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## Solomon on Sex - Dating and Relating

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February 5, 2012

Good morning. For those of you who are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are in the fifth week of our study in the Song of Solomon. For those just joining us, let me give an overview of the book.

The Song of Solomon is an Old Testament book that is a collection of love songs between King Solomon and his first wife. They are poetic. They are romantic. Sometimes they are explicit. God inspired them and put them in the Bible because we need to study them. That is why we are in this series. The book is structured in what is called a lyric idyll. It is a collection of songs about their marriage put together like snapshots in a photo album.

The book began with snapshots of their wedding day. Last week, we studied a snapshot that showed the bride's reaction when she saw the bridal chamber that Solomon decorated in green, her favorite color. Last week's snapshot closed with a warning to the single and searching among us. Do not awaken love until the wedding night.

This morning, we are in Song of Solomon 2:8. This section is a flashback to when they were dating. It is a message geared primarily to those who are single, but the rest of us will learn valuable lessons along the way. We will work our way through the text quickly because I want to get to one key verse at the end that we will unpack.

**Ladies, date a motivated man.**

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold,

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there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. Song of Solomon 2:8–9 (ESV)

The scene is the mountains of Lebanon where she grew up. She hears Solomon coming in the distance, because he is calling to her. She looks on the hillside, and he is running. He is bouncing from rock to rock like a gazelle. Solomon is not dragging his feet. He is running like a track star to see the girl he loves. By the time he gets to her doorstep he is probably sweating and looks like a Gatorade commercial.

When he arrives at her house, he is so excited to see her that he doesn't just knock on the door. He is a peeping Tom peering through the windows with a smile on his face. He can't wait to see her and hear her voice.

This is not the point of the text, but is worth noting. Ladies, when a Christian guy is interested in you, check to see if he is a motivated man. Ladies, you want to marry a motivated, hard-working guy.

I have seen too many young women become attached at the heart to unmotivated men. These are men that are not motivated to get a job. If they have a job, they try to perform the minimum amount of work. They aren't motivated to provide for a wife. They aren't motivated to make a difference for Christ. They want to come to church and just sit. They are lazy. They do not want to come to church and make a difference. They are motivated when it comes to playing with adult toys. They are motivated for football. They are quick to critique the exhausted football team on the field but are too lazy to get off the

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couch and get their own potato chips. They aren't motivated to put in the hard work to be a sacrificial leader for their wife and children.

Ladies, they may be cool. They may have a funky hairstyle. They may have a car with a loud exhaust. They may be popular. If they aren't motivated and hard working, they are lazy. If you get hooked up with an unmotivated lazy guy who has not grown up, you will regret it.

### Ladies, date a positive man.

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away." Song of Solomon 2:10–13 (ESV)

It is spring time. It appears they were apart for the winter. Absence made the heart grow fonder. Solomon invites her to a walk in the countryside. He reminds her everything is in bloom. The flowers are out. The turtledove, which is a migratory bird, is back to the land. The fig tree is putting out blossoms. Everything is coming alive after a long winter. Solomon is excited because their love is also in bloom again.

This is a side note. When it comes to their date, Solomon is not taking her to the movies where the lights are off and the movie is on so they don't have to talk and nobody can see what their hands are doing. He takes her for a walk in a public place. The best part of a walk in the country is the publicness of the walk doesn't encourage physical intimacy, but walking together gives you perfect privacy for conversation. As we will see in a moment, the dating stage of a relationship is the time you should have many in-depth conversation about things

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that are important. Going for a walk together is one of the best ways to accomplish that!

Another thing I noticed is Solomon's approach to life. He is a positive guy. His glass is always half-full. He is the kind of guy that brings energy to a relationship. He doesn't drain energy out of a relationship. I think he is the kind of man that was tough to get emotionally down. His life attitude is only hinted at in these verses, but that attitude becomes more obvious the further we move into the text.

Ladies, don't allow yourself to be attracted to a passive depressive guy. You will regret it.

