiant and masculine. (The adjective *adom*, translated *ruddy*, was most likely the noun *adam*, man or manly.) He is the epitome of masculine splendor and handsomeness. Outstandingly good looking even amongst a great multitude of men. She then proceeds to detail the many aspects of his masculine beauty, vs 10-16. He stands above all others in attractive qualities. His head is the most fine gold. His locks are bushy. 5:11.His hair is black as a raven.5:11.His eyes are the eyes of a dove fitly set. 5:12.His cheeks are as a bed of spices. 5:13. They are as sweet as flowers. His hands are as gold rings set with beryl. 5:14.His belly is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires. 5:14.His legs as pillars of marble set in sockets of fine gold. 5:15.His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as cedars. 5:15.Although she uses flowery phrases to describe him, she augments rather than diminishes his masculine beauty. He is gracious and charming, yet strong and masculine. In this respect he is a model and paradigm for all Godly men. He displays a masculine beauty that is the ideal analogy of Godly manhood. An integral aspect of worship, in respect of men, should be the attainment of this Godly ideal of manhood. In submitting to God's Spirit, that He might accomplish this task, we worship God with our masculine entity.

15.He is altogether (in every respect) lovely. 5:16.

Every aspect of him is lovely, commendable and desirable in her eyes and estimation. He is not merely lovely, He is altogether lovely. He is peerless from every point of view. In her estimation He leaves nothing to be desired, in appearance, character, loving concern, and love making. He is her lover, her friend, her husband and companion. He is her protector, her admirer. Everything she desires, needs and craves for. She is driven to superlatives to describe him. He is wholly desirable.(NEB) Altogether lovely. (NIV) Altogether lovable.(JB)There is another plural here, 'desirables', that emphasizes the emphatic structure, "Everything about Him is delightfulness."

16.My Beloved and my friend. 5:16.

Throughout the development of this relationship one aspect that has obviously grown immensely is the quality of friendship between the lovers. From their earliest encounters, when neither was known to the other, there has been a steady development of those factors essential to the emergence of a strong friendship. When the relationship has deepened into something much more than mutual attraction, the friendship factors have also remained uppermost. The result has been that throughout all the various stages and nuances of the relationship, everything has served to enhance their friendship. That characteristic of friendship has been so integral that she proudly declares, "This is my Beloved, and this is "MY FRIEND." a person attached to another by feelings of affection and strong personal regard.a person intimately known to another and regarded with liking, affection and loyalty.an intimate, personal confidant who may be trusted at all times. A person who gives assistance; a patron; a supporter: a person who will remain true to their companion, regardless of circumstances. The friendship factor is highly desirable in any close human relationship. Ideally, lovers, spouses, and companions should all be friends. It is to the dimension of friendship with Him that Christ lovingly encourages us to develop.

William Penn once said,

"She is but half a wife who is not a friend."

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Jesus plainly intimated His desire for our friendship. Periods of loving worship are ideal for the development of this friendship status. John 15:12-15 *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*¹⁴ *You are my friends if you do what I command.*¹⁵ *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (NIV)***18. My brother. 8:1.** Song 8:11

If only you were to me like a brother, who was nursed at my mother's breasts! Then, if I found you outside, I would kiss you, and no one would despise me. (NIV)

Of all the names that the Shulamite uses for Solomon, this may be the strangest. Considering the intimate, passionate relationship they enjoy together, why would she wish he were her brother? She is not wishing they were literally brother and sister; but rather that they had the freedom to express their love in public without incurring criticism. In their society and culture, it was not permitted for a man and woman to kiss or show obvious affection in public unless they are siblings. So strong is her desire for his kisses that she is frustrated that there should be any place she may not be permitted to receive them. On this occasion she is in public with him and they dare not share their love and kisses. So she communicates her burning affection for him by saying, "How I wish, right now, that you were my brother, for then we could freely kiss each other without incurring censure." It was a way of telling him again that she could not get enough of his kisses.

