

“Put Your Husband Where
Your Heart Is /
When A Man Loves A Woman”
Song of Solomon 5:9 – 6:13

I. A woman must put her Husband where her heart is

- 1) He needs admiration and respect 5:10-15
- 2) He needs sexual fulfillment 5:16; 6:2-3
- 3) He needs home support 6:3
- 4) He needs an attractive wife 6:4-9 (cf. 7:1-9)
- 5) He needs a best friend 5:16

II. A man must love his wife

- 1) She needs a spiritual leader 5:10b
- 2) She needs personal affirmation and appreciation 6:4
- 3) She needs personal affection and romance 6:8-9, 11-13
- 4) She needs intimate conversation 5:16
- 5) She needs honesty and openness 6:10, 13
- 6) She needs stability and security 5:9, 6:1, 13
- 7) She needs family commitment 6:9 (cf. 8:1-2)

“Put Your Husband
 Where Your Heart Is/
 When A Man Loves A Woman”
 (Song of Solomon 5:9 – 6:13)

Introduction

Marriage is scary business to many people today. With so many unhappy couples sharing horror story after horror story, some persons will do almost anything to increase their odds for success. In New York, women are enrolling in a class called “Marriage Works,” a 6 month, 276 hour course to help them land the right mate. The cost is a cool \$9,600.¹ To this class you can add the Divorce Busting Center’s, “Keeping Love Alive” Workshop; the “Hot Monogamy” workshop (4 days, \$1800 per couple / \$1000 per person); Twogether, Inc.’s, “Pairs Passage to Intimacy” (2 days, \$499 per couple / \$250 per person); “Getting the Love You Want: Workshop for Couples,” (2 days, \$575 per couple); and Pairs for Love’s, “Language of Love” (1 day, \$25), “If You Really Loved Me” (1 day, \$225 per couple / \$125 per person), “Passage to Intimacy Weekend” (2 days, \$450 per couple / \$250 per person) and the list goes on. I guess desperate times call for desperate measures.

God did not intend for marriage to quickly end. He did not intend for it to be painfully endured. He intended it to be wonderfully enjoyed. It was not His plan that it would be a burden. He wants it to be a blessing. In order for us to experience maximum marriage satisfaction, it is essential that we grow to know each other. A woman must come to understand the unique needs her husband has as a man. A man must discover the unique needs his wife has as a woman. All of this is hard work, lifelong work, but work that pays unbelievably rich dividends.

In marriage, a wife needs to put her husband where her heart is. A man, on the other hand, needs to love his wife, love his woman. We do this by learning to meet some basic needs that are at the very essence of who our mate is. For a man, there are at least five. For a woman, there are at least seven.²

I. A woman must put her husband where her heart is.

Shulamith is growing in her knowledge of Solomon. Their relationship is maturing. They hit a bump in the road in 5:2-8, but they refused to let that sidetrack them. Out of that conflict they discover a better understanding of their mate and a greater commitment to move ahead. What did Shulamith discover about Solomon concerning his basic needs?

1. He needs admiration and respect. 5:10-15

¹ Abby Ellin, “A Class Feminists Might Abhor,” *New York Times* (3-5-00).

² A superb work which looks at the needs of men and women in a similar fashion is Willard F. Harley Jr.’s, *His Needs Her Needs* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1986). This book has greatly impacted my own thinking and much of its contents are reflected in this chapter.

God has wired a man in such a way that he longs for and needs his wife's admiration and respect more than anything else (cf. Eph. 5:33b). She understands and appreciates both his value and achievements more than anyone else. She reminds him of his gifts and abilities and helps him in the area of self-confidence. She is his biggest fan, and he is her hero. She is proud of her husband, not out of duty, but as an expression of genuine and sincere admiration for the man she loves and with whom she has chosen to share her life.

In his February 1995 newsletter, James Dobson provided some very insightful marital counsel. In the process of charging both husbands and wives, he "nailed" this issue concerning a man's need for admiration and respect.

