

# Song of Songs

Study Guide

Unit 1



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Head Knowledge icon is for activities designed to reinforce the information you are learning.



Heart Knowledge icon is for activities that will help you feel the importance and relevance of what you are learning. In this section you will at times study real cases of other people, learning valuable lessons from their life experiences.



Hand Knowledge icon is for suggested activities to help you apply God's Word practically in your own life.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

## About the book

Have you ever wondered whether the Bible has any advice on the topic of love and romantic relationships? Except for a few stories, it may appear that the Bible is quite silent about the early stages of romance and the steps leading to marriage.

However, the truth is that the Bible has a lot to say! God is actually very interested in every detail of our lives, and our love life is no exception. He is the Great Designer of the concept of marriage. Not only that, but for every one who accepts His offer, He takes upon Himself to become the perfect Arranger of individual marriages.

One day, a few thousands years ago, He gave special inspiration to one of His wisest children on earth to write His instructions on love relationships in the form of a song. It is called the Song of Songs—the greatest of all songs. Think of that! Out of all the songs in the Bible—including all the psalms, prayers, and praises—God picked up a love song between a man and a woman to bear this title of honor. That shows the great regard He has for this phase of human experience.

## About the author

We know that Solomon, the wisest man on earth, wrote the book. We also know quite a bit about his love life—he had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

Although he possessed more wisdom than any other person on earth, when it came to his own personal life, he still had the ability to make free-will choices, and he used that freedom in a wrong way. God respected his unwise decisions, and the second part of his adulthood proved a failure.

We don't know when or why he wrote this book. It might describe his own experience, that of his first true and pure love. Or maybe he wrote it at the end of his life, giving instructions to future generations, showing how true love should really look like. We don't know. But we may be assured that what is contained in this book is inspired of God, and contains useful instruction for us (2 Timothy 3:16).

We can learn a very important lesson from Solomon's experience. Possessing wisdom does not equate success, just as reading and knowing the contents of this course will not guarantee a perfect dating and marriage experience.

Bible principles must be accepted in the heart and lived out in the life. Let the story of this book captivate you. Grasp the scenes, become immersed in the action. Story is one of the easiest means for truth to reach the heart. Meditate on it, dwell on it, until God's thought becomes your own, and you see the beauty of His ways.

The quizzes will test your knowledge on this course, but far more important are the suggested reflection activities at the end of each lesson. These will help you transfer the information to your own life situation and experience. And this is what matters most—truth made reality in YOUR life.



1. What love stories have you found in the Bible?

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2. How do you reconcile the fact that Solomon was the wisest person who ever lived on earth with the fact that he made so many bad choices regarding marriage, leading him away from God?

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3. Did any of the love stories in the Bible help you at a particular stage in your life? Share.

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4. How do you personally feel about studying the Song of Songs?

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# HOW TO READ THE BOOK

## Reading the Bible as literature

While studying this book, we must keep in mind two things. First, that this book is a poem. Its meaning may not always be obvious, and that's simply how poetry works. The reason why the author chooses appropriate indirect language rather than saying things straightforward, is because love—romantic love in particular—is such a delicate topic. That is why we need to treat this piece of literature according to the rules of poetic interpretation. The language used is a means to convey a message; to discover that message, we need to pick up the right tools for interpretation. The wrong tools might get us to the wrong message!

Another important thing to bear in mind is the purpose of this book. Some have suggested that its purpose is only symbolic, that it only describes in metaphoric language the relationship between Christ and the church, and has nothing or little to do with the earthly side of marriage and sex. This is known as the allegorical view, which was adopted by many Jewish circles and by the early fathers of the Christian church. Some rabbis even forbid young Jews from reading the Song of Solomon until they reached the age of thirty, lest they should become engrossed with the sensual language and miss the actual spiritual meaning.

In view of this perspective, we may rightly ask the following question: Is the purpose of the book to build us spiritually ONLY, or does it also have practical instruction on courtship, marriage, and sex that we can apply in our own lives? The answer to this question will determine how we approach this particular book in the Word of God.



1. In poetry, the \_\_\_\_\_ may not always be obvious.
2. The Song of Songs should be interpreted according to the rules of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ view claims that the purpose of the book is to convey spiritual truth about Christ and the Church.

## The Greek view

The “spiritual” or “allegorical” view is partly right in that God gave marriage to teach humanity some very important things about Himself and about the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:31-32).

This fact, however, does not make marriage a non-reality. Both the earthly relationship between a man

and a woman and the spiritual relationship between Christ and the church are as real as they can possibly be. Even if one seems more visible and tangible than the other, they are both of heavenly origin and important for our lives.

The allegorical view recommends that we should dwell as little as possible on the explicit sexual references and seek for the spiritual meaning to avoid being tainted with bodily lust. This view subtly suggests that the book is too sensual, too passionate for us to draw an example for our daily lives —that somehow the more explicit and sensual content slipped into the text, but it was never intended for us to dwell upon. Basically, it suggests that there was a little mistake in the writing of this book. But did God really make a mistake?

The allegorical perspective is based on the Greek worldview of separation of body and soul, matter and spirit, earthly and spiritual. According to Greek dichotomy (the word “dichotomy” comes from two Greek words meaning “to cut in two”), the physical realm is bad in itself, while the spiritual realm is superior and desirable; the body is inherently evil, while the spirit is good.

The Greek separation of body and soul gave birth to the doctrines of hell and purgatory, as well as other practices and institutions in the early church, like Gnosticism (the false doctrine that Jesus did not have a physical body), asceticism (willingly inflicting pain on one’s own body in order to become more spiritual), and monasticism (isolating oneself from society to dedicate the life to prayer and spiritual exercises). All these doctrines and practices the Bible explicitly condemns (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3).

Carried to its extreme conclusions, this worldview brought the early church to many other non-Biblical notions.

- that secular occupations are unfit for the spiritually-minded
- that marriage is not fit for the priesthood, and therefore celibacy makes one spiritually superior
- that wealth is a sign of low spirituality, and, therefore, a vow to perpetual poverty is a prerequisite to join the spiritual elite.

The arrival of Protestantism brought a paradigm shift in the church, reestablishing work, marriage and wealth in their proper spheres within human life.



1. “For this cause shall a \_\_\_\_\_ leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his \_\_\_\_\_, and they two shall be one \_\_\_\_\_. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.” (Ephesians 5:31-32)
2. The allegorical view of the Bible is based on Greek \_\_\_\_\_ of body and soul.
3. The arrival of \_\_\_\_\_ brought a shift of mindset in the areas of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Match each wrong concept with the Bible verse which condemns it.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 Timothy 4:3; Hebrews 13:4

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 John 4:3

\_\_\_\_\_ Proverbs 30:8-9

\_\_\_\_\_ Colossians 2:18,23

\_\_\_\_\_ Proverbs 18:1; Mark 1:34-35

a. Jesus did not have a human body.

b. Poverty is required for godliness.

c. Secular occupations are not suitable for spiritual people.

d. We should dedicate our lives to spiritual exercises only.

e. We should inflict pain on our bodies to become more spiritual.

f. Celibacy is a sign of spiritual superiority.

## Biblical view

Standing in great contrast with Greek logic is Hebrew thought. In Hebrew thinking, body and soul are not two separate entities; the two dimensions form a compact unit that cannot possibly be separated. Every occupation and activity of secular life has a sacred dimension; therefore, all things need to be done with the fear of the Lord in mind—whether it be work, worship, or relationships within the family and with society at large. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23).

The wholistic thought of the Hebrews is also seen in their sacred view of life. For them everything is theocentric or God-centered. There is no distinction between the secular and religious area of life. This aspect of Hebrew thought is clearly stated in the words of the psalmist: “I have set the LORD always before me” (Ps 16:8). Thus, to modern Jews, “blessings are recited over some of the most mundane items, such as upon seeing lightning, hearing thunder, and even after using the washroom.” The totality of existence embraces the whole way of life. This kind of wholistic thinking can be seen in the Bible. (Ferdinand O. Regalado, “Hebrew Thought: Its Implications for Christian Education,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 12/2 (Autumn 2001): 97–109.)