2. My pomegranate. 8:2.

This was probably a lovers intimate term of endearment. An intimate little pet name that lovers delight to use in their times of privacy. It also has some added significance. The pomegranate is a round, sweet fruit about ten centimeters (four inches) across with a hard rind. It is green when young and turns red when ripe. There are numerous edible seeds inside the pomegranate. The pomegranate fruit is sweet to the taste but rather tedious to eat as each seed must be extracted separately. It is therefore a fruit to enjoy when one has time to relax and spend some leisurely time, casually feeding on it. It is a past time for relaxation and pleasure. A fruit one can thoroughly enjoy if you have sufficient time to ignore haste and devote yourself to enjoying your pleasure. In the same manner our worship often requires unlimited time in order to find its fullest expression. God longs for us to seek Him out when we are not in any hurry to leave His presence. Occasions when we may spend quality time, leisurely basking in His presence. Pomegranates were highly esteemed during Bible times. The hem of Aaron's robe was decorated with blue, purple, and red pomegranates. Ex. 28:33-34; 39:24-26. The pomegranates was therefore associated with Temple worship and spoke of the fruit of the Spirit. Aaron carried the pomegranates into the Holy of Holies on his High Priestly robe on Yom Kippur, the one day of the year when he could enter that most sacred place. Solomon also decorated the Temple with the likeness of the pomegranate.

I Kings 7:18-20 *He made pomegranates in two rows encircling each network to decorate the capitals on top of the pillars. He did the same for each capital.*¹⁹ *The*

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capitals on top of the pillars in the portico were in the shape of lilies, four cubits high.²⁰ On the capitals of both pillars, above the bowl-shaped part next to the network, were the two hundred pomegranates in rows all around. (NIV)

A delightful spiced wine was made from the juice. It was thought to be an aphrodisiac to further incite their love. Song 8:2-32 *I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house-- she who has taught me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates.³ His left arm is under my head and his right arm embraces me. (NIV)*

Chapter Five

Learning the language of Love

The Song of Solomon traces the development of lover's intimacy, first on a natural, then on a spiritual plane. It is essential to understand the first in order to properly comprehend and implement the second. The intimacy of a loving relationship develops in several dimensions.

Physical attraction

The initial attraction in a human relationship is usually a physical one. A man and woman see each other and are attracted to what they see.

Social Companionship

Following their initial attraction they begin to discover each other through conversation and dialogue. As they learn about their prospective partner, the relationship begins to grow or wane. If it begins to grow it develops into a social relationship in which they relate to each other on a gradually developing plane. True friendship is a desirable outcome of this phase.

Intellectual compatibility

This occurs through the meeting of compatible minds. The couple enjoy and appreciate an inter-change of knowledge and intellectual perspectives. They discover how well they are suited to each other in their mental and philosophical views of life. It is the joyful blending of two minds to think and act as one.

Spiritual affinity

Spiritual affinity begins to develop as their individual spirit finds a close affinity with that of the other. There follows an inter-penetration of spirits through which the pair find a mutual unity, affinity and oneness. In human relationships, this usually requires the presence of sexual intercourse in the relationship. Through this occurs a mystical bonding, initially of bodies, and later of spirit and soul.

Our new found relationship with God follows similar lines. It begins with a cursory knowledge of Him but every meeting with Him in spiritual communion and worship, should further develop, widen and strengthen the relationship. Our worship relationship is a vital, living relationship with God that ought to bring us closer to each other with every new engagement of our spirits.

Love is a choice

“Falling in love” is really an emotional obsession, triggered by physical intimations. Staying in love is the real challenge. This can only be achieved by subsequent right decisions and actions. Falling in Love is not true love because it is usually not a conscious choice or act of the will. It is an effortless act requiring little strength of

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character or will. It is a natural, genetic instinct. It is often a self serving, self gratifying exercise in which the good of the other party is frequently a secondary consideration.

The object of true love is not getting something you want, but doing something for the good of the One you love.