"It is never too late to put a little excitement in your relationship. Romantic love is the fuel that powers the female engine. Unfortunately, most of us get so busy earning a living that we often drift away from the things that drew us together in the first place... [therefore] a gentle reminder to men: marriages must be nurtured or they wither like a plant without water. There is more than one perspective on every substantive issue, however, and we need to look at the other side of this one. The task of maintaining a marriage is not exclusively a masculine responsibility. It should be shared equally by men and women. Wives must understand and meet the needs of their husbands, too. That is an idea you may not have heard in a while. Let me be more specific. It is my conviction that Christian writers, myself included, have tended to overstate the masculine responsibilities in marriage and to understate the feminine. Men have been criticized for their failures at home, and yes, many of us deserve those criticisms. But women are imperfect people too and their shortcomings must also be addressed. One of them is the failure of some wives to show respect and admiration for their husbands. George Gilder, author of *Men and Marriage*, believes women are actually more important to the stability and productivity of men than men are to the well being of women. I am inclined to agree. When a wife believes in her husband and deeply respects him, he gains the confidence necessary to compete successfully and live responsibly. She gives him a reason to harness his masculine energy – to build a home, obtain and keep a job, remain sober, live within the law, spend money wisely, etc. Without positive feminine influence, he may redirect the power of testosterone in a way that is destructive to himself and to society at large.... What should a woman do for a man that will relate directly to his masculine nature? In a word, she can build his confidence."

My wife's approval means the world to me. Knowing that she is in my corner and that she loves and admires me, motivates and inspires me.³

Shulamith met Solomon's need for admiration and respect with a catalogue of praise in 5:10-15. Here she praises both his appearance and character. She says he is white and ruddy, which may mean "dazzlingly ruddy."⁴ His hair is wavy and black as a raven. He is good looking to her – tall, dark and handsome. "His head is like the finest gold," an indication of great wealth and value. This is what he is to her. Her description of his eyes reflect peace and gentleness, calmness and tranquility, brightness and alertness. They too are attractive, "washed with milk

³ See also Steven Nock, "Does It Pay for Men in America to Marry and Raise Children?" *Insight* (May 29, 2000), 40 – 43.

⁴ Glickman, 66.

and fitly set.” His cheeks are sweet scented, possessing a pleasant and desirable smell from his cologne. His lips possess sweet, wet kisses that she longs to embrace. Her sense of smell and taste are aroused by her husband and she tells him so.

Physically he has prepared himself for her. His hands are strong and valuable like rods of gold with precious rings adorning them. His body is handsome, carved and cut like ivory, covered with sapphires. His attractiveness and worth is much to be admired she says. His legs are strong and sturdy like pillars of marble set on gold. His appearance is breath taking and unimaginable, likened unto the beauty and grandeur of the tall and imposing cedar trees of Lebanon. His is a rugged attractiveness, a masculine attractiveness. Moving downward from the top of his head to his legs, Shulamith tells him he is handsome and valuable inwardly and outwardly, in appearance and character. He is the man with whom she has chosen to share and spend her life, and there are no regrets.

A woman is crucial to the success and well being of a man. It is indeed the case that a great woman can take a mediocre man and raise him to the level of good. But a not so great woman can take a great man and pull him down to the level of mediocrity. Her admiration and respect is often the key and the difference. Sandra Aldrich says women who want to be treated like queens need to treat their husbands like kings.⁵

2.

⁵ Sandra Aldrich, “Husbands Don’t Have Scriptwriters.” *Today’s Christian Woman* (Mar/Apr 1998), Vol. 20, No. 2, 36 – 39.

He needs sexual fulfillment.

5:16; 6:2-3

It is no surprise to discover in survey after survey that men say sexual fulfillment is their number one need. Now to be sure, it is high on the list of a male, but I am convinced it is not number one, but number two. I am also convinced a man's need for admiration and respect, and his need for sexual fulfillment, are intimately connected. If a woman fails to meet his need for sexual fulfillment, she will also fail to meet his need for admiration and respect. Why? Because a man finds it impossible to believe that his wife admires and respects him if she does not desire him sexually. In other words, his ability to attract her and satisfy her sexually is essential to his sense of self worth and his need for admiration and respect.

