

The Language of Love

By John R. Gibson

We smile at the flock of goats compliment and blush a little at the fawns and palm tree references, but if we are able to get past the rather unusual comparisons we can learn a lot from the love language of Song of Solomon. Though we would never use most of the specific comparisons the two lovers use in complimenting each other, the passionate devotion they had for one another is something every husband and wife should strive for. From the opening request that he kiss her (1:2) to the closing call that he “make haste” (8:14), this is song depicts a romantic love worthy of imitation.

The young Shulamite says, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16). And then in 6:3 she flips it to say, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.” This devotion to one another is what the Lord desired from the beginning when He said, “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). The Scriptures repeatedly warn about the evils of adultery and we must heed those warnings (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4; et al), but let’s not be content with simply “not cheating” on our spouse; instead, let’s put away all selfishness and truly seek to belong to the one we love.

As I noted earlier we may find the compliments expressed in this book a little strange for our taste, but let’s not miss the number of times they praised the other. The following are but a few of the many found in this book.

“Behold, you are handsome, my beloved!” 1:16

“My beloved spoke, and said to me: ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.’ ” 2:10

“Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair!” 4:1

“This is my beloved, and this is my friend.” 5:16

While it is true that actions speak louder than words, people also need to hear kind, complimentary words. As husbands and wives we need to have a deep, abiding love for one another and not be hesitant to express our feelings for the one who has become one flesh with us.

Continuing the thought of compliments, I think the exchange in 2:1-2 is one we would do well to consider. The Shulamite says, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” While we have come to see these in a different light because of some popular hymns, it is likely that she was describing herself as nothing special by comparing herself to common ordinary flowers. However, her Beloved came back quickly with, “Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.” Most of us would do well to listen to our spouses and know when they are feeling down, unappreciated, etc. and let them know that for us they are a bright spot in this dark world—a lily among the thorns.

No consideration of the Song of Solomon would be complete without acknowledging the physical attraction they had to and for one another. This book is not vulgar, but it clearly shows two people who found the other to be the object of those sexual desires that are a normal, honorable part of marriage (cf. Hebrews 13:4). He said of her, “The fragrance of your breath is like apples, and the roof of your mouth like the best wine” and she responded with, “The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved” (7:9-10). On another occasion she said, “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me” (2:6). Near

the end of chapter four the Beloved speaks of his bride as a garden with pleasant fruits and sweet smells and she responds by inviting him to come and enjoy his garden. Our culture has completely rejected the biblical view of the sexual relationship between man and woman with some completely separating it from commitment and marriage, thus turning it into no more than that which takes place in the animal kingdom. For others it is treated almost as though it were some necessary evil for those who desire to have children or to meet one's "obligations" in the marriage. Then there are those who seem to see it as a weapon wielded in the marriage for the control and manipulation of one's partner. Let us reject all of these and see the sexual relationship as the Shulamite and her Beloved did, viz. the physical expression of an emotional, passionate attraction felt for the one to whom we have given ourselves in marriage.

Those who are married should seek to have the love depicted in this book and the unmarried should settle for nothing less than one who will wholeheartedly commit himself or herself to the relationship. Near the end of the book the Shulamite speaks of the proper jealousy one should feel toward their spouse and the enduring nature of a love money cannot buy. May we all work toward this ideal in marriage.

"Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy as cruel as the grave;
Its flames are flames of fire,
A most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor can the floods drown it.
If a man would give for love
All the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised." 8:6-7

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