One of the reasons young women are attracted to passive and depressive men is because a woman's mothering instinct kicks in. They want to mother the guy. They think they can fix him and nurture him. Ladies, you may enjoy mothering your man for a while but it will eventually drive you nuts. You will eventually learn you can't change him or fix him. You need to marry a man, a man who is a positive leader. Don't date and marry a passive, depressive child who can shave. You mother children, not a husband. Solomon is a positive, focused guy.

**Guys, date a woman who is modest.**

**O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Song of Solomon 2:14 (ESV)**

We have a very motivated Solomon trying to look through the windows to see the woman he loves; but she is hiding inside. Maybe she is playing hard to

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get. I don't know. If she is like many women, she is still fixing her hair in the bathroom. We don't know exactly why she won't come to the door, we just know he has to wait for his girlfriend. He is not getting to see her until she is fully clothed and presentable.

This poetic line doesn't give us much to go on, but from the rest of the book, we learn the Shulamite was very modest with her charm and protective of her chastity. She knows she has looks that can kill but she isn't the kind of girl that shows it off. She is modest in how she conducts herself around men. To put it frankly, she is a woman that is aggressive and creative in marriage but guarded with her charm around other men both before and after marriage.

This is a precious quality. Guys, your goal is not to date the girl who wears the smallest swimsuit on the beach. That is a woman trying to attract all the men she can. She is trying to attract all the wrong kind of men. You want to date, and marry, a woman who is modest in public but is looking forward to being married and passionate with her husband in private, not the other way around.

**Talk about the little things that will make a big difference.**

**Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom. Song of Solomon 2:15 (ESV)**

Now we come to the verse where we will spend most of our time. The ESV translation has this inside the quotes, as if Solomon is speaking. The quotes were added by the editor. There are no quotes in Hebrew. The scholars are not certain who says this little line. I side with the scholars who think it is spoken by the Shulamite. If you notice the structure of the song, we begin with a motivated man that has a positive outlook on their future then we switch to a

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modest woman who has a realistic outlook on the future. This is her statement of realism that brings Solomon's amazing optimism down to earth.

All Solomon sees about the future and their relationship is everything in bloom. The Shulamite sees the bright future, but she also sees little problems that could add together to derail their relationship if they aren't addressed while they are dating. She calls them *little foxes*.

If you remember, she came from a farming family that worked the vineyards. In Lebanon there were lions and leopards that would threaten your life in the field.<sup>1</sup> Those were the big issues you cared about when you worked the vineyard. The foxes were small threats. Scholars tell us these foxes were usually not more than a foot tall. They were hard to keep out of the vineyards because they were tiny. While they are small, they are very destructive. First, they burrow in the ground loosening the soil around the roots, which cut down on the vines ability to gain nutrients from the soil. Second, if they could reach the grapes, they gobbled them up before they reached maturity. When harvest season arrived, the grapevines were not healthy and many of the grapes were gone. The lion and leopard are big problems than can destroy you. Foxes are little problems that slowly eat at your relationship.<sup>2</sup>

What were the foxes she saw gnawing away on their future? One concern was his busyness in the matters of state. We will unpack that next week. What I would like to do for the balance of our time is to platform off of this idea that little

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Gledhill, *The Message of the Song of Songs*, pg. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Dillow, *Solomon on Sex: The Biblical Guide to Married Love*, pg.47.

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things can add up to ruin a relationship and apply that concept to dating and married.

What are the little problems young men and women see but don't address when they are dating that can boomerang back to destroy their marriage? This week, I pulled out a piece of scratch paper and wrote down things that seem insignificant to most dating couples, but in the end, they will make a big difference when you are married.

## 1. Roles

When you are dating, you must discuss what the role of a man and woman is in marriage from a biblical standpoint. This is crucial. There are two major streams of thought. There are egalitarians and complementarians.

Egalitarians say a man and women are equal in all respects. When it comes to who does what in the family, you discuss it and hopefully agree. When you don't agree, you play a game of rock, paper, scissors to determine who gets their way.