Shulamith knew this and so she worked at becoming an expert sexual partner for Solomon. She studied her own desires and responses to recognize what brings out the best in her. She also talked and communicated this information to her husband to insure that their sex life would be satisfying and enjoyable. In an article entitled "Communicating about sex keeps couples loving" it was pointed out that, "Opposite sexes sometimes have opposite views about sex, which can spell trouble for a relationship if it is not worked out. Experts agree it is common for people to have different sexual styles. But couples who communicate about their differences can often resolve them, while those who view opposing styles as rejection or as a lack of love are on a collision course with disaster.... There is no substitute for talking things out so the other person understands your feelings," says Dr. Maj-Britt Rosenbaum of Long Island Jewish Medical Center. The article goes on to address areas of potential conflict such as Mr. All the Time vs. Mrs. Occasionally, the danger of pornography, Planned Patti vs. Spontaneous Sam, Daytime David vs. Nighttime Natalie, Hurry Up Harry vs. Slow Down Denise, I Like the Darkness Diane vs. I Love the Light Larry, and One Track Mind Michael vs. Instant Distraction Donna.⁶

In 5:16 she again speaks of the beauty of his mouth and the fact he is altogether lovely. She desires him. She wants him, and again, she tells him so. In her mind (and his!), who wouldn't want such a man? In 6:2-3 she says he has gone to his garden for a time of enjoyment. This is a reference to Shulamith, herself (cf. 4:16), and in particular to the giving of herself in lovemaking. She provides for him a bed of spices, a place of pleasure. There, he feeds and gathers that which satisfies and pleases him. She is available to him. She is there for his enjoyment. She desires him. The bedroom of this couple will never become a place of boredom.

It is important at this point to be honest and note that men and women do not approach sex in the same way and with the same perspective. It has been well said that when it comes to sex men are like microwave ovens and women are like crook-pots. I did not say crackpots! What does this mean? Simply put, men are creatures of sight and are moved by what they see. If a man sees what he likes, like a microwave oven, he can heat up in a hurry. On the other hand, a woman is more like a crook-pot. She must simmer a while before she will be ready! Willard Harley has well said that in marriage, we must create an atmosphere of affection in which sex will be enjoyed more often and with greater pleasure. Phil McGraw, author of *Relationship Rescue: A 7 Step Strategy for Reconnecting with Your partner* says, "If you have a good sexual

⁶ Gwen Yount Carden, *Dallas Times Herald* (2-11-89), 1E.

relationship, it's about 10% of the value of the relationship overall. If you don't have a good sexual relationship, it's about 90%.”⁷

“For many people, sex has become a labor rather than an adventure.”⁸ However, no marriage will ever be everything God wants it to be without the beautiful gift of sex being active and satisfying for both. It requires communication and understanding. But if we will make it a priority and give it the attention that it requires, we can indeed find the full joy and satisfaction in this area of our marriage that the Song of Solomon praises in such a marvelous manner.

3. He needs home support. 6:3

Shulamith expresses great confidence in the relationship she enjoys with Solomon in 6:3. She says, “I am my lover's and my lover is mine.” She also notes that he is comfortable in her presence and in their home. “He feeds his flock among the lilies.” Not only does he find her physically satisfying, he also finds her and their home emotionally satisfying. She has created a home that offers him an atmosphere of peace and quiet and refuge. She manages the home and it is a place of rest and rejuvenation. Shulamith understood what all women need to understand, that the wife/mother is the emotional hub of the family. There is a colloquial saying that is well known by almost all married persons. It goes something like this, “In the home, if Mama ain't happy, then ain't nobody going to be happy!” This may not be fair, but it is true. It is the way that things are. I am fond of saying that a woman is the thermostat of the home. If her thermostat goes up to 90 or 95 degrees, it is not just hot for her, it is hot for everybody. On the other hand, if her thermostat goes down to 70 or 65 degrees, it is not just cool for her, it is cool for everyone.

One thing a man detests is a nagging, griping, whiney woman. God knew this and addresses it several times in the book of Proverbs. Note the following verses.

Proverbs 9:13 – “A foolish woman is clamorous. She is simple and knows nothing.”

Proverbs 19:13 – “The contentions of a woman are a continual irritation.”

Proverbs 21:9 – “Better to dwell in the corner of a housetop, than the house shared with a contentious woman.”

Proverbs 21:19 – “Better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman.”

Proverbs 25:24 – “It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop than in a house shared with a contentious woman.”