God created man as a whole—a physical, intellectual, spiritual, social and emotional being— and He is equally interested in all parts. The Song of Solomon is His instruction book on marriage and sexuality, and also on our relationship with God. He wants us to know how to conduct this relationship in a way that will reflect His personal relationship to us.



1. In Hebrew thinking, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are not separate; they form a compact \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Every occupation of \_\_\_\_\_ life has a \_\_\_\_\_ dimension.
  3. Mention at least three Bible passages that reflect a wholistic view on life.
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## Family, a school

Our heavenly Father designed families on earth to be a reflection of the family bonds that hold the whole universe together under His benevolent rule. The love between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, is a reflection of God's great love for us. "Through... the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 10).

God knows we learn best by experience. In the family or in a close, family-like community like church, we can get to know each other very well. We know each other's strengths and weaknesses, the best as well as the worst about each other. The acceptance and love we experience in our own families is meant to help us grasp something of God's unconditional love for us.

Right from the beginning of creation, Satan has sought to mar and destroy God's plan for families. Husbands and wives started blaming each other (Gen. 3:12-13), siblings started murdering each other (Gen. 4:8). So it is today. Instead of finding security, acceptance, and love from parents, partners and close relatives, many people experience abuse, rejection, and pain. These sad experiences affect their views of God, associating Him the negative attributes they have experienced and felt in their own lives.

God's plan is to restore the family bond to its original design. He wants to raise up families that will reflect His real character to the world. This will be the greatest evidence in favor of the truth and will be more convincing than any sermon.

"Every home should be a place of love." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 18)

"Our homes must be made a Bethel, our hearts a shrine. Wherever the love of God is cherished in the soul, there will be peace, there will be light and joy." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 19)

"The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 32)

"One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached... The whole family is engaged in the service of the Master; and by their godly example, others are inspired to be faithful and true to God in dealing with His flock, His beautiful flock." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 32)

In these last days of earth's history, families, churches and ministries have the solemn responsibility of revealing the great love of Christ to the world. Reflecting His heart of love will lead souls to Jesus and to the truth:

“Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 415.5)



1. “Through... the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ties that human \_\_\_\_\_ can know, He has sought to \_\_\_\_\_ Himself to us” (Steps to Christ, p. 10).
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ we experience in our own families is meant to help us grasp something of God’s \_\_\_\_\_ love for us.
3. Instead of finding \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ from parents, partners and close relatives, many people experience \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, affecting their views of God’s character.
4. “The \_\_\_\_\_ message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of \_\_\_\_\_.” (COL 415.5)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the approach of this course will cover both the practical and the spiritual lessons of the Song of Solomon. There are at least three reasons for this choice of paradigm:

- 1. The spiritual lessons are important:** God wants to teach us things about Himself. The main reason why He instituted marriage is to learn more about Him. Missing the spiritual lessons and dwelling only on the physical does a great injustice to the text and to the purpose of the book.
- 2. The practical lessons are just as important:** God created man as a whole, and He has given explicit instructions on how to run each part of our lives. To believe otherwise suggests the God is not interested in marriage, sex, or any other part of our physical, social, and emotional beings—an idea borrowed from the paganism, which gave birth to many heresies throughout the history of the church.
- 3. The spiritual and the practical depend on each other:** Earth and heaven are interdependent. Our earthly experiences impact our spiritual lives, and vice versa. Through the teachings of this book, God wants to shape both, so we can flourish and prosper as we grow.





3. Share how you discovered a new dimension of God’s love through a friend or family member. Share it in one of the following way: give a testimony in church or at a social gathering, create a post or reel on social media, write a personal thank-you note.



1. Case studies:

*One of your friends is reading the Bible through. He has reached the book Song of Solomon, and he shares with you that he feels uncomfortable about the explicit references to sex.*

What would you say to your friend?

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*A young member in your church experiences frequent bouts of depression and anxiety. She seems worried about her safety all the time. She does not share much about her past, but somehow you find out she comes from a broken family.*

How would you help your friend from church?

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# “YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD”

The Bible says we are all temples where He wants to dwell. *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NKJV)*

Whenever we approach the subject of love and marriage, we must keep this important truth in mind: we, as well as others, are temples where the Holy Spirit wants to dwell.

## We are temples for others

1. **A place of safety.** *“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock” (Psalm 27:5).* The temple was a place of refuge, a place where people found security and peace. Each one of us should ask ourselves: am I a safe person to others, trustworthy and dependable? If I don’t reflect those attributes in my daily interactions with others, I am most probably not ready for marriage.

2. **A place of forgiveness.** In the temple, people found forgiveness for their sins. The sacrificial lambs symbolically carried the guilt of the Israelites and paid the penalty of transgression. God promised to forget their sins, to remove them *“as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12)* and to *“cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).* Have we learned the lesson of forgiveness? Do we cherish a kind and conciliatory spirit? Can people find in us genuine forgiveness, or do they feel rejection because of their past mistakes?

3. **A place of communion with God.** One of the most important purposes of the sanctuary was to connect people with God. *“And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest’s office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God” (Ex. 29:44-45).* Is our influence sanctifying, ennobling? Are others brought closer to God because of our influence?

## Others are temples for us

Just as we are God’s temple, other people are also temples where God wants to dwell. When it comes to a romantic relationship, the same holds true. The person we want to approach is God’s temple—he or she belongs to God.

1. ***We approach romance with reverence.*** A temple must be approached reverently. Not in a hurry, not impulsively. Not in a joking, irreverent way. How do we approach God’s temple in the person of His sons and daughters? Are we flippant and frivolous? Flirty and selfish? Are we being careless and impulsive, in a hurry? Or do we approach these temples in a proper way, with due reverence and consideration for the souls that God has created?

The question to be asked is: Do I have the right attitude? Have I made this step prayerfully and with due consideration and respect, or am I moving from feeling and impulse? Does my approach uplift and ennoble, or does it tend to defile and defraud others?

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: **that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter**: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-9)

“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” (Habakkuk 2:20 NKJV)

“Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash [...], and let not your heart utter anything hastily [...]” (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 NKJV)

“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” (1 Corinthians 3:17 NKJV)

**2. We come to the temple with an offering.** In ancient times, people brought sacrifices to the temple. They did not come with empty hands, expecting only to receive. Besides the sacrifices for sin, there were also sacrifices of consecration, devotion, and thanksgiving. These offerings were a symbol of their desire to consecrate themselves—their whole beings and all of their possessions—to God. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1 (KJV).*

Do we approach other people in the same way, with an intention to serve and to be a blessing? This applies to all relationships in life, but especially to marriage, which is essentially giving oneself entirely and unreservedly to another person.

**3. We come to the temple to receive a blessing.** Not only did the worshipers bring an offering to the temple, but the temple also ministered to many important aspects of human life. When we approach someone with serious romantic intentions, we should ask ourselves a series of questions about him or her: Is this person suitable? Is he/she mature and capable enough to provide for my physical, mental and emotional needs? The temple was meant to bring people closer to God. Does this person draw me closer to Jesus or does their influence make me forget about Him?

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

## Enter with joy

Entering into God's temple was a joyful experience. *"How I love your Temple, Lord Almighty! How I want to be there! I long to be in the Lord's Temple. With my whole being I sing for joy to the living God."* Psalm 84:1-2 (GNT)

We should have a certain degree of willingness and desire to approach and love the person we intend to develop a relationship with. Force and pressure was never part of God's plan, for love is based on freedom. Romance should be a joyful experience. Does your heart fill with joy at the thought of the person you are considering a relationship with?

People that are conscientious by nature tend to be very serious about doing things right. And don't get me wrong, they should! But once the approval of God rests on your relationship, don't allow fear or stress to deprive you of the joy and peace that God wants to offer through that experience. Rejoice in what God is doing and will do!

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isaiah 61:10)

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isaiah 62:5)



1. Match each temple characteristic with the appropriate Bible verse(s). These characteristics apply to the temple of the heart, as well.

