

# “And He Loved Her”

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Meditations on Marriage  
from the  
“Christian Shepherd”

—2009—

## January 2009

*“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.”* (Song of Songs 2:3,4).

There are three lovely things that the bride is given by the bridegroom to enjoy. What strong, wonderful and happy marriages result where these things are found in daily use!

*“I sat down under his shadow”*. On a hot summer day the shade of a strong, leafy tree is wonderfully refreshing. Life presents many trials and difficult situations which husband and wife face together. How happy the wife whose husband’s life morally answers to the strength and comfort of a tree—especially in times of trial when she relies on his strength and looks to find comfort from the heat of the trial.

*“His fruit was sweet to my taste”*. A Husband should not only provide strength and comfort for his beloved wife, but his words and ways should produce *sweetness* and *satisfaction* for her delight.

*“His banner over me was love”*. In Eph. 5:25 and Col. 3:19 we read: *“husbands love your wives...”*. A husband’s words and ways should always plainly declare his love for His beloved wife. Such love surely provides an unending *banquet* of joy in marriage!

## February 2009

*“O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes”* (Song of Songs 2:14,15).

Here we find that the bridegroom’s beloved has, for some reason, hidden herself from him—and, feeling her absence deeply, he entreats her to come back. Her appearance was very precious and appealing to him, and her voice—her words—were sweet to his hearing. He yearns to look on her and to hear her.

Times like this can also take place in our marriages. One spouse or the other, for some reason, withdraws—displayed by their actions or expressions or communication (or lack of thereof). Perhaps an annoying habit, an impatient word, or a thoughtless action by the other spouse triggered this unhappy distance. The joyfulness that ought to characterize marriage is slowly stolen away by the *little foxes*—little annoyances between husband and wife.

The *vine* which is the channel that brings lasting and growing joy into the marriage union is slowly, almost imperceptibly ruined by these *little things*. How important that both partners prayerfully and carefully guard against allowing *little foxes* to breed discontent and cause distance to come between them.

Where, however, these things have caused a distance and cooling of marital love and joy, both partners need to express to the other their love, desire and longing for the sweet close-

ness that once characterized their marriage. The words of the bridegroom provide a wonderful example of how this may done. He likens his beloved to a beautiful, tender dove—a term of endearment such as we might use the term ‘darling’.

He then expresses how he longs to see the look of love and joy on her face that had been there before. He tells her how her sweet voice provides such delight to his heart and how he yearns to hear it once again. His call to her, wooing her to himself is full of the tenderest love and without rebuke.

This is most surely the spirit and manner of acting by which *little foxes*—little annoyances that have dulled the flow of marital joy and love—can be removed. Renewed tender expressions of love and desire for each other must come *before* husband and wife together can take away the *little foxes*.

## March 2009

*“Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. Come with me ... my spouse ... Thou hast ravished my heart ... How fair is thy love, ... my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!...”* (Song of Songs 4:7-10).

We find here six wonderful principles in the expressions spoken by the husband (bridegroom) to the wife (spouse) in the above passage (abbreviated). What wonderful blessing and joy will result in marriages where both the husband and wife’s words and actions towards each other are governed by the ‘spirit’ of these six expressions.

(1) *“... all fair, my love...”*. Does marital love so ‘blind’ husbands and wives that they only see the beauty of their spouse? It most certainly should!—*“...be thou ravished [captured] always with her love”*. This is one of the times in the Bible when *ravished* has a positive, rather than a negative sense.

(2) *“... no spot in thee...”*. Here we find that vital and precious quality of marital love *covering a multitude of sins*. Continual criticism of each other’s failures or mistakes, produces sorrowful, dissatisfied and crumbling marriage unions. What a perfect example we find displayed in the infinite love of God towards His oft failing earthly people; *“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob [Israel]”* (Num. 23:21).

(3) *“... come with me...”*. The spirit of desire for the fellowship and companionship of one’s spouse is the moral ‘cement’ that gives marriage a strength which cannot be broken under any circumstances. Applying God’s warning in Amos 3:3 to marriage is specially appropriate for husbands and wives: *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”*

(4) *“... ravished my heart...”*. The husband’s (or the wife’s) intermost affections—*heart* affections— must totally captivate their spouse. This is another time in marriage when by the actions of the spouse proves the reality of a truly captivated heart.