Discover your partner's love language and practise it

Every individual has unique ideas as to how love should be expressed. The primary objective of a suitor should be to discover how his partner perceives the language of love. There are often wide variances of perception between male and female. Most women have a very different idea about how true love should find expression, than does their male counterpart. Each gender needs to understand the perceptions of the opposite sex. Every man needs to discover the love language of his partner. What does she enjoy and appreciate? What conveys to her most powerfully, the sincerity of your love? Many men are amazed to discover how meaningful a bunch of flowers may be. Most men do not realize how important to their spouse, are their verbal expressions and assurances of love. Men are usually much more physical than are women. The woman is much more refined, and genteel. She appreciates and enjoys the finer details of a relationship.

Credit your Love Bank account regularly

Every partner should establish a Love Bank into which they make regular deposits. The deposits consists of words of praise, thanks and appreciation. They include acts of thoughtfulness and concern. Every time a husband shows appreciation to his wife in this way, he makes a deposit into the account of their relationship. Happy is the partner who has a large amount of credit in their account.

If we want to develop an intimate relationship we must discover and fulfill our partner's perceptions of love.

The fruit of our lips

All words produce fruit and we reap the results of the words we sow, either positive or negative. Words are the fruit of our lips and as we would woo and win a partner with our words, so we should woo God with them too. Hosea 14:1-21 *Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall!* Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. (NIV) Heb 13:15 *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (NKJ)*

Love is reciprocal

Love begets love. It is winsome and wholly attractive. It can melt the hardest heart. True love is difficult to resist. Our love relationship with God is the direct result of discovering His love for us. The more we learn about that love, the more we desire to reciprocate it. The more we are exposed to the influences and power of Divine love, the

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greater is our desire to love God in return. It is not a legal response. It is a spontaneous heart response.

Her words of adoration

In the Song of Songs the Shulamite is constantly voicing her admiration of her beloved. She is constantly saying complimentary things about him. She persistently eulogizes him, always speaking positively and well of her partner. She speaks many of those words directly to Him. On other occasions, e.g. in the presence of the daughters of Jerusalem, she voices her praise of Him before her companions.

These two forms of worship typify :-

Our personal, private devotions and worship. Our involvement in corporate worship where others may hear our praise. His words of affirmation. In return, the groom consistently speaks glowingly of her and constantly speaks words of tender assurance to her. In the early stages of their relationship, she is obviously ill at ease. She has numerous complexes and inhibitions, feeling unworthy of him and his love. She speaks very negatively about herself, but she always praises and eulogizes her partner. His response is one of loving concern. Gradually he changes her self image. He helps her to see herself as he sees her. This makes her self perspective much more positive and healthy, improving her ability to relate to him.

Say it with love!

The words of both Bride and Groom are obviously filled with love. Their descriptions of each other reveal the perspectives of people in love. They are completely unashamed of their love and speak it out for all to hear. This forcefully reminds us that our praise and worship must be expressed out of a genuine love for the Lord. Worship is the articulation of our love for Jesus. Just as lovers are often extravagant in their expressions of love, so we ought to be in our praise and our worship of the Lord. Words that are not genuine reflections and expressions of a real love relationship are not acceptable to the Lord of glory. In fact, they are often an insult to Him. When we purport to worship God, we need to beware that we are not actually wearying Him with our words.

Mal 2:17-18 *You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, "In what way have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"* (NKJ)

Say it from the heart

If praise is the language of the heart, it must be spoken from, and with the whole heart. Lovers do not always say rational things to each other. Sometimes their conversations would not make sense to an outside ear. They talk of things that only they two understand. They try to express the inexpressible feelings of their hearts. They do not say, "I love you with my whole head." But, "I love you with my whole heart."

Do it joyfully

Ps 33:1-3 *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.* *2 Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument*

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of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. (NKJ) Deut 16:14-15 *And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates.*¹⁵ *Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.* (NKJ)

It is interesting to observe the number of times that God commands His people to rejoice and be glad in His presence. This is particularly true in respect of our worship of Him. God insisted that when Israel presented herself before God in the sacred Feasts, she should do so with rejoicing.

This was particularly so in the Feast of Tabernacles.