A man will not hang around a woman that is continually badgering him and beating him up verbally. Basically he will take one of two actions. Either he will fight or take flight. Most men won't fight their wives. They will not fight them physically because it is wrong, it strips away their masculinity and they will also go to jail (and rightly so). Most men will not fight their wives verbally either. There is a simple reason for this. They almost always lose verbal battles. Women are indeed verbal animals. It is said that the average male speaks somewhere between

⁷ Cecelia Goodnow, “Phil McGraw draws raves for ‘no bull’ approach to rescuing relationships, *Seattle-Post* (3-4-00).

⁸ Peter Marin, “A Revolution's Broken Promises,” *Psychology Today* (July, 1983), 55.

10,000 and 12,000 words per day. On the other hand, the average female speaks somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 words per day with gusts of up to 50,000 words! In other words, women are well equipped for verbal battles and men are not. As a result, most men will not fight their wives physically or verbally, they choose instead to take flight. Some men will walk out of the marriage. Other men will stay within the marriage covenant but they will still walk away. They become known as workaholics or persons engaged in 1001 extracurricular activities. The reason for all of this is quite simple: it is quieter alone at the office or out in left field on a softball field. A woman must understand how crucial she is to providing a home that is a place of support for her husband. Michele Weiner-Davis, author of *Divorce Busting and Getting Through to the Man You Love* says, "The key to dealing with men is to stop talking and start acting Women need to learn male friendly methods of persuasion and stop doing what doesn't work." Her suggestions included:

- Stop pressing your point when it's obvious he's heard you, even if he doesn't acknowledge it.
- Make your goals clear and action – oriented.
- Pay attention to how your conflict ends.
- Ignore [some] undesirable behavior.
- Take a time-out.
- Emphasize the positive.

"It's far more efficient to praise than scold, to reward than punish."⁹

Interestingly, it is also in a woman's best interest to work toward home support. According to research done at Ohio State University College of Medicine, marital quarrels are harder on women than on men. Blood samples taken from 90 newlywed couples after they had a fight showed that women had higher levels of stress hormones. Researchers noted that men tend to withdraw from conflict or "tune out." Women, on the other hand, are more likely to be critical or demanding.¹⁰

Now, I do want to be fair. I have discovered, as a husband of over twenty years, that even Godly women who love the Lord sometimes have a bad day. At our home, my four boys and I have developed a code amongst the men. We simply say, "Mama has that look in her eye!" I came home one day when we were living in Wake Forest and was met by all four boys at the front door. "Stop Daddy stop. Don't go in the house. There's a problem." I asked them what the problem was and in unison they said "It's Mama." I asked them if she was hurt and they responded no but she was about to kill one of them. Timothy, my youngest, quickly interjected, "She's got the look Dad, and she's got it big time!" I slipped into the house and looked into the kitchen where Charlotte was at work at the sink. Our sink was against the back wall and so all I could see was Charlotte from the backside. However, let me tell you that by the way she was conducting business at that sink, I could tell from the back she had the look. I quickly moved back outside to the boys, gathered them up in a male huddle and said, "Guys, we've all seen Mama and so here's Dad's counsel. Every man for himself!" I shared with them that I had seen this look before and that basically this look said, "Give me some space for about two hours and I

⁹ Stephanie Dunnewind, "It's Time for a New Strategy When Nagging Doesn't Work," *Seattle Times* (4-6-00).

¹⁰ *Today's Christian Woman* (Mar/Apr 1997), 19.

will be fine.” I told the boys that I was not going to bother her or cross her path for the next couple of hours. I suggested that they do the same, and I informed them that if they got in trouble with her that they were not to call me, because I was not coming!

Professor Bob Montgomery at Bond University in Australia says the formula for a happy, nurturing relationship is simple: Five good times for every bad one. “If everything is basically good most of the time, a marriage can absorb the shocks and problems that are part of everyone’s life – especially if both [partners] are able to put out the soothing response of humor when these crises emerge.”¹¹

A man, indeed, needs to believe and experience a home that is his castle. He has the need for home support, and the wife is essential to his receiving this.

4. He needs an attractive wife. 6:4-9 (cf. 7:1-9)

Shulamith has praised Solomon and now he returns the compliment. Yet, as he returns the compliment, we learn something more about a basic need that men have: the need for their wife to be attractive. Solomon begins by telling his love, his darling, that she was like two of the most beautiful and lovely cities in Palestine, the cities of Tirzah and Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that in Lamentations 2:15, Jerusalem is called the “the perfection of beauty.” So unbelievable was her beauty that he says it was as if he was facing an awesome army with its banners in full display. Her beauty threw him off balance. So great is her loveliness that he is almost overwhelmed. “Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me.”