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| ___ Holiness and purity             | a. Psalm 16:11; 100:4                        |
| ___ The presence of the Holy Spirit | b. Habakkuk 2:20; Ecclesiastes 5:1-2         |
| ___ Safety and security             | c. 1 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 |
| ___ Reverence                       | d. Psalm 51:6                                |
| ___ Sacrifice and surrender         | e. Romans 12:1                               |
| ___ Fullness of joy                 | f. Philippians 4:7                           |
| ___ Power                           | g. 1 Corinthians 3:16                        |
| ___ Peace                           | h. 2 Corinthians 4:7                         |
| ___ Truth and wisdom                | i. Leviticus 5:5-6                           |
| ___ Forgiveness and reconciliation  | j. Psalm 16:11; 100:4                        |



2. Based on the metaphor of the temple, create a set of questions that will help you evaluate your **relationships with people in general**: friends, family, at church, at work, etc. You may want to read this lesson again to gather some ideas. Answer those questions as honestly as possible. Ex.:

- ✓ *Am I a safe and trustworthy person?*
- ✓ *Does my influence lead others to Jesus?*
- ✓ *Do I forgive easily, just as Christ forgave me?*

3. Then, create another set of questions related to **romantic relationships** (use the option that fits you best):

- Create a set of questions to evaluate how prepared you are to enter a relationship.
- If applicable, create a set of questions to evaluate the suitability of the person you are considering a relationship with.
- If you are already in a relationship, write a set of questions to evaluate yourself, your partner,
- and the dynamics of your relationship.
- If you are already married, focus on assessing yourself in light of the duties of that solemn covenant with God and your spouse.

4. After honestly and prayerfully evaluating your own situation, write a letter to God to discuss the results of your assessment. Include in your letter weaknesses identified, questions that perplex, and guidance that you need according to your particular circumstances. Keep your letter for future reference, and over time, record the ways in which God provided for specific answers and solved your problems.

# CHAPTER 1

The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

**Maiden:** Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw me.

**Daughters of Jerusalem:** We will run after thee. **Maiden:** The king hath brought me into his chambers.

**Daughters of Jerusalem:** We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine.

**Maiden:** The upright love thee. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

**Narrator:** If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

**Bridegroom:** I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

**Daughters of Jerusalem:** We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

**Maiden:** While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.

**Bridegroom:** Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes. **Maiden:** Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. **Bridegroom:** The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

The book opens with the passionate speech of the maiden, also called the Shulamite. In fact, the maiden does most of the talking in the entire book! The ample space given to her words shows just how much God recognizes a woman's feelings and experience. God loves human beings, male and female, equally. He deeply cares for them both.

The Song of Songs can be challenging at times, because not everything is in strict chronological order; it is more like a photo album with many different snapshots. Nevertheless, we can identify a rough timeline throughout the book. Chapters 1-3 relate the initial phase in the relationship, the courtship period, and the wedding ceremony. Chapter 4 deals with the consummation of marriage, while Chapters 5-7 describe married life, with Chapter 8 drawing some important conclusions.

This unit will deal with the first chapter only. This passage captures beautiful snapshots in the incipient stage of a relationship—when a man and a woman are first attracted to each other.



# “DRAW ME!”

**Maiden:** “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine... Draw me!”

How deeply in love is the maiden! She expresses a deep desire for close friendship with the man that she admires. I know girls can be like that sometimes. The moment they are attracted to a guy, it’s almost like they already see themselves married!

In spite of all of the internal turmoil and butterflies running through her stomach, the maiden is wise to control her thoughts and actions. She doesn’t take the lead. She doesn’t initiate the kiss. The maiden acknowledges the man’s leadership. She says, “Let *him* kiss me.” The maiden doesn’t pursue the man nor devise ways to draw his attention. Instead, she asks him to “draw” her, to pursue her.

God designed men to be the leaders of their families (Gen. 18:19). In the Bible we often encounter wordings such as “the man... took to wife” (Ex. 2:1), or “when a man hath taken a wife” (Deut. 24:1), recognizing the God-given role of men in the pursuit of marriage. When a single man is considering a romantic relationship with a lady, it is rightful and Biblical for him to take the first step in that direction, to be the initiator.

There are special cases in the Bible when a woman did ask the man to initiate a relationship towards marriage. One beautiful example is the story of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 3). At the advice of an older and more experienced woman, and in a way that was socially accepted in those times for a situation like hers, Ruth humbly approached Boaz. Her courageous act inspired him with confidence, which led him to take bold and manly steps towards the realization of their marriage.

Every God-arranged marriage is special, and every case has its own particularities. The ideal situation would be for a man to initiate the conversation towards a romantic relationship; in some cases, however, the woman might humbly have to approach and “ask” him to draw her, like Ruth or the Shulamite. Whether the man or the woman makes the very first move, “let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose to please and honor God” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 49.1).



1. The \_\_\_\_\_ does most of the talking in the entire book.
2. Not everything in the Song of Songs is in strict \_\_\_\_\_ order.

3. How is the book organized?

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4. The first chapter deals with \_\_\_\_\_.

5. It is right and Biblical for the \_\_\_\_\_ (man/woman) to take the first step towards a romantic relationship.

6. In the story of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, the woman humbly approached the man, after which the \_\_\_\_\_ took the leadership role.

7. "Let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and an earnest purpose to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ God" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 49.1).

**Maiden:** "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee... The upright love thee."

In the Bible, a name represents character (Ex. 33:19; 34:5-6). The man in our story is a man of character, and everybody acknowledges that. At this incipient point in the story, it is rightful to investigate the character of the other person, and not enter in a relationship in the hopes or with the purpose of changing them. Can we respect that person as they are right now? Other Godly people must see and acknowledge the good character that young people often take for granted when overpowered by infatuation. "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Ecclesiastes 7:1).

"Let a young man seek one to stand by his side who is fitted to bear her share of life's burdens, one whose influence will ennoble and refine him, and who will make him happy in her love... Let a young woman accept as a life companion only one who possesses pure, manly traits of character, one who is diligent, aspiring, and honest, one who loves and fears God." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 45, 47)



8. A name represents \_\_\_\_\_.

9. We don't enter into a relationship with the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ the other person.
10. "A good \_\_\_\_\_ is better than precious \_\_\_\_\_"  
(Ecclesiastes 7:1).

**Daughters of Jerusalem:** *"We will run after thee... We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine."*

The daughters of Jerusalem are all present and witness the blooming of love between the man and the woman. There is nothing secretive about their relationship. And those who witness their love pronounce it good.

Although the beginning of a relationship should be characterized by discretion and modesty, it should nevertheless be open and frank to the people that are mostly affected by it. Young people should feel accountable to their parents, pastors, mentors, or other godly people in their lives, and should lay their minds open before them, honestly seeking for help and advice. People outside the relationship often have a more objective perspective, and their godly advice is incredibly valuable.

"If you are blessed with God-fearing parents, seek counsel of them. Open to them your hopes and plans; learn the lessons which their life experiences have taught. If children would be more familiar with their parents, if they would confide in them and unburden to them their joys and sorrows, they would save themselves many a future heartache. When perplexed to know what course is right, let them lay the matter just as they view it before their parents, and ask advice of them. Who are so well calculated to point out their dangers as godly parents? Who can understand their peculiar temperaments so well as they? Children who are Christians will esteem above every earthly blessing the love and approbation of their God-fearing parents. The parents can sympathize with the children and pray for and with them that God will shield and guide them. Above everything else they will point them to their never-failing Friend and Counselor" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 73).



11. Those who witness their love pronounce it \_\_\_\_\_.
12. People outside the relationship often have a more \_\_\_\_\_ perspective.
13. If you are blessed with God-fearing \_\_\_\_\_, seek \_\_\_\_\_ of them.



14. Are you blessed with God-fearing parents or a Godly mentor? If you do, write a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessing they are in your life. If you don't have a trusted counselor at this moment, write a prayer to God, asking to lead you to find one.

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15. Write a thank-you note to your parents or mentors for the blessing they have been in your life, or think of doing something nice to show them your appreciation.

# “INTO HIS CHAMBERS”

*Maiden: “The king hath brought me into his chambers.”*

That is, the man has taken the maiden into the inner chambers of his heart and affections; he has opened his heart to her, seeking a deeper knowledge of her as a person. The maiden has no doubts about his intentions, because they are made very clear.