Lev 23:40 *And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.* (NKJ)

Rejoicing and expressing joy and gladness, is actually a method of praising God

Psa 50:23 *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.*" (NKJ)

Dedicating quality time

Making meaningful time for each other in the busy schedule of life is a language many wives value and appreciate. Making time to court one's spouse afresh is always appreciated. Solomon follows this line assiduously. He makes short trips with his bride. He spends time verbally wooing her. He continuously affirms his appreciation of her beauty and constantly affirms his love for her. All this takes precious time but he devotes this to her as an indication of his love and esteem. In the same manner, meaningful worship requires time to express. We cannot rush into God's presence, say a few hasty Hallelujah's, and leave again. Worship, like love requires an investment of time. Sadly, some "Worship services" are treated as irksome preliminaries before the main event. The manner in which they are "rushed through" is certainly not worship. It is more of an insult

The physical touch

Relationships are enhanced by loving touches. People in love enjoy expressing that love in a variety of ways including holding hands, embracing, stroking and patting each other. God loves us to "touch Him" in the spirit. He also loves to touch and fondle us in a paternal and affectionate manner.

Luke 18:15-16 *People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.*¹⁶ *But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.* (NIV)

The women of Salem obviously recognized the value of being touched by Jesus. They flocked to Him, bringing their babies and children that He might touch them. The

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disciples underestimated the value that Jesus Himself attached to this. They would have chased the mothers way had Jesus not stopped them.

Moses touched the throne of God Exod 17:11-13 *As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.*

12 *When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up-- one on one side, one on the other-- so that his hands remained steady till sunset.*13 *So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.* (NIV)

The raising of Moses' hands was symbolic of him reaching out and up to God. It signified his endeavor to touch the throne of God in prayer. Likewise, when we lift up holy hands towards God we are reaching out to touch His throne and His kingly majesty.

1 Tim 2:88 *I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;* (NKJ)

Love is lavish and generous

John 12:33 *Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*(NKJ)

One of the things that lovers desire to do, is to give gifts to each other as tangible expressions of their love. Mary felt such loving gratitude to Jesus that she lavished a whole pound of spikenard on His feet. It was an extravagant action that only love would make. Her act of extravagant worship symbolises deep and reverent worship that truly costs something. However, the lovers relationship is reciprocal. One never gives without receiving in return. Mary sacrificially gave her spikenard, she in return gained a new fragrance in her life that filled all the house and accompanied her wherever she went afterwards .Judas Iscariot, the treasurer, criticized her generosity but Jesus rebuked and reprimanded him. Jesus appreciated her generosity immensely. In a similar manner, King David, refused to give to God something that had not cost him anything.

2 Sam 24:24-2524 *But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.*25 *David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.* (NIV)

The three dimensions of worship

The number 3, has considerable significance in respect of worship. God required the Israelites to appear before Him in festivals of worship, three times each year. Exod 34:23-24 The number three also suggests numerous others important matters concerning Praise and Worship in the biblical context.

viz :-

Passover	Pentecost	Tabernacles
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Outer Court	Inner Court	Holy of Holies
Body	Soul	Spirit
Praise	Worship	Adoration
Courtship	Betrothal	Marriage Maturity

This pattern, as clearly portrayed in the plan of Moses' Tabernacle with its three distinct areas, obviously prescribes a certain progression of worship. This progression marks the route of the worshipper as he sets his face towards the worship of his creator and redeemer God.

1: The Outer Court. Praise! Courtship!

Represents the body, the physical aspect of our being. This area of praise frequently involves the use of our physical being to praise and exulting in God. Such praise includes singing, shouting, clapping, waving our hands, raising our hands, jumping, dancing, marching.

praise is the

1. the act of expressing approval or admiration; commendation; laudation.
2. the offering of grateful homage in words or song, as an act of worship:.
3. sing someone's praises, to praise someone publicly and enthusiastically:
4. to express approval or admiration of; commend; extol.
5. to offer grateful homage to (God or a deity), as in words or song.—Synonyms. acclamation, plaudit, applause, approbation, compliment. eulogy, laud, applaud, eulogize, approve, glorify, exalt, honor.—Antonym. condemnation. depreciate.