(5) *“... fair is thy love...”*. He previously expressed how beautiful *she* is to him. Now he further assures her that her *love* for him is just as valued and beautiful. A strong joyful marriage requires that each partner often assures the other how much their love is cherished.

(6) “... *how much better is thy love than wine...*”. There are many natural joys (typified by *wine*) experienced in this world. In strong, healthy and lasting marriages, no natural joy should ever be allowed to become more important than the love of a spouse.

#### April 2009

“*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.*” (Song of Songs 4:16).

Happy is the marriage in which each partner has *morally* prepared such a *garden* just for the pleasure of their spouse. In Scripture we often find *gardens* mentioned (specially Genesis and Song of Solomon). Generally it pictures a place of a quiet rest and delight—a place which produces enjoyable fruits for its owner’s satisfaction. Though our verse (above) is the expression of a wife (bride) to her husband (bridegroom), in a happy marriage union each partner ought to be the source of intimate, personal delights for their spouse—delights and joys which no one else can supply. Let us consider a few important principles for joyful, strong marriages found in this passage.

**First** we see the wife’s *eagerness* that her husband come and find his deepest joy in the garden she has prepared for him. Each partner’s continuing *eagerness* and *desire* to please, delight and satisfy their spouse all throughout their marriage results in lasting, joyful and strong unions.

**Secondly**, the special joys that each spouse specially prepares for their partner will withstand and bear its rich fruit in times of trial (*the north wind*) as well as in pleasant times (*the south wind*). Wonderful and exciting is a marriage union where even the trials and difficulties of life serve only to enhance the joy, rest and comfort of a spouse’s *garden*.

**Thirdly**, a truly delightful garden of love prepared by each spouse for the other **is only meant** for the private joy, rest and satisfaction of their partner. Marital joy, in every aspect, is meant for two that God has brought together as one; “*God...blessed them, and called **their name** Adam...*” (Gen. 5:1,2; see also Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9). In our verse, when the wife refers to the circumstances of life (*the wind*) that are part of every marriage and her desire that it all will produce fragrant spices, her expression is “**my garden**”. She desires that *in all circumstances* it will provide joy for her spouse. This should mark all marriage unions. But how sweet to notice that when she speaks of the *joy and delight* that is to be found in her garden, then her expression is “**his garden**”.

Vibrant, lasting marriages will result where **both** spouses provide marital love, joy and delight which is **only** meant for their partner.

#### May 2009

“*Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus...he abode with them...*” (Rom. 16:3; Acts 18:3).

One of the most instructive, helpful examples of a happy marriage found in God’s Word is the account of dear Aquila and Priscilla. The Biblical references to this dear couple are replete with helpful principles for strengthening and preserving the marriage union. We first read of them in Acts 18 where the Apostle Paul contacted them when they had been banished from Rome by Claudius Caesar. Let’s briefly consider some of these precious principles.

(1) “*Aquila...his wife Priscilla...By their occupation they were tentmakers*” (Acts 18:3). Aquila took the *lead* in providing for their marriage, working as a tent maker, but they *worked together*. This marriage not only displayed godly moral order (Aquila is mentioned first when the subject concerns provision and living arrangements), but also displayed *unity*—oneness of mind. Marriages where both partners *work together* are happy, solid, unions.

(2) Aquila and Priscilla were attached in love and heart with the beloved apostle. “*...Paul...took his leave of the brethren [Corinth], and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila...*” (Acts 18:18).

They desired to walk in fellowship with Paul. Happy is the marriage that holds to the truths given by divine inspiration through the Apostle Paul. When matters of the ‘heart’ produce spiritual desires to *be with Paul* it is morally suitable and sweet (Priscilla is mentioned first). A wife’s love and desire for God’s truth brings blessed influences in the marriage.

“*...when Aquila and Priscilla had heard [Apollos], they...expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly*” (Acts 18:26). Happy Christian marriages *require* that the husband be spiritual head in all facets of life (Aquila is mentioned first). A godly wife’s life and words lend invaluable testimony to Scriptural truth (*they...expounded*).