Going back to prior descriptions, he again describes the beauty of her hair, the brightness of her teeth, and the loveliness of her temples. His love for her has not diminished, and her beauty is as radiant as ever. Yet he does not stop here. He adds to his previous praise. He tells her that she has a uniqueness that transcends all others. In verses 8 & 9, he says there may be 60 queens and 80 concubines, indeed virgins without number, but none of them compare to her. Again he refers to her as his dove, and then he adds that she is his “perfect one, the only one.” This favorable opinion, he notes, is also shared by her mother, as well as other women. They, too, call her blessed and they also praise her.

A man longs for a woman who is possessed of an inner and outer beauty. A woman who is beautiful to her husband will cultivate a Godly/Christ-like spirit in her inner self (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-5). She understands that being beautiful on the inside will make her more attractive on the outside.

She also is a woman who keeps herself physically fit with diet and exercise, and she wears her hair, make-up, and clothes in a way that her husband finds attractive and tasteful. Her husband is pleased and proud of her in public, but also in private. At this point I need to say a quick word to the women that I hope will not cause them to become angry with me, but is nevertheless essential. I need to have a short talk about this thing that was birthed in the place where the Devil lives called flannel gowns and cotton socks! Women need to understand that from the male perspective there is no such thing as a sexy flannel gown. It does not exist. Indeed, I have

¹¹ Julie Macken, “The Mystery of Why Women Marry.” *Financial Review* (8-28-99).

conducted an extensive search all over the country, often frequenting Victoria's Secret and Frederick's of Hollywood, looking for this elusive, sexy flannel gown. I can provide conclusive evidence that it does not exist.

I do need to add that on one occasion, I was challenged by a seventy-year-old man concerning this. I was taken back as he came up and promptly struck me in the ribs with his fist. I turned around to see a twinkling-eyed old codger who said to me, "Young fellow, you've got it all wrong about them flannel gowns." I told him that I'd never had any man, anywhere, any time say that to me, and so I was at a loss on how to respond. He assured me that he was right and I was wrong. He went on to say, "Yes, my old lady and me have been married for over 50 years. She has a sexy flannel gown. It is about five years old. It has holes all in it." He went on to say, "When I go to bed at night, it's like going treasure hunting in that flannel gown!" I must confess, I blushed. And as I did, he struck me in the ribs one more time. He said, "Got ya, didn't I?", and he walked away. I guess in light of that I can say to all the women reading this, that if you have a holy/wholly flannel gown he might make an exception!

I shared this truth one time in a black church, and a man got so excited he left the congregation, came up on the platform and gave me a high-five at this point in my message before all the people. I think he was agreeing with me. On another occasion, a lady came up to me, and if looks could kill, I would not be writing this. She simply said with a rather stern face, "My husband wants to talk to you." Her husband, on the other hand, came up to me grinning from ear to ear. "Where have you been all my married life?" he said. "I want to invite you over to the house tonight after our meeting. We're going to have a "granny gown" bonfire! I'm going to burn them all!" I think that provides sufficient evidence that men, being creatures of sight, are not impressed with flannel, sweats, or cotton socks. Indeed, Shulamith understood very well the need for Solomon to have a wife that he could be proud of physically and spiritually, publicly and privately.

5. He needs a best friend. 5:16

In the latter part of 5:16, Shulamith simply says of Solomon, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!" Shulamith was well aware of the fact that though a man may not always act like it, he needs for his wife to be his very best friend. How does a wife go about doing this? She develops mutual interests with her husband. She discovers activities her husband enjoys and seeks to become proficient in them as well. If she learns to enjoy them, then she joins him in them. If she does not enjoy them, she encourages him to consider other things that they can enjoy doing together. She works at becoming her husband's very best friend so that he repeatedly associates her with those activities he enjoys the most. I recognize that men are very good at putting on acts and pretenses. However, I have become more and more convinced with each passing year of my own marriage, that a man really does need to have a woman, his wife, who is his very best friend.