It is a big thing to allow someone into the chambers of the heart. Sometimes, a big mess may come out of it! That often happens in all sorts of relationships, not only romantic ones. As someone aptly put it, “Involvement with people is always a very delicate thing... It requires real maturity to become involved and not get all messed up.”

In her short but insightful book, *Relationships*, Pamela Reeve shares what she calls the ABC concept of relationships. “A” level friendships are the “Acquaintance” level: we know people’s names, what they do, have casual contact with them, but that’s about all. The “B” level might be called the “Brotherly” level: we know what their interests are, their likes and dislikes, what they’ve been in the past, and what they are planning to do in the future. We do things together, have fun together, work together, and help each other when any of us is in need. B level relationships are deeper than A level ones, but they don’t involve a lot of commitment nor deep, intimate sharing.

Friendships at “C” level are “Close” friend relationships, one of commitment and intimate sharing. This type of relationship demands mutual responsibility to keep the friendship alive. Some aspects involved in C-level relationships are shared interests, like values, common goals, mutual attraction and enjoyment, trust, commitment, and time.

How did the king bring the maiden into his chambers? How does one open the chambers of the heart to another? “Before someone else can come to know me—really know me—I need to learn how to share myself intimately and appropriately. [...] I move into intimate sharing slowly, by letting my friend know what I am thinking and feeling. I share my convictions and tell my joys and disappointments. I let her know my dreams. I share my weaknesses, failures, and fears as well as my victories and successes. I let myself be known. Without self-disclosure I can have numbers of casual friends, but no intimate ones. If I am going to have the help, support, encouragement, and reproof I need from my friend, I must be open with her. Another great benefit of openness is that as she accepts me just as I am, really knowing me, I experience the kind of unconditional love God has for me.” (Reeve, 1982, p. 8). This is the beauty of deep friendships—they reflect God’s unconditional love and acceptance.

Proverbs 12:26 admonishes us, “A righteous person is cautious in friendship” (WEB). Before entering into the commitments of a C-level relationship, two people should know each other well enough to know they can trust the other person. Both should agree to enter into that deeper level of commitment; if only

one friend aims at C level and does all the intimate sharing, the one at B level will feel suffocated, and even unsafe, and will move towards the A level or break the friendship altogether (see Prov. 25:17). The maiden's words reveal that she had full knowledge of the man's intentions, and they also show her desire to share the same level of friendship that he was pursuing.

Two problems that often arise in friendships between girls and guys are undeclared and mis-declared intentions. Mrs. Reeve nicely explains what should be done in either case:

1. **Undeclared intentions.** "Let us assume, for example, that a fellow has been dating a girl for three or four months, and she doesn't know whether he is just enjoying a good friendship or is possibly working toward a lifetime commitment. It is most important for this man to declare where he is. He may say, 'You know, I am just thinking of a friendship. I am not thinking of a serious, ongoing depth of relationship.' Or, he may say, 'You know, I really wonder whether or not this could be leading toward a very deep friendship and on to marriage.'"

2. **Mis-declared Intentions.** "Another problem arises when one says he or she is at a B level but acts as a person would at C. That needs to be refused. If you say, 'We're just friends, this is not really heading to a lifetime commitment,' then you don't share intimately, you don't reveal your secrets to the other. [...] To indicate you would like to date a lot, that you would like to see the other many hours a week, and then to say there's really nothing in it is a mixed message. The one receiving it needs to say, 'We are friends, therefore we'll do the activities, we'll have the discussions that mild friends have and see each other very occasionally.' Otherwise one party can selfishly enjoy all the good of a relationship without the accompanying commitment, and that cheats the other." (Reeve, 1982, pp. 21-22)

When both parties are fully committed to the depth of friendship that a romantic relationship demands, there is safety and security. This was the case between the maiden and the bridegroom in the Song of Solomon. She could say with full assurance, "The king hath brought me into his chambers."



1. "The king hath brought me into his \_\_\_\_\_" means the inner chambers of his \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Match each level of friendship with its description

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| _____ A level ("Acquaintance" level) | a. common activities, knowing each other's likes and dislikes |
| _____ B level ("Brotherly" level)    | b. commitment and intimate sharing                            |
| _____ C level ("Close" level)        | c. knowing each other's names and occupations                 |

3. One great benefit of \_\_\_\_\_ is that as friends accept us just as we are, really knowing us, we experience the kind of \_\_\_\_\_ love God has for us.

4. When entering into a C-level commitment, both friends should \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Two problems that often arise in friendships between girls and guys are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ intentions.
6. In the case of \_\_\_\_\_ intentions, it is most important for the man to declare where he is.
7. When one says he or she is at a B level but acts as a person would at C, it is a case of \_\_\_\_\_ intentions. The one receiving the mixed message should set the proper boundaries of a B level friendship.



8. Reflect on Proverbs 25:17, “Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor’s house, lest he become weary of you and hate you (RSV).” How does the ABC concept of friendships apply in this situation?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Match each situation with the effect it has on friendships.

- \_\_\_ Too deep, too soon
  - \_\_\_ Controlling the other
  - \_\_\_ Competition
  - \_\_\_ One friend pushes towards a C-level friendship, while the other wants to stay at B-level.
  - \_\_\_ You only want one close friend.
  - \_\_\_ You have too many close friends.
  - \_\_\_ A guy and a girl have been in a dating relationship for a period of time, but one of them decides to break off, stepping slowly towards B level so as not to hurt the other person.
  - \_\_\_ A guy moves into C-level sharing with a girl without clearly stating his intentions.
  - \_\_\_ A guy does C-level sharing with a girl, but says he only wants a B-level friendship.
- a. The one wanting the B-level friendship will feel invaded and will back up a level.
  - b. The girl is confused as to the guy’s intentions.
  - c. The guy is cheating the girl, enjoying the benefits of a C-level friendship without the commitment.
  - d. The relationship is strained or broken because somewhere the focus shifted from “helping” to “winning.”
  - e. We find out later that we didn’t know the other person enough, so we end up disappointed with the relationship.

- f. The friend being controlled will feel swallowed up or will lose their own identity; they will either succumb to a toxic relationship or withdraw.
- g. You don't have the time or energy available to maintain all the close friendships.
- h. You get jealous of your friend for having other close friends besides you.
- i. The person remaining at the C level will become confused by the gradual backing out of the other person; the most loving thing to do is a clean, sharp break, to allow the other person time to heal.

10. Study the following real case from the early history of Adventist pioneers.

Annie Rebekah Smith (1828-1855) worked at the Review and Herald Office as an editor. She was young and talented, and James White soon gave her large responsibilities in the publishing work. Right until her death, Annie held a close friendship with James and Ellen White. He sent her a gift of \$75 during her last battle with tuberculosis. Annie's mother wrote, referring to her close friendship with the Whites, that "Annie loved them."

Another worker at the printing office during Review and Herald days was John N. Andrews, a young handsome preacher. John had shown some sympathy for Annie, by taking sides with her when James White corrected the young lady in matters related to editing and office work. It seems from Annie's writings and poems that she did fall in love with John and held high hopes for the future. Those hopes were crushed when John dropped interest in her for another young lady, Angeline Steven, from his hometown in Paris, Maine. According to Ellen White, "Annie's disappointment cost her her life." She died of tuberculosis at the tender age of 27.

Sometime after Annie's death, Andrews considered to withdraw from his relationship with Angeline. Ellen White's letter seems to be counseling him to not make the same mistake with Angeline that he did with Annie. Now that he had raised her expectations, he should go ahead and marry her.

*Topsham, Maine  
August 26, 1855*

*Vision for J. N. A. Concerning His Marriage*

*Dear Brother John [Andrews]:*

*There were two things in the vision given me at Paris that I could not remember. Some things were perfectly lost to me while with you, or hid from me so that I could not speak them. While writing the other parts of the vision these things have unfolded to my mind.*

*I told you that I saw you could not glorify God by taking the step you have contemplated [marrying Angeline], as you have glorified Him in your past life. Instead of having less care while engaged in the great work, as you approach the time of trouble your care will be doubled, your anxiety increased. In no way are you bettering your situation.*





# “FEED YOUR LITTLE GOATS”

***Maiden:** “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother’s children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”*

Unlike today, having a tan was not desirable in ancient times. Tanned skin was an indicator of lower financial and social status; it meant you had to work hard outdoors to earn a living. Being white and pale was a sign of affluence. The maiden acknowledges her difficult station in life, which makes her doubt her worth and eligibility for marriage.