2: The Inner Court. Worship! Betrothal!

Represents the human soul and the employment of its faculties to praise God. This dimension includes the soul's faculties of intelligence, will and emotions, expressed through the mediums of singing, weeping, laughter and the expression of emotion through physical activities as mentioned previously. It is usually a quieter, more thoughtful and sensitive expression than that of the Outer Court.

worship

1. Reverent honor and homage paid to God or a sacred personage
2. formal or ceremonious rendering of such honor and homage
3. adoring reverence or regard:
4. the object of adoring reverence or regard.
5. to render religious reverence and homage to.
6. to feel an adoring reverence or regard for (any person or thing).
7. to render religious reverence and homage, as to a deity. to attend services of divine worship.
8. to feel an adoring reverence or regard.—Synonyms. honor, homage, adoration, honor, venerate, revere, adore, glorify, idolize, adulate.

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3: The Holy of Holies. Adoration!

adore

1. to regard with the utmost esteem, love, and respect; honor.
2. to pay divine honour to; worship: to adore God.
3. to like or admire very much: I simply adore the way your hair is done!
4. to worship.—Synonyms. 1. idolize; reverence, revere, to venerate.

Represents the redeemed spirit of man engaged in the intimacies of the true worship and adoration of God. This dimension is very sacred, personal, intimate and fulfilling. This is the ultimate objective of our exercises of praise and worship. To come before God in His intimate presence and meet with Him face to face, in an attitude of reverential awe. To commune and converse with Him.

It is to this place also, that the worship leader endeavors to lead the congregation of worshippers. It is this kind of spiritual worshiper for whom the “Father is seeking.” John 4:23. Every church should be a worshipping community. In the development of such corporate worship, much depends on the leader of the service. The primary purpose of worship, whether expressed individually or corporately, is to uplift, eulogize and exalt the WORTH-SHIP of God. To exalt His greatness! Therefore the ultimate purpose of a “worship leader” is not to merely conduct community singing but to lead a congregation into a posture and spirit of true worship of God. His function is to guide and lead the congregants spiritually, from the Outer Court, through the Inner Court, and into the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies. He will usually achieve this by example and exhortation. He should not use the opportunity to preach at the people, but to simply exhort and encourage them by word and example, to enter into an attitude of heart that is conducive to worshipping God. Worship is intimacy with God. Intimacy is a close, familiar, affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person. It infers a deep familiarity, a close understanding, a deep relationship. Every time we worship, we expose our beings to the searching light of God’s Spirit and to the influences that can transform us into His image and likeness. It is only in the intimate mutual trust of such a relationship that God will use His transforming influences. a close association and detailed knowledge or deep understanding of a place, subject, or person. Coming before God in intimate worship enables us to grow considerably in our personal knowledge of Him. This is far more than an intellectual or philosophic knowledge, it is a penetrating, spiritual, experiential knowledge. an act or expression serving as a token of familiarity, affection, or the like: e.g. to allow the intimacy of using first names.

The intimacy we develop with God through worship is not the intimacy of over familiarity that often occurs in human relationships. It is an intimate, yet awesome, personal, experiential knowledge. It is the knowledge that friends may share, though one is far above the other in station or office. an amorously familiar act; A love relationship has many intimate ways in which to express itself. A host of expressions, actions and looks, that convey secret messages in a code the lovers have developed through deep mutual knowledge and trust. sexual intercourse. To be intimate with. Probably the ultimate act of amorous intimacy is that of sexual intercourse. A primarily physical

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activity that carries many overtones, emotional, mental, and spiritual. The Bible frequently speaks of sexual intercourse as “knowing someone.”

