

#### 4) Cultivating Courtship

- A) Solomon and the Shulammitte girl share strong admiration for one another as a part of their courtship (Song of Songs 1:8-2:6). Their relationship reveals how to cultivate courtship!
- B) Solomon speaks to his future bride, "most beautiful among women..." (1:8); "...my mare among the chariots of Pharaoh" (1:9); "your cheeks are lovely... your neck..." (1:10); "how beautiful you are, my darling... like doves" (1:15); "like a lily among the thorns" (2:2).
- C) Solomon cultivates **RESPECT** by showing **HIGH REGARD** and **PRIDE** in his future bride. Solomon shows **VERBAL KINDNESS** and is courting her **EXCLUSIVELY**.
- D) The Shulammitte girl speaks to her future husband, "my perfume... fragrance... my beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh..." (1:13); "a cluster of henna..." (1:14); "How handsome you are... so pleasant..." (1:16); "Like an apple tree... in his shade I took great delight..." (2:3); "his banner over me is love..." (2:4).
- E) The Shulammitte girl experiences an **ENVIRONMENT OF ROMANCE** in the midst of **PUBLIC PRIDE AND LOVE**. She experiences **SECURITY & PROTECTION**, all of which raises her **SELF-WORTH & VALUE**.
- F) True cultivation always increases desire (2:5-6). Sexual desire is normal and should not surprise anyone! Note that Solomon **PROTECTS PURITY AND GUARDS THE HEART** of his bride and himself (2:7)!

# Purity In Courtship

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**LET US BEHAVE PROPERLY AS IN THE DAY, NOT IN CAROUSING AND DRUNKENNESS, NOT IN SEXUAL PROMISCUITY AND SENSUALITY, NOT IN STRIFE AND JEALOUSY. BUT PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH IN REGARD TO ITS LUSTS.  
~ROMANS 13:13-14 (NASB)**

#### 1) The Priorities Of The Bride

- A) Attraction to physical beauty can be a powerful motivator for seeking a relationship with another person. However, the priorities of the Shulammitte girl reveal that God seeks more in relationships which are honoring to Him:
- i) **Godly Character** -- Who are you following?
  - ii) **Reputation** -- Are you known for your Christlikeness?
  - iii) **Servanthood** -- Do you actively serve others/family?
  - iv) **Open & Honest** -- Do you seek to have a relationship which is public and open for input and observation?
- B) Beauty ALWAYS turns ugly without God at the center. God-centered relationships ALWAYS produce lasting beauty!

## 2) The Tension Between Dating & Courtship

- A) Honoring parents and devoted submission to their experience and guidance were much stronger cultural forces for a romantic relationship in biblical times (and even in modern times) than attraction & romantic interest.
- B) Relationships which could lead to marriage were usually arranged by parents, and all relationships -- even those initiated by their children -- required parental approval.
- C) Most arranged relationships were not forced on children, but were subject to their acceptance. Ultimate approval, even after arrangement, still belonged to the parents.
- D) This flies in the face of the current 21<sup>st</sup> Century phenomena of dating. Dating and the culture which often surrounds it is very different from the world/culture of the Bible.
- E) Because of the difference in culture, it is important to understand and apply biblical principles (wisdom) to the culture of dating. With that in mind, I believe dating is:
  - i) **Observation** -- The opportunity to observe both the character and the reputation of another person.
  - ii) **Interactive** -- Dating should never happen alone. Dating should happen in groups, with family, or an already married couple.
  - iii) **No "Strings" Attached** -- Absolutely no "playing house." No touching, no kissing, no pet names, no strings. Clear thinking is easier without "strings."
  - iv) **Short Duration** -- Dating should not extend further than 3-5 dates spread over a period of 2-3 months. After that point, it's time to get serious or get lost!

- F) Dating can (although not often) lead to courtship. Courtship occurs between two people who have observed one another's character and reputation, have the approval of others (primarily parents), have shown a pattern of self-control, and are preparing for marriage. I believe courtship is:
  - i) **Involvement** -- A chosen effort to influence one another's character and spiritual walk with Jesus.
  - ii) **Boundaries** -- Courtship continues to happen interactively with family and friends, but also develops deepening intimacy through expanded boundaries.
  - iii) **Purity** -- Courtship raises the level of trust, vulnerability, and desire, without raising the level of opportunity for sexual expression.
  - iv) **High Regularity/Short Duration** -- Courtship continues dating, but with great regularity. However, courtship should last no longer than 6-12 months.
- G) The goal of dating is observation & evaluation. The goal of courtship is trust building & marriage. Without clear goals, the ship has a tendency to wander.

## 3) Where's The Beef -- The Bible -- The Why?!!

- A) **Reflect Jesus (Ephesians 5:1-4)**. All our relationships, especially the romantic type, should reflect Jesus!
- B) **Commit To Purity (Romans 13:12-14)**. You will never regret purity, you will always regret impurity. Without question, keep the marriage bed pure (Hebrews 13:4)!
- C) **Synergistic Sanctification (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:3-7)**. God has never created ANYTHING more satisfying than Himself for you. Marriage is a "one-ness" celebration of mutual satisfaction in God and in one another!