How interesting that, throughout all ages, single women experience similar thoughts and feelings. No matter how beautiful they are, they always feel they’re not enough; they see all their imperfections, and think they’re not worthy of a man’s love. The thought often occurs to them that perhaps the difficult circumstances in their lives have somehow disqualified them for marriage. Hard work and great responsibilities keep them from taking care of themselves and achieving personal goals. “They made me keepers of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”

What they don’t see is that the very circumstances they believe were against them have actually equipped them for the important roles of wife and mother. The harshness and vicissitudes of life have made them beautiful and strong on the inside, which far surpasses their outside beauty. This is the truth enclosed in the Shulamite’s words, “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.”



1. Tanned skin was an indicator of \_\_\_\_\_ financial and social status.
2. Hard work and great responsibilities sometimes keep single women from \_\_\_\_\_ and achieving \_\_\_\_\_ goals.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of life have equipped them for the important roles of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The hardships of life make them \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on the inside, far surpassing their outside beauty.

**Maiden:** *“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?”*

**Narrator:** *“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.”*

In hot countries at noon, shepherds look for shadow where they can shelter themselves and their flocks from the burning sun.

Imagine the maiden taking care of her sheep, growing anxious as the morning hours pass by. She knows noontime is coming, and she needs to find shelter for her sheep, most probably with other shepherds who will lead their own flocks to rest.

However, she is facing a problem. She doesn't feel comfortable hanging around other men. She doesn't want to be considered one who “turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions” or as the Hebrew puts it, “one that is veiled” (a prostitute) or “one who wanders.” Her desire is to keep herself pure, not allowing her feelings and affections to wander from one man to another; she wants *her* man, *her* shepherd, the one that is meant *for her*.

The text doesn't make it very clear who gives the answer to the maiden. Where the answer comes from is of little consequence, for it is indeed wise counsel: “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.” Don't fret or worry, if you don't know. Keep watching your flock—keep doing the work that lies nearest. In due time, God will bring the shepherd that is meant to be your companion.

These two verses reveal an important principle in life. First, find out God's purpose and call for your life, then pursue marriage—in that order. Run towards the goals and dreams the Lord has put on your heart; consecrate your life to God's service. As you run, watch who is running next to you, in the same direction and at a similar pace.

God often brings two people together to increase their efficiency in God's work. One single horse can pull a weight of 3 500 kg, but do you know how much can two horses pull together? Almost 10 800 kg! That is over three times the amount! When two horses do the work together, their individual capacity increases. That is God's plan for marriage: “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour” (Ecclesiastes 4:9)—the reward of souls saved in the kingdom of heaven.

The way to find that perfect team partner is to discover and pursue the calling God has made to you personally. Don't just waste your time around. Serve God with love and passion. Discover your talents and gifts. In your service for Him, God will bring the person who will be best suited to work with you. You want to know where your partner for life is? “If you do not know... follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats” (Song of Solomon 1:8, NKJV).



1. One who “turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions” is a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The maiden’s desire is to keep herself \_\_\_\_\_, not allowing her feelings and affections to \_\_\_\_\_ from one man to another.
3. “Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents” means doing the work that lies \_\_\_\_\_.
4. God often brings two people together to increase their \_\_\_\_\_ in God’s work.
5. “Two are better than one; because they have a good \_\_\_\_\_ for their labour” (Ecclesiastes 4:9)—the reward of \_\_\_\_\_ in the kingdom of heaven.



5. What is the work that lies nearest you? Who are the “little goats” God has entrusted to your care at this moment in your life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. On a clear night, spend some time watching the stars and meditate on Daniel 12:1. Just like God cares about the place of the stars in the heavens, He will take care of you and who will be by your side. The only thing you need to do is to shine brightly for Him!
7. As a teenager, I used to read *Adventist World* quite regularly, especially on Sabbaths. One time I read a featured article that contained this very lesson of waiting on God—pursuing His calling first, trusting Him with this aspect of marriage. It made a huge impression on my young mind! Maybe you will be equally inspired by the testimony of Wendy Harris-Guptill, a missionary in the jungles of the Philippines:

“As time went by, my friends and relatives began to show concern about my being single, nearing 30. The chances of finding a soul mate in the middle of a jungle seemed impossible. I found it humorous when people tried to discreetly hint that maybe it was time for me to come home for a while and ‘find someone.’ However, I trusted God’s promise in Matthew 6:33 that when we put the Master first, all other needs will be supplied. I knew that God did not need me to return to an Adventist community to find the companion He had for me. My mother finally came to the same conclusion, and quipped one day, ‘If God wants you to have a husband, He’ll have to drop one out of the sky!’

I had no idea of the amazing things God had in store for me in the following months. In May 2008 I met Dwayne Harris, a pilot/aircraft mechanic who had recently left all to pioneer a new work in the Philippines with a small helicopter that God had provided. Having worked in the village for several years, I could see the distinct advantages of having helicopter assistance with our medical evacuations. I was pretty excited when I heard that he was seriously considering basing the helicopter near our village!

Dwayne hardly knew a soul in the Philippines upon arrival and had used up his own resources just getting himself and the helicopter into the country. God led someone to help him get the helicopter through customs without a hitch. Then various people of all types and religions had stepped in and provided a place for Dwayne to stay, food to eat, and fuel for the helicopter during the six months he was in Manila!

My parents, who live outside of Manila, opened their home to Dwayne every weekend during this time. The chance to get out of the city and fellowship with other Adventists on a beautiful campus was welcome, especially since he came from the wide open spaces of Montana, a far cry from the 15 million people living in Manila! Even though this time in the city was a time of waiting and character building, God continued to demonstrate His love and care for Dwayne.

As I continued my work in the mountains far from Manila, God provided several more opportunities for Dwayne and me to meet. I began to highly respect Dwayne and his simple but confident trust that God would provide for His work. As I realized that this was a truly genuine man, I couldn’t help wondering what God had in store for us.

Four months after I met Dwayne he was finally able to get the helicopter cleared, registered, and ready to fly from Manila to Palawan. And yes, much to my delight, God dropped my future husband out of the sky (somewhat literally) and into my jungle home without me having to set foot out of the Philippines! One year after we met, Dwayne and I were married.

The change for me was not hard—a wonderful new roommate, a helicopter for transport, and an exciting new mission in progress! As Dwayne joined me in my little hut, we lived a fairy-tale missionary life as we made medical visits and evacuations with the helicopter. A half-day hike up the mountain to reach a patient now took only minutes! I continued running the busy jungle clinic while Dwayne helped with the construction of a new clinic building. The evenings were usually quiet, and we had no phones, Internet, or other media to distract us. We enjoyed planning for the

future of our mission. [...]

It was a new revelation to me, as our mission progressed, how it could be so simple to take God at His word and trust His promises for everything, not just when being in a tight situation. I was perplexed how I, and possibly many others, had missed this core part of faith. I can see clearly now, as I read God's Word and the Spirit of Prophecy, that we should not be limiting God's work by our lack of faith! (And not just financially, but in all the needs for furthering His work.) Seeming obstacles are often God's way of testing our faith in His ability to do the impossible.

My understanding increased as I observed Dwayne. I began to realize how I had been so shortsighted in my ministries so far. Dwayne talked to others with humble confidence about our plans, never mentioning money, personnel, housing, or any other needs that might be conditional for such huge undertakings. The issue was never "if God will provide" or "if we can work this issue out." It was just trying to think bigger, moving forward, seeking God for wisdom, and trusting Him with the details. [...]