“*Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 16:3); “*...Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house*” (1 Cor. 16:19); “*Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus*” (2 Tim. 4:19). As ‘helpers’ Priscilla is mentioned first, when the assembly is involved Aquila. Paul’s salutation mentions ‘Prisca (Priscilla) first. Helping-service, headship, and heart are all so important in happy marriages!

#### June 2009

“*...to receive the instruction of wisdom, righteousness and judgment, and equity*” (Prov. 1:3).

The purpose of the divinely inspired book of the Proverbs (the majority of which was penned by King Solomon) is given in the first verses of the first chapter. We find four foundational reasons for reading and obeying this precious book of God’s wisdom for living a happy, fruitful life in this world.

(1) The first is that the reader might receive *the instruction of wisdom*. There are many sources of *instruction* available. But over all man’s wisdom and instruction God’s Word declares that “*...the world by wisdom knew not God*” (1Co 1:21). We need

God's instruction in wisdom for every aspect of our lives. Whose wisdom and instruction are you following in your marriage, dear husband and wife?

(2) If our lives are not lived in *righteousness* before God how can we expect to be happy? Receiving instruction in God's righteousness as it applies in our daily lives is vital in maintaining a happy marriage. The institution of marriage is wonderful but if either or both partners refuse His instruction in righteousness, there cannot be joy. "*(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)*" (Eph. 5:9).

(3) Our Lord commanded that we "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (Jn. 7:24). How needful in marriage! Notice that it is not speaking of *being judgmental*, but rather judging according to the wisdom given of God. No marriage can last where one or both partners is *judgmental* in thoughts, words and deeds, towards their spouse. Where God's wisdom is used in judging marriage matters, stability and joy result.

(4) The Hebrew word used for *equity* suggests the thought of being 'smooth, straight, level'. What can be more important to a happy, fruitful marriage union than the wisdom of *equity* (fairness) exhibited by each spouse towards their partner? Gentle, smooth, level and unchanging love and attitudes towards each other result in joyous and confident marriage unions.

Let us seek grace to be diligent in displaying God's wisdom with these four qualities. If these principles are pursued in our own wisdom and efforts, our marriages likely will become cold and dry unions where each partner takes the other for granted. It is our blessed God's will that marriage be joyous (Prov. 5:18).

### July 2009

"*Let not mercy [‘loving kindness’, JND Trans] and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart*" (Prov. 3:3).

*Mercy* ('loving kindness') and truth are foundation 'pillars' that support and strengthen joyful, lasting marriages. Our verse presents us with what we might call 'an urgent warning', pressing the importance of these two pillars not being allowed to forsake our ways.

It may seem strange that our verse does not read; "Do not forsake mercy and truth". Rather the responsibility is placed on the reader husband and wife. They are to make sure that mercy and truth are not allowed to be missing from every facet of their marriage.

How, we may ask, could this happen? The answer is found in asking more questions and answering them in all honesty before the Lord.

Husbands, do you *first of all*, display *loving kindness* toward your wife? Is *loving kindness* your reaction when she doesn't have your favorite shirt and pants ironed and ready for you to wear to work? Is *loving kindness* your reaction when more than once on an already personally full, busy Saturday

your wife reminds you that the yard needs to be mowed, the leaky bathroom sink faucet needs to be fixed, and you promised to watch the kids while she spent some time shopping?

Wives do you show *loving kindness* to you husband when he forgets to buy flowers for you on your anniversary, or when he invites friends over for an evening *before* talking it over with you?

It doesn't take very much to test our willingness to show *loving kindness* towards our spouse. *Mercy* — *loving kindness* — forms the support for strength. When bound around the *neck* (often used in the Bible as a symbol of strength), *loving kindness* becomes the 'pillar' which strengthens and supports marriage.

*Truth* is absolutely necessary in every aspect of marital relationships. Without total truth expressed and lived between spouses, marriages quickly disintegrate, producing emotional and eventually, physical separation and destruction of the marriage.

Every movement of *truth*, however, is to be *written on the table of the heart*. Love motivates and ameliorates marital difficulties that, if not characterized by love, will cause harsh words and hurt feelings. May our marriages be characterized by a love that has *mercy and truth* as its pillars.