Gen 4:11 *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. (KJV)* Gen 4:25 *And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. (KJV)*

This phrase is used because such intercourse includes the opportunity of knowing a person of the opposite sex, in the closest possible manner. God also wants us to know Him in a similar fashion. The spiritual equivalent of “knowing” occurs in the deeply intimate realm of true worship. the quality of being comfortable, warm, or familiar There are also realms of deep intimacy that do not involve sexual love and relationship. These intimacies are those that afford the sense of belonging in a warm and familiar manner that affords a feeling of great comfort and ease in each others company. privacy, especially as suitable to the telling of a secret The ultimate expressions of intimacy require a situation of privacy without the presence or intrusion of any other person. This is also true of our worship at certain times. Whilst we may frequently worship God in company with other like minded persons, there are also times that we need to be utterly and absolutely alone with Him.—Synonyms. closeness, proximity, familiarity, warmth, affection.

What is God really looking for?

John 4:23-24 *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.24"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."(NKJ)*

In the pursuance of His great redemptive purpose, what is God really looking for? What is He seeking in this world? He is seeking for people who will truly worship Him in spirit and in truth. Those who will wholeheartedly worship God in a truly biblical and essentially spiritual manner. He is longing to fellowship with those who will press through, beyond the veil of the flesh, into the essence of the spirit, and into His immediate intimate presence. I long to be such a worshipper and I sincerely trust that you would too.

Chapter Six

The King in His beauty

The book of Revelation affords a distinctly different image of Christ than do the Gospels and epistles. An inkling of this comes through in the first chapter when the Apostle John sees the glorified Christ for the first time.

Rev 1:10-18

10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,¹¹ which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³ and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (NIV)

A fresh vision of Jesus

John was very familiar with the humanity of Christ. He is the disciple of whom it is said, "He leant on the bosom of Jesus." He had learned to know Jesus in a very personal and rather intimate manner. He had become very familiar with the sound of his voice and the various gestures that were a part of Christ's personality. Many years later, as he walks the shores of Patmos, he suddenly hears a voice behind him. A voice that is very familiar, yet distinctly different from any he had ever heard. At the sound of that voice his heart leaps within him. He recognizes the timbre and tone of Christ's voice and spun around to greet him. When fully turned, he receives a tremendous surprise. Instead of the familiar figure of Jesus, as John had always known him, he looks upon a new, dynamic, glorified Christ, clothed with the glory of God. (vs 13-16)The immediate effect is dramatic. John fell down at the feet of Christ as though he were dead. The startling vision of Christ was so spectacular that John's breath was taken away. He lay prostrate before the one he had known as "The Lamb of God", but is now manifest as the "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Jesus was no longer the carpenter from Nazareth, nor the crucified Savior. He is the risen, glorified, ascended, King of all saints. Later to be acknowledged as "King of kings and Lord of lords." The vision John had of Christ that day is of Jesus in His present and future form. He is no longer "despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." (Isa 53:3) He is now the King of the universe in all his resplendent glory and majesty! Little wonder that John almost expired! He had turned, expecting to see the old, familiar figure of Jesus, as when He walked the

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roads of Israel. Instead, he was almost blinded by the shining image of the glorified Messiah. As the book of Revelation progressed, John viewed, “the things that were and those things that were to come.” As the book unfolds, the image of Christ grows brighter and more intense. His beauty and glory are enhanced in every chapter until towards the end of the book, He appears in His ultimate splendor and everlasting glory. Worship the almighty One of the names that John ascribes to Messiah Jesus is “The Almighty”. The Greek word he uses is *pantokrator*, meaning the All Powerful One. The word occurs 10 times in the New Testament and nine of those occurrences are in the book of Revelation. The worship in Revelation confirms many aspects and styles of worship.

1: Kingdom of priests worship. Rev 5:9-10

9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10.You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth. (NIV)

2: The worship of Jesus. Rev 5:11-13:11

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13.Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (NIV)

3: The use of musical instruments to accompany worship. Rev 5:8

And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (NIV)

Rev 14:22 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.(NIV)

4: Loud bursts of praise. Rev 19:66

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. (NIV)

5: A huge, international, universal company. Rev 7:9-10

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (NIV)

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6: A company of both Jew and Gentile. Rev 7:44

Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. (NIV)

Rev 7:9-12

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

7: An everlasting praise meeting. Rev 7:11-12:11

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying:

**"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks
and honor and power and strength be to our
God for ever and ever. Amen!" (NIV)**

It is one of the final scenes in Revelation that we shall look at to comprehend the glory of Christ and the kind of worship of which he is pre-eminently worthy.