We are still babes learning to live by faith, but it's been nothing but exciting so far. In Dwayne's words: 'When we surrender all to God, He will provide beyond our dreams or imaginations.' And that's exactly what God has done—not just financially but in every aspect of our lives. 'The Lord wants His people in these days to believe that He will do as great things for them as He did for the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Canaan. We are to have an educated faith that will not hesitate to follow His instructions in the most difficult experiences. «Go forward» is the command of God to His people!' (Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, Washington, D.C., Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940, p. 277)"

—Wendy Harris-Guptill. "Go Forward!", *Adventist World*, March 2011

# THE BRIDEGROOM SPEAKS

**Bridegroom:** “I compare you, my love, to a mare of Pharaoh’s chariots.” (RSV)

For Westerners, the comparison of a woman with a horse might sound strange indeed! But in those times, it was perfectly in place.

Solomon had some experience with horses. He imported horses and chariots from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28-29, RSV). Horses were a symbol of strength and pride. Scholars of ancient history also note that Pharaoh didn’t use mares for his chariots, but stallions. Comparing the young maiden to a mare among Pharaoh’s stallions was like saying, “You are unique and special to me. You stand out like a beautiful mare among a bunch of regular stallions.” He is not embarrassed around her; on the contrary, he feels rather proud!

Another lesson we can learn from the comparison with a horse is the element of strength. A good wife will not drag her husband down; she will not discourage him from his lofty ambitions. She is a source of strength, of courage, always standing by his side and supporting him. She doesn’t cut his wings, but helps him soar higher and higher.

“If those who are contemplating marriage would not have miserable, unhappy reflections after marriage, they must make it a subject of serious, earnest reflection now. This step taken unwisely is one of the most effective means of ruining the usefulness of young men... no one can do one hundredth part as much to chill the hopes and aspirations of a man, to paralyze his energies and ruin his influence and prospects, as his own wife” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 43).

The opposite is also true: nobody can do even 1% to encourage a man’s hopes and aspirations, to stimulate his energies and enlarge his influence and prospects, as his own wife. In that sense, she has the qualities of a horse—“she is clothed with strength and dignity” (Proverbs 31:25, NIV) and inspires her man with that strength.

If a young man dedicates his life to God’s service, it is important for him to seek a young lady who will become a support and help in his lifework, not a hindrance.

“Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy or inharmonious and wretched. Let the questions be raised, Will this union help me heavenward? Will it increase my love for God? And will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in this life? If these reflections present no drawback, then in the fear of God move forward” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 45).





**Daughters of Jerusalem:** “We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.”

The daughters of Jerusalem are very supportive of their friend. We noticed earlier in the chapter that they approved of her relationship right from the very start. It is very important for a girl to have the support of her family and friends in her love life. There is a communal effort from all her friends to encourage and enhance the maiden’s loveliness and self-worth. The maiden in the Song of Songs does not have enough financial advantages to take care of herself (1:6), so her friends thoughtfully come to her aid, offering to handcraft jewels that she could adorn herself with.

There are several studies that point to the strong influence of family and friends on romantic relationships. Sometimes, couples that fall in love are under the impression that they alone are the ones who determine the person they choose to date, the quality of the relationship, and its duration, as if they were living in an isolated cocoon. But studies indicates their choices are affected significantly by the level of support the couple perceives from family and friends. This is especially true in the case of women. If the woman feels her family and friends support her, the couple is more likely to experience stability in their relationship.



1. The young man admires the young lady’s \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The daughters of Jerusalem gave their \_\_\_\_\_ of her relationship right from the very start.
3. If the woman feels her \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ support her, the couple is more likely to experience \_\_\_\_\_ in their relationship.



4. After his first wife died, William C. White was left with two daughters and a whole load of church responsibilities to care for. While pioneering the work in Australia, he found a young lady, May, who would become his second wife. Read the following letter written by Ellen White to her son Edson, Willie’s brother. In what practical ways did she express her excitement and support of her future daughter-in-law?

Cooranbong, N. S. W., Australia

January 15, 1895

Dear Children, Edson and Emma White:

[...] May Lacey is a noble-looking girl and possesses a fine mind. She is in good health, says she was never sick a day in her life. May Walling went to America to be on hand if the Walling suit should be pushed. May Lacey takes her place. Willie was so anxious that I should have someone to give me treatment, and I have employed her, and she fills the bill nicely. But I soon learned why Willie was anxious for May Lacey. He loved her, and she seems more like Mary White, our buried treasure, than anyone he had met, but I had not the slightest thought when she came to my home; but you will have a new sister in a few months, if her father gives his consent. She is a treasure. I am glad indeed for Willie, for he has not had a very happy, pleasant life since the death of Mary. He will now take steps to have his children come to Australia.

[...] Willie goes to Tasmania, and calls on May Lacey's father, and sets before him his love for his daughter, then he takes boat for New Zealand, and we will not see him for three months. Then, if the Lord will, I shall have a daughter with whom I am well pleased. She is always cheerful, kind, and tender-hearted, willing to do anything she can, and is always satisfied and thankful. She has a large head, blue eyes—she calls them gray, but they are blue—cheeks as red as roses, light complexion. Well, I think I have described her nicely. I told her today that I would like to understand if the matter was settled between her and Willie. She said it was, if her father would consent. I have not any doubt but what he will consent. I am now preparing her wardrobe. I paid the expenses of her brother in college at Battle Creek. Her father did not feel able to do this.

May has been three terms in the school and has developed a talent for a worker, giving Bible readings and visiting. She loves the truth and loves the Lord and is content with anything. Everyone acquainted with her loves her, and everyone who knows of this engagement says she is just the one for Willie White. She is a good performer upon the piano or organ, and reminds me of Mary as she acts this part in meeting. She has a powerful voice that can be cultivated. She loves me and I love her. I wish you could see her. She is about as tall as Mary, her eyes the color of Mary's eyes. She has a similar forehead as Mary had, she is of a sweet disposition, will never stir him up and make him nervous. She is just the one I should choose. I have not seen anyone I have cared to take Mary's place in my family relation before, but this is all right. I leave them in the order of God.

I am so glad for Willie, for he needs a wife. She has a mild disposition but can be personally decided. When she is satisfied a certain course is right, she is not to be moved any from it. She lost her mother a short time after we came to Australia. She was a precious Christian woman. [...]

Well, we are here, fitting up her wardrobe, and we hope she will be prepared for her married life with a real becoming wardrobe, but not expensive or extravagant. [...]

Mother



5. If you know a young couple who is planning to get married, think of ways you can support and encourage them.
  
6. If you are a girl, you may know in your own circle of single female friends someone that might be struggling financially. As opportunity arises, give your friend that extra support to take care of her health or appearance. When finances are tight, these aspects are not usually the priority. She will greatly appreciate a friend's thoughtful gift!



# SWEET FRAGRANCE

**Maiden:** “While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.”

Spikenard is a strong perfume extracted from the plant *Nardostachys jatamansi*, which grows in the highlands of the Himalayas. Spikenard was highly appreciated in ancient times, and it is still used in modern herbal medicine.

One time when Jesus was invited to a feast, a woman came and anointed his feet with a costly perfume made from spikenard (John 12:3). The perfume cost one year’s worth of wages, but the woman was so grateful for what Jesus had done in her life, that she wanted to show her gratitude to Him in this way. She hoped her act would remain unnoticed, but the fragrance was so strong that it filled the whole house. When people criticized her for such a waste of money, Jesus commended her act of love. He said that her act was so significant, that her story would be told wherever the Gospel was to be preached.

There is a lesson that we can learn from the story of Mary. Spikenard reminds us of a life full of love. “That ointment was a symbol of the heart of the giver. It was the outward demonstration of a love fed by heavenly streams until it overflowed.” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 564)

Spikenard also reminds us of a life led by the Holy Spirit; such a life will shed fragrance all around it. “Mary knew not the full significance of her deed of love. She could not answer her accusers. She could not explain why she had chosen that occasion for anointing Jesus. The Holy Spirit had planned for her, and she had obeyed His promptings. Inspiration stoops to give no reason. An unseen presence, it speaks to mind and soul, and moves the heart to action. It is its own justification.” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 560)

Abigail is another example of such a life led by the Holy Spirit. In a time of crisis, when David was preparing to come and kill her husband, she acted promptly and wisely to appease his wrath. This kind of wisdom is the result of learning to recognize and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit, even when it is hard.