### August 2009

"*...rejoice with the wife of thy youth...be thou ravished always with her love...why wilt thou... be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?*" (Prov. 5:18-20).

Though the tragic fact that today almost 60% of marriages in America end in divorce, God's thoughts of His blessed institution for man and woman has never changed: "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh*" (Gen.2:24). "*God...blessed them, and called their name Adam*" (Gen. 5:1,2). "*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matt. 19:6).

Marital unfaithfulness, adultery, and every kind of perverse, depraved moral corruption carried on between men and women, men and men, as well as women and women, marks Western culture today. Perhaps, we may say that Western culture has degraded itself beyond *immorality* to a condition of *amqAality* (life styles that have absolutely no moral conscience or moral guides). While both husbands and wives are in danger of falling into such degenerate life-styles, the force of the above verses are clearly directed at the man/husband.

For example, the realities of the Western work place today find many men working in close association with women. A woman's dress, words, actions, even her glances — intentional or unintentional — may potentially stir and ignite the passions of a male co-worker.

Christian husbands, whose employment puts them in constant close contact with female fellow workers are in a specially precarious position, one that requires constant prayer and watchfulness. Proverbs 5:18-20 could not be plainer in expressing both the natural joys and delights of marriage, as well warn-

ing of the dangers of unsubdued passions. Christians can rest, however, in God's faithful promise; "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Unsubdued passion caused the strongest man mention in Scripture, Samson, to fall. It also caused the wisest man in Scripture, Solomon, to fall. Sodom's unsubdued depravity caused Lot to lose all. Husbands, be very careful and prayerful!

### September 2009

"... *be thou ravished continually with her love*" (Prov. 5:19, JND Trans.).

Though these few words of instruction are given to the man ("*my son*", as often rendered in Proverbs), they contain a crucial principle for wives (and for all women).

The world we live in today is morally like the world of Noah's day—a world filled with *corruption* (sexual immorality) and violence (see Genesis 6:12,13).

Western lands (once illuminated by the glorious light of Christianity) are flooded with sexual immorality in every sphere—advertising, sports, entertainment, music as well as political, business, and educational sectors. Women's clothing fashions however, may be the most harmful of all in undermining Biblical standards of morality and decency.

The revealing, seductive clothing women increasingly are wearing in public and in retail and corporate environments seem to be explicitly created to sexually entice men by drawing their attention to the female form.

How important that dear Christian wives realize the dangers of Satan's onslaught against their husbands. Though a husband is instructed to delight and revel in his wife, captivated only by her love, it is also absolutely vital that a wife continually seek in every way to *be a captivating delight* to her husband. "*A garden enclosed is ... my spouse...Let my beloved come into his garden, And eat its precious fruits*" (SS. 4:12,16). How joyous the marriage where **both** partners remain ravished by their mate's love, doing all possible to **be** a ravishing delight to their spouse!

### October 2009

"*These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue...hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies... he that soweth discord among brethren*" (Prov. 6:16-19).

If both husband and wife prayerfully seek grace that their actions towards each other not be marked by these seven things, the result will be a joyful, strong marriage.

**Pride:** It has often been pointed out that the middle letter pride is "I". Our old nature wants 'self' to always be first, how-

ever "I" must take last place in a truly happy marriage. Joy comes when each spouse puts "you" first. Years ago a speaker gave a bride and groom this excellent advice: "God first, your [husband/wife] second ... you, last".

**Lies:** "*Speaking the truth in love*" (Eph. 4:15) is the divine guard against marriage being destroyed by spousal deception. In a truly happy Christian marriage there's no room for a 'little white lie'.

**Judgemental:** Morally, *shedding innocent blood* happens when either spouse continually makes critical judgements of the other's motives. Allowance of a critical spirit erodes the foundation of a strong marriage.

**Evil Imaginations:** Paul exhorted Timothy to *keep thyself pure* and to *flee youthful lusts*. In a morally wicked, corrupted world such as we live in today, it is vitally important that both husband and wife daily seek God's grace to walk in purity of mind and heart.