Rev 19:4-16

4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns."⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)⁹ Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."¹⁰ At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."¹¹ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the

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fury of the wrath of God Almighty.¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (NIV)

There are seven aspects to the worship ascribed to Christ in this scripture. (Rev 19:2-16)

1: It was inspired by a vision of Christ enthroned. V.4.

In Rev 5:9. we hear the Song of Redemption.

In Rev 7:14 an anthem for protection amidst great tribulation.

In Rev 19:5 worship is inspired by a vision of the enthroned Messiah.

John had known Jesus intimately as the Son of man upon whose chest he had rested his head. He had later recognized Him as the lamb of God when he stood before the cross and seen Him sacrificed. In Revelation 1:12-18, he had finally seen Him as the glorified Son of God, the Alpha and Omega. Now, finally, in Revelation 19:16, he sees Christ revealed as King of Kings and Lord of lords, exalted far above all, seated on the throne of His majesty. The praise and worship evoked by the splendid sight of Christ enthroned, surpasses every other worship event. I believe that in these last days, God is going to grant to us a new revelation of the glorified, enthroned and reigning Messiah. It will bring forth from us higher, richer, deeper praises than we have ever known or imagined.

2: Worship involves reverential fear V.5.5

Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear (reverence) him, both small and great!" (NIV)

True worship inevitably involves deep reverence and profound respect, that includes Godly fear, i.e. a true fear of God. The word translated "fear" Gk. Phobeo means to "reverence and stand in awe of". God certainly does not wish us fear Him as being frightened of Him, but He definitely desires and deserves our deepest respect.

3: Prostrations before the throne. V.4.4

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down (prostrated themselves) and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!" (NIV)

Prostration, casting oneself face down upon the ground, is a dramatic, extravagant, ultimate expression of worship. It is a universal sign of complete surrender, submission and worship. It constitutes a deep humbling of oneself. A graphic illustration of profound humility and self abasement, intended to greatly enlarge the person before whom one is prostrated. I believe we will see much of this and like expressions as we draw ever closer to this prophetic moment.

4: Glorious unity. Vs 1, 6.Rev 19:11

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: (KJV)

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N.B A great voice, (singular) of much people. (plural) Rev 19:66 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (KJV)

N.B. The voice, (singular) of a great multitude (plural) These verses indicate the glorious spiritual unity of the great company. Though there was a tremendous multitude that no man could number, they sang and worshipped with ONE VOICE. This indicates unity, harmony, oneness of expression.

5: Gladness and rejoicing. v.7.Rev 19:7

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (KJV)The Kingdom of God symbolizes a wedding, not a funeral. The Bride of Christ expresses her admiration, adoration and worship in tones of gladness and rejoicing too marvelous for words. Such rejoicing should accompany our worship too.

6: The righteous acts of the saints. Rev 19:8

And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (NAS)Some versions of the scripture say “the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints”, but the NAS affords a truer rendering, for it is the righteous ACTS of those saints that constitute the fine linen robes.

7: Spiritual equality before the throne. V.10

Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."(NAS)John instinctively fell at the feet of his heavenly guide who immediately remonstrated with him, saying, “Don’t worship me, worship God. For we are all equal before His supreme presence.”

Only God deserves true worship. This dramatic and remarkable scene, a profound vision of the future, conveys something of the glorious worship that will arise from the ultimate throng of redeemed who stand before the eternal throne. It is towards this event that we are steadily marching. God is even now preparing us for our role in this prophetic scenario. In order to prepare for these occasions, God wants us to learn experientially how to truly worship the King in the beauties of holiness. May the Blessed Holy Spirit gloriously accomplish this purpose of preparation in you and me. Amen!

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