“The piety of Abigail, like the fragrance of a flower, breathed out all unconsciously in face and word and action. The Spirit of the Son of God was abiding in her soul. Her speech, seasoned with grace, and full of kindness and peace, shed a heavenly influence. Better impulses came to David, and he trembled as he thought what might have been the consequences of his rash purpose. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.’ Matthew 5:9. Would that there were many more like this woman of Israel, who would soothe the irritated feelings, prevent rash impulses, and quell great evils by words of calm and well-directed wisdom.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 667)

A woman whose life is led by the Holy Spirit will be like a sweet fragrance. “While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.” Her influence will help all those around her heavenward.

Another interesting fact is that spikenard is known for improving brain health; it enhances memory, learning, and overall cognitive function (Kamble et al., 2025). Romantic love in its early stages is often

associated with reduced activity in some regions of the brain responsible with critical judgment. A virtuous woman, however, will have an elevating influence on the brain of a man; like Abigail, she will “prevent rash impulses, and quell great evils by words of calm and well-directed wisdom.”



1. “While the king sitteth at his table, my \_\_\_\_\_ sendeth forth the smell thereof.”
2. Spikenard reminds us of a life full of \_\_\_\_\_ and led by the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. “The piety of Abigail, like the fragrance of a flower, breathed out all \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.”
4. Spikenard is known for improving \_\_\_\_\_ health and overall \_\_\_\_\_ function.
5. A virtuous woman will “prevent \_\_\_\_\_, and quell great evils by \_\_\_\_\_ and well-directed \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Maiden:** “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.”

Not only is King Solomon spellbound by the sweet fragrance of the lady at his table, but the maiden herself is deeply charmed by her beloved. She compares him to a bundle of sweet-smelling myrrh. In poetic language, she describes how she thinks of him all the time, even during the night; for he has become a part of her heart, the repository of human emotions and affections.

Just like the spikenard, myrrh in the Bible is connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Myrrh was one of the main components of the anointing oil for the sanctuary and the priests (Exodus 30:23-31). A priest was anointed with myrrh, which made all of his garments sweet-scented. In Psalm 45, Jesus is described as a King anointed with myrrh: “*Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad*” (Psalm 45:7-8).

A man anointed with the Holy Spirit will love righteousness and hate wickedness. When Joseph was in Egypt, he chose righteousness when tempted by Potiphar’s wife: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

A righteous, godly man will obey the leadings of the Holy Spirit in his life. When Joseph of Nazareth

was engaged, he found out that Mary had conceived, and he didn't know that the baby she was carrying was from the Holy Spirit. Now he faced a big dilemma: according to Jewish law, pregnant and unwed women like Mary had to be put to death. He was "a just man" and did not want her to be publicly disgraced; but as he was considering to put Mary away, an angel instructed him as to what he should do: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:20). Following the Lord's instructions, he obediently took the responsibilities of protector and provider for the mother of the Messiah.

The influence of men and women who are obedient to God and whose lives are surrendered to His leading will be like the spikenard and myrrh. In the context of romance, man and woman will be a blessing to each other. The woman, like the spikenard, will soften and subdue, while the man, like myrrh, will be a strong helper and priest in their relationship and future home.

"God made from the man a woman, to be a companion and helpmeet for him, to be one with him, to cheer, encourage, and bless him, he in his turn to be her strong helper. All who enter into matrimonial relations with a holy purpose—the husband to obtain the pure affections of a woman's heart, the wife to soften and improve her husband's character and give it completeness—fulfill God's purpose for them." (*The Adventist Home*, p. 99)



1. Myrrh was one of the main components of the anointing oil for the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. "Thou lovest \_\_\_\_\_, and hatest \_\_\_\_\_: therefore God, thy God, hath \_\_\_\_\_ thee with the oil of \_\_\_\_\_ above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of \_\_\_\_\_, and aloes, and cassia..." (Psalm 45:7-8).
3. A righteous, godly man will \_\_\_\_\_ the leadings of the Holy Spirit in his life.
4. The influence of men and women who are obedient to God and whose lives are surrendered to His leading will be like the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. "God made from the man a woman, to be a companion and helpmeet for him, to be one with him, to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ him, he in his turn to be her \_\_\_\_\_ helper."

**Bridegroom:** “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes.”

**Maiden:** “Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.”

**Bridegroom:** “The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.”

The beloved lavishes words of appreciation for the maiden’s beauty. She is beautiful *for him*. How important is for a wife to be constantly assured that she is beautiful and special for her husband!

The beloved especially praises the maiden’s eyes; he says she has “doves’ eyes.” Doves cannot move their eye-balls like humans do—they can only focus on one thing at a time. When the man looks into the eyes of his sweetheart, he can see her singleness of purpose; she doesn’t have the ability nor interest to look at another in the same way. For her, he is special and unique.

Eyes are known as the “window to the soul.” A dove’s eyes are soft and gentle, modest and innocent. This is a reflection of what is in the heart of the maiden. Her love is innocent, humble, pure, and exclusive.

The chapter ends with a beautiful metaphor taken from nature. The beloved and the maiden compare their relationship in terms of a house built from cedars and firs, with lush greenery underneath. Just like the grass and trees in the physical world grow according to the laws of nature, so did their friendship and closeness grow gradually and naturally. Nevertheless, it was also intentional, just as erecting a house from beams of cedars and firs requires intentional planning and building. Throughout the chapter, the couple grows from an initial uncertainty about the feelings and thoughts of the other, to complete assurance as to the intentions and direction of their relationship.



1. “Behold, thou art fair; thou hast \_\_\_\_\_ eyes.”
2. Doves cannot move their \_\_\_\_\_ like humans do—they can only focus on \_\_\_\_\_ thing at a time.
3. The maiden doesn’t have the \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_ to look at another man in the same way.
4. Just like the grass and trees grow \_\_\_\_\_, so does their friendship. Nevertheless, their relationship also required \_\_\_\_\_ planning and building.



# CHRIST, THE BELOVED

A study of the Song of Songs would be incomplete without the spiritual application to Christ. The relationship between Christ and His people is often described in the Bible in terms of the marriage relation.

“For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.” (Isaiah 54:5)

“As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” (Isaiah 62:5)

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2)

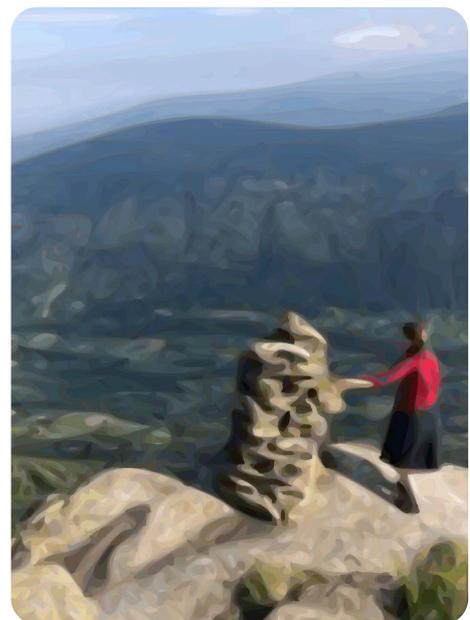
“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

“Closer than father, mother, brother, friend, or lover is the Lord our Saviour.” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327)

*“For thy love is better than wine.” “We will remember thy love more than wine.” (1:2,4)*

The Bible predicts how Satan will make the whole world drink from the wine of Babylon. Wine represents the erroneous doctrines of a false religious system in opposition to God. *“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” (Revelation 14:8)*

Throughout history, God’s truth has been suppressed by the erroneous ideas of men. But God always had a people who preserved the Word of God alive. One such group of people were the Waldensians. For centuries, they owned and produced copies of the Bible, at a time when it was forbidden by the Roman Catholic church to do so. They kept the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible and risked their lives to share the wonderful truth of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Many of them died horrible deaths because of their convictions.



Mount Casteluzzo. Photo credits: Shanna Walters

I had the opportunity to visit one of the places where Waldensians were mercilessly thrown off a cliff for their faith. As I sat down on the edge of Mount Casteluzzo in Italy, I asked myself whether I would have had the courage to do what those Waldenses did. If someone would hold me there, threatening to throw me down the rocks if I did not renounce my beliefs, would I be strong enough, brave enough to hold on to Christ? I closed my eyes and tried to imagine how it would feel to be hurled down that mountain.