Listen to me closely. The most liberal versions of egalitarianism are what our culture endorses. Many churches who call themselves Christian churches endorse this. Let me shoot straight. When Christians say they are egalitarians, and they claim to believe the Bible, they are not playing with a full deck of cards. The Bible is not egalitarian. I have read the arguments, and I have read the Bible, and they do not match. Young people, this is a huge issue. Our culture is drenched in egalitarianism. You need to do the Bible study on this and get this issue straight in your head before you date. Then, when you date, this is one of

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the discussions you must have. Ignoring this is letting a fox play in your vineyard. I have watched this cause huge amounts of pain and tears in many marriages.

The Bible is clearly complementarian, not egalitarian. That means a husband and wife are equal in personhood but they have distinct God-given roles. Their marital roles are designed to complement one another.

I am sure you are wondering where this is found in Scripture. Let's just jump right in and offend all the feminists in the room and go to one of the most direct passages. Let's just turn Ephesians 5 and unpack some principles from it.

**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Ephesians 5:22–24 (ESV)**

**A wife's role is to submit to her husband's leadership.** Go back to Genesis. Why was a woman created for Adam and from Adam? It was not good for him to be alone. He needed a helpmate suitable for him and since the helpmate was made from something that came out of him, having that helpmate will complete him. Men, you are heads of your family and of your wife. Your wife was created by God to be your helpmate and that is her primary role. Married ladies, when somebody asks you what you do for a living, tell them your job is to be the wife of my husband. Don't answer people by saying your identity comes from a corporate position; it comes from your home position and playing your God-given role.

**These roles are not arbitrary.** God didn't roll dice to decide who would be head of the home. Husbands, you are head of the home just as Christ is

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head of the church. There is parallelism there. Think of the love and sacrifice Christ has done for the church. Men, that is our job to love and sacrifice for our wife and children.

**These roles are not reversible.** They cannot be changed around. The church cannot die for Christ. Christ cannot submit to the church. A husband and wife's roles are not reversible. Some of you are wondering how this works because you married up. You married a woman that is much smarter than you are. If that is your case, praise God. He gave you a wise counselor but as the husband, you are still responsible before God for your family.

**A husband's role is to lovingly sacrifice for his wife.**

We offended the feminists, now let's offend the chauvinists.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

As a husband, your job is to sacrifice your life for the good of your wife and children. Think of Christ's sacrifice for us. He died for us. He is sanctifying us. He will glorify us. Men, that is our pattern for how we are to relate to our wives.

Satan desires to twist these roles, sin has altered our desire to fulfill our God-given complementarian roles. There is an interesting passage in Genesis 3:16 that describes how sin affects the role a husband and wife play in marriage.

...Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Genesis 3:16 (ESV)

The word *desire* does not refer to biological attraction. That existed before the fall. The word *desire* literally means *a desire for your husband's position*.

One of the ways the fall affects a woman in marriage is rather than being a

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helper who is supportive of her husband's leadership, her sinful desire will be to be a challenger who will try and undermine her husband's position of leadership. Sinfully, she won't want to be his helper, she will want to be his challenger.

Guys, that doesn't go well for us. That is when the effects of the fall play out in our marital role. It says *he will rule over you*. The Hebrew word for *rule* is a harsh dictatorial rule. Rather than being a leader who loves his wife and desires to sacrifice himself for his wife, sin leads a husband to be harsh and dictatorial toward his wife. These are men that yell around the house. They throw things and leave the wife and kids hiding in the closet. That is a sinful disgusting man. That is how sin twists his role in family leadership.

In short, the fall produces an egalitarian marriage where a wife is not supporting her husband and submitting to him but is competing for his leadership. A husband is not sacrificing himself for his wife but is using his wife. This is why an egalitarian marriage produces so much hardship. This is why it is so unbiblical.

A Christian marriage is a complementarian marriage where a husband and wife repent of the sinful ways they are expressing their role in marriage. The wife returns to fulfilling her role as the helpmate who submits and supports her husband. Her husband returns to his role of joyfully sacrificing and supporting his wife. These are little things that make a big difference.

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## Goals

While you are dating, consider writing your obituaries. Talk about what you want said about your life when it is over. What are your spiritual goals? What are your life goals? What difference for Christ do you want to make? Use your dating time to find and work through the little fox of having different goals for the future. You would be surprised how many starry-eyed romantic couples come in for premarital counseling that have not discussed life goals.