**Straying Feet:** The Apostle Paul speaks of the Christian life of faith as patiently "*running the race*". As his life drew to a close he wrote to Timothy (and all believers) that he had "*combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (JND Trans). Too often, husbands and wives forget the great impact their personal Christian *walk* has on their marriage. Be careful where your feet take you!

**False Witness:** At times a spouse's deep desire or longing for some change in marriage can cause their thoughts, words, and actions to become unbalanced, unrealistic, or unfair. It's important not to make a 'mountain out of a molehill' to gain a desired end.

**Discord:** Marriage is *unity*—two become one. Seven times in Scripture we read that the Lord views a man and woman who are married as being *one flesh* and warns that what He has *joined together* is never to be divided apart by man. Husbands and wives! work diligently to maintain unity in your marriage!

### November 2009

The importance of maintaining a loving dialog between husband and wife in a happy marriage is obvious. But we live in a day of continual high pressure, inordinate busyness, and constant social change. These things can cause a lessening of that kind of dialog between husbands and wives—especially if it becomes pressured, strident or frustrated. The spirit in which spouses communicate with each other may determine if the marriage is a happy or a crumbling union.

When a spouse is troubled, upset or downright angry about some problem, the other spouse needs to use wisdom about *how* and *how much* to speak about the issue: "*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise*" (Prov.10:19).

When marital difficulties arise, it is best for a spouse to first really understand the other's concerns. Sometimes it may be best to just be quiet for a time. "...*a man of understanding*



*holdeth his peace*” (Prov. 11:12).

Always speak to each other in a tender tone of voice and with gracious words! “*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*” (Prov. 15:1).

When marital tensions run high, *honey* is a wonderful way to sooth and sweeten spirits! “*Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones*” (Prov. 16:24).

The result of either spouse speaking in a *still small voice* (“*soft, gentle, voice*” JND Trans.) to their loved partner who is feeling the strain of anxiety or is otherwise upset will be “*...thou hast comforted me...thou hast spoken kindly to thy handmaid*” (Ruth 2:13).

A wise husband or wife, rather than trying to immediately straighten out their spouse’s tensions or misunderstandings by logic or debate, will first seek to speak so as to win the heart. Our blessed God will draw His disobedient and unfaithful earthly people (the Nation of Israel) back to Himself by gentle words which will deeply touch her heart. “*Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her* [“*Speak to her heart*”, JND Trans.]” (Hosea 2:14).

A spirit of true *wisdom* and *kindness* can only come from our blessed God—wisdom to understand and know what ought to be done and kindness in doing it. This is a sure path to enjoying a delightful and strong marriage relationship. “*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness*” (Prov. 31:26).

### December 2009

“*And she said, Let me find favour in thine eyes, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken kindly to thy handmaid*” (Ruth 3:3, JND).

“*My beloved is...the chiefest among ten thousand ...yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend...*” (S of S 5:10,16).

“*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord*” (Prov. 18:22).

“*...rejoice with the wife of thy youth*” (Prov. 5:18).

I recently saw a bumper sticker which, though meant to be humorous, was sad and sobering. It read; “All men are idiots, and I married their king”. Though having no knowledge of what caused the car driver’s desire to display that bitter message, the public actions and expressions displayed by her and her female companion were certainly not characteristic of happy, contented, God-fearing people.

Western nations, having rapidly given up the principles of Christianity which were the foundations of so much blessing, now are reaping the terrible harvest that departure from God and His Word produce.

Divine institutions of God—especially the marriage union—are scorned, mocked, or totally ignored by multitudes of souls. Rampant immorality, unfaithfulness, violence and

emotional shipwreck are but a few of the fruits produced by such godlessness.

In Heb. 13:4 we learn that “*Marriage is honourable in all...*”. God’s institution of marriage is a wondrous picture of the union between Christ and the church. We read of this infinitely grand and glorious union in Eph. 5:25,27-30: “*Husbands, love your wives, even as **Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;...**(27) **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.** (28) *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.* (29) *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; **but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:** (30) *For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*”.**

Satan’s attacks on the wonderful divine institutions of God such as marriage, are both subtle and openly violent. He seeks to destroy marriages in the guise of an “*angel of light*” and also as a “*roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour*”. How comforting then to know that God promises His children that we can “*resist the devil and he will flee from you*”.