I realized in that moment that the only way I could have chosen death was if I loved Jesus deeply. Nothing else would have sustained me in such a trial.

If we experience the love of Jesus, we will find His love better than wine, better than all the wines of Babylon. And this love will be the only sure thing amid the perils of the last days. "The deep love of God alone will sustain the soul amid the trials which are just upon us." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 135)



1. "Thy love is better than \_\_\_\_\_."
2. Wine in Revelation represents the \_\_\_\_\_ of a false religious system.
3. "The \_\_\_\_\_ alone will sustain the soul amid the trials which are just upon us."



4. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Find at least 10 Bible verses that speak about God's love for you.



5. How do you demonstrate your love for Jesus? Find Bible texts that show how you can practically express your love for Him. This week, express that love in at least one of those ways.

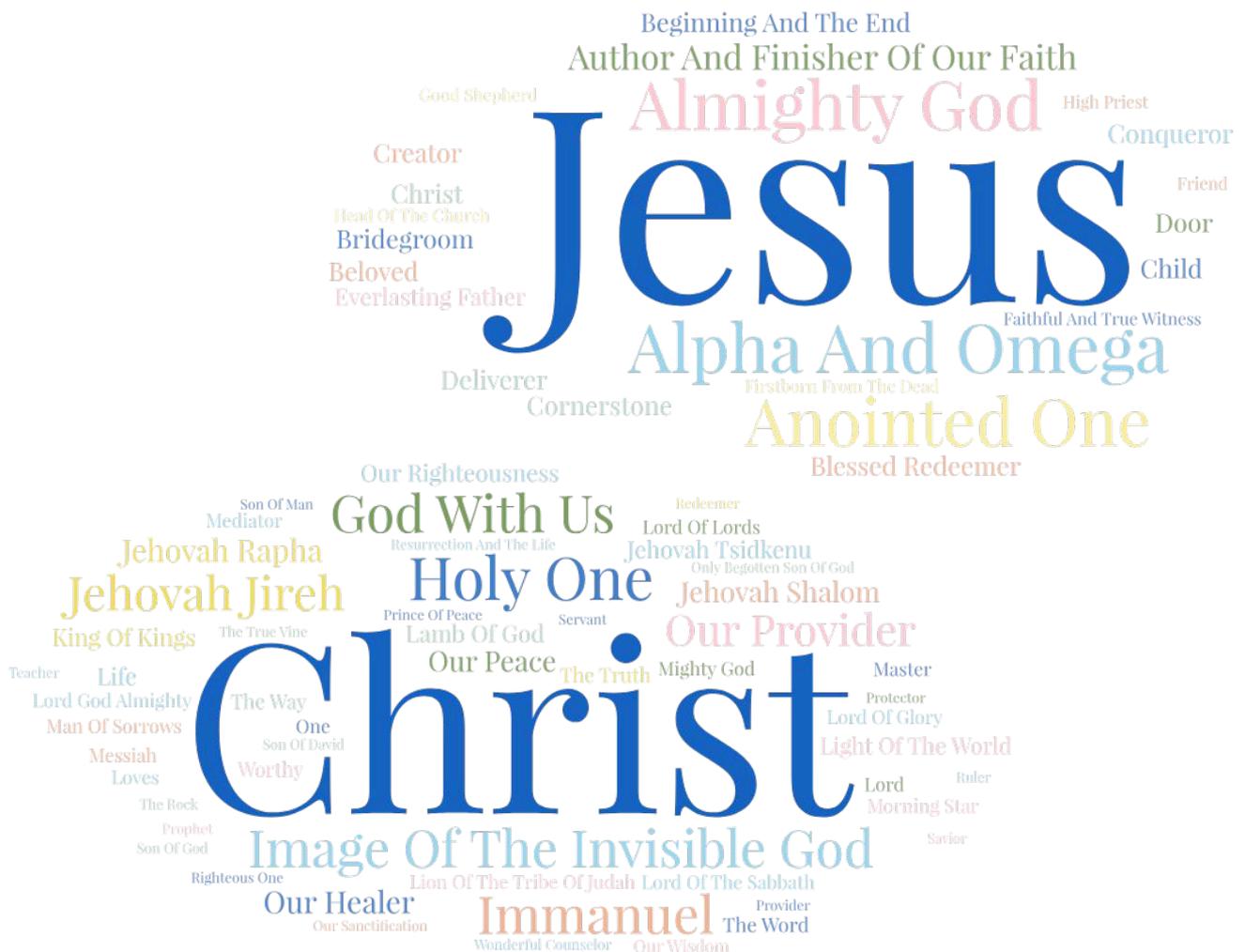
"But few appreciate all that Christ is to them. If they did, the great love of Mary would be expressed, the anointing would be freely bestowed. The expensive ointment would not be called a waste. Nothing would be thought too costly to give for Christ, no self-denial or self-sacrifice too great to be endured for His sake." (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 565)

*“Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth.” (1:3)*

For those who love Jesus, His name will be precious. Have you ever experienced being suddenly alert when the name of a person you love is mentioned? If we are devoted to Christ, we will love to hear His name. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee” (Psalm 5:11).



1. Choose five names or titles of Jesus and describe what each one means to you personally. Was there an incident or moment in your life when Jesus was to you a Shepherd or a Rock (or any other title)?



*“The king hath brought me into his chambers.” (1:4)*

God loves everyone alike, but only those who respond to His love get to know the depths of His heart. As we follow Christ by faith into the heavenly sanctuary, where He ministers, we get to be in the “secret place of the most High.” There we can see the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of God.

*“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust... Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.” (Psalm 91:1-2,14-15)*

*“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)*

*“A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.” (1:13)*

Whom do we think about all day? “Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ’s, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 58)

“We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 99)

*“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes.” (1:15)*

Christ, the Bridegroom, compares His bride’s eyes to “doves’ eyes.” As we noted earlier in this study, doves’ eyes can only focus on one thing at a time. Having “eyes like doves” refers to how lovers are fully focused on their significant other, looking at nobody else with the same love. The comparison with doves is also significant, because doves have only one mate in their lives.

Is our focus entirely on Jesus? How does our devotional time and attendance to church look like? Do we get distracted with our phones, our friends, music, or other things? Evaluating our lives at large, what do

we spend most of our time on? Do we pursue selfish ambitions and goals, or do we seek to follow His plan for our lives?

Jesus once told a parable to illustrate how other things in our lives might distract us from God. “Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” (Luke 14:16-20)

If we love Christ, we will accept His call and dedicate our lives to Him. We will use all our energies and all our resources to serve Him, and to get ourselves and others ready for His appearing. But how many of us are preoccupied with the things of this earth! Like the people who were invited in the parable, we bring excuses. However, God requires the whole heart. “We are to follow the Lamb of God whithersoever He goeth. His guidance is to be chosen, His companionship valued above the companionship of earthly friends.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 223)



1. Only those who \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ’s love get to know the \_\_\_\_\_ of His heart.
2. “If we are Christ’s, our thoughts are \_\_\_\_\_ Him, and our sweetest thoughts are \_\_\_\_\_ Him. All we \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ is consecrated to Him.”
3. What are the excuses that people brought for not coming to the wedding feast?
  - a) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) \_\_\_\_\_
4. “We are to follow the Lamb of God \_\_\_\_\_ He goeth. His \_\_\_\_\_ is to be chosen, His \_\_\_\_\_ valued above the companionship of earthly friends.”



5. Ask yourself the questions below. Journal your honest thoughts to God, asking Him for His help. If you find that your love for Him is diminishing, talk to Him about it! He is more than willing to fill your heart with love for Him.

- Who has my heart?
- With whom are my thoughts?
- Of whom do I love to speak?
- Who has my warmest affections and my best energies?
- Is all I have and all I am consecrated to Him?
- Do I long to do His will?
- Do I long to please Him in all things?
- In every unexpected trial, do my thoughts turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun?

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"For love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord."

*Song of Songs 8:6*