## Priorities

While you are dating, talk about your priorities. Talk about what is important to you. Talk about what moves you. Talk about what you want to be part of your life every day.

## Anchors

Anchors are the non-negotiables in a marriage. These are fixed points you agree to hold yourselves to. In the past, I told you about some standards Cindy and I agreed to, such as not riding in a car alone with someone of the opposite sex. Another standard is eating dinner together as a family. We can't do it every night of the week, but in our busy lives, we try to hold dinner as a family to be an anchor point we won't give up in our lives.

Another anchor point we are struggling to accomplish is family Bible reading. Guys, this one is our responsibility. We are the heads of the family. Our wives may do a great job helping with the spiritual education of the children, but we are the head of our home. The buck stops with us. The spiritual education of our children is our responsibility.

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Let me share some thoughts. With one child in high school wrestling, another in junior high wrestling and another in dance, I am struggling to keep a family devotional time. As I prayed about it this week, the Holy Spirit brought to mind a strategy I am implementing this week. You can hold me accountable. The Holy Spirit said, “Let your wife be in charge of preparing the *physical food* for dinner, you are in charge of preparing the *spiritual food* for dinner.” I am not talking about giving a sermon. I am talking about something as simple as reading a verse and sharing for 30 seconds with the family over dinner. That re-anchors us to a life-habit we agreed to bind ourselves to years ago.

### Conclusion

Probably one of the most vivid examples of what can happen when a couple doesn't use their dating time to catch the little foxes in their relationship is the marriage of John and Molly Wesley. Many of us know John Wesley as the founder of Methodism, but what happened in his marriage is conveniently swept under the rug.

John Wesley never intended to marry. At the age of 48, while crossing a bridge in London, he slipped on the ice and broke his ankle. He was taken into the home of 41-year-old Molly Vazeille, a wealthy widow with four children. Without even mentioning it in his journal, the two were married only eight days later. The attraction was instant. What could go wrong? They were both Christians. However, adequate conversation about the little foxes was absent.

Some biographers refer to what happened next as the “30-year-war.” During his life, John Wesley traveled 250,000 miles on horseback and preached

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40,000 sermons. He lived life at an insane pace and he believed marriage should not slow him down.<sup>3</sup>

Molly attempted to travel with him for the first four years of their marriage but couldn't handle the pace, seasickness or mobs that often threatened his life. Rather than repenting and traveling less, he simply left her home.

On one occasion, when Molly was near death with a fever, Wesley returned from his travels at 1 a.m. to be by her side. When the life-threatening fever left her in the middle of the night, Wesley packed his bags and was gone before daybreak for another engagement.

It was this kind of marriage that infuriated her. She became so angry that she sent letters to the newspaper undermining his ministry. She publicly accused him of adultery with their housekeeper. There is evidence their fights turned physical. Some witnesses claim Molly was sometimes bruised and in some of John Wesley's correspondence with her he admits striking her. A witness at their house claims he saw Molly dragging John by his hair across the room as she tore clumps of hair out of his head when they fought.

Molly was further enraged because John continued an extensive letter writing correspondence with multiple women that drove her to insane levels of jealousy.

Their last years were spent apart and alone. Molly Wesley was dead and buried before her husband was even notified. Today, their graves are miles apart in two different parts of London.

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<sup>3</sup> *Your Affectionately, John Wesley: The Rev John Wesley and His Correspondents* (Museum of Methodism, Wesleys Chapel, 49 City Road, London EC1Y 1AU, March 2003), pg. 16.

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My friends, they should have taken a lesson from Solomon and the Shulamite. They should have enjoyed many long walks in the country talking about the little foxes before they rushed into marriage. The little things that didn't seem important when they were infatuated with love, turned out to become the big differences that destroyed their marriage. They should have talked about role, goals, priorities and anchors.

It is time for us to get to the Q&A portion of the message so I am going to invite my wife up.

## Questions and Answers



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching. Feel free to contact him at [ktruck@gmail.com](mailto:ktruck@gmail.com) or visit his web at [www.christ2Rculture.com](http://www.christ2Rculture.com)

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