I also believe a word of warning is essential at this point. I believe it is wise for a man to have an inner circle of three or four men who are his confidants and with whom he has great trust. I am also unalterably convinced that no woman should be a part of that circle. It is an unwise and dangerous course of action. But in addition to that, in his innermost circle, there must be only

one person, and that one person should be his wife. She should be his closest confidant. She should be his closest companion. She indeed should be his very best friend. Experts tell us that many long marriages wither from neglect, rather than blow up.

“So many times when couples get involved in careers and parenting their children, they lose that emotional connectedness with each other. It slips away and they don’t realize it,” says Claudia Arp. “She’s into her thing, he’s into his thing, then when the kids leave – that reason for staying in the relationship goes, too.” “In the past, marriages stayed together because society expected you to stay together,” says David Arp. “Now if a marriage stays together, it’s because the couple wants to stay together.¹²

A husband and a wife indeed should be lovers. Song of Solomon has made this very clear. However, a husband and a wife should also be one another’s very best friend. Song of Solomon has also made this clear, and it is not surprising that there is usually an intimate link between being great lovers and being best friends.

II. A man must love his wife.

Men and women are different in many ways. One area in particular is in the area of needs. They are quite different at this point, and therefore it is not surprising to see that women have needs significantly different than those of men. How has God put a woman together? What does she need from a man?

1. She needs a spiritual leader. 5:10b

Shulamith says that Solomon is chief or distinguished among 10,000. It is clear that her primary focus is on his physical appearance, and yet I am convinced she makes this statement as well because of the Godly character that radiates from within. It would be difficult to imagine the Bible commending anyone simply on physical appearance alone. Even here in the Song of Solomon, the spiritual character of a man is at least implicitly present. The fact of the matter is a woman’s most pressing need is that her husband would be a spiritual leader. She longs to follow a man of courage, conviction, commitment, compassion, and character. A woman longs for a man who can be both steel and velvet. He can be a man’s man and at the same time, he can be gentle, tender, and approachable. I have often said that a good woman is worth her weight in gold. However, a good man is worth twice his weight in gold because there are so few of them. Time magazine, February 14, 1994, ran on its cover page the body of a man and the head of a pig. That particular lead article was entitled, “Are Men Really That Bad?” The fact is men have been beaten up quite severely over the past several decades, and many men deserve those whippings. However, I sense that there is a new generation on the scene that is committed to being the kind of man that honors God and blesses a wife. Such a man will be a spiritual leader in the home. He will take the initiative in cultivating a spiritual environment for the family. He will be a capable and competent student of the Word of God, and he will live out before all a life founded on the Word of God. He’ll encourage and enable his wife to become a woman of God, and he will take the lead in training their children in the things of the Lord.

¹² Kristen Kauffman, “Divorced After Decades,” *The Dallas Morning News* (9-15-00).

2. She needs personal affirmation and appreciation. 6:4

Solomon refers to Shulamith as “his love, his darling.” He tells her how lovely, beautiful, and awesome she is. In verses 5 – 9 he details those qualities and attributes that he finds so irresistible. There is no question that this would have met her need for affirmation and appreciation. A man who loves a woman will praise her for personal attributes and qualities. He will extol her virtues as a wife, mother, and homemaker. He will also openly commend her in the presence of others as a marvelous mate, friend, lover, and companion. She will feel that to him, no one is more important in this world.

I remember telling men in a conference that one of the ways they show their wife appreciation is by picking up the phone and calling her during the day to see how she is doing. He is not to call to ask what came in the mail or what’s for supper! The following night a sweet young lady came up to me to tell me that her husband had obviously listened to what I had said the night before. She informed me that they had been married for a number of years and that her husband had never called her during the workday until today. On this day, he called her five times! At first I was quite proud of the impression I had made on the young man, but then a frightening thought entered my mind. I asked the young lady, “Well what did he say in each of those conversations?” Tragically, she informed me that he said not much at all and that each conversation lasted no more than a minute. I began to apologize to her for the fact that things had not worked out so well. She quickly interrupted me, “Oh no, Dr. Akin, it was wonderful. Just the fact that he thought to call means everything. We can work on the words later! However, if he doesn’t call, we have nothing to work on.”

P’ Gail Betton explains, in part, the popular success Bishop T. D. Jakes enjoys with women because of the constant way in which he publicly praises his wife. “I am a divorced mother of a 7-year-old, and I like to see a man who loves his wife.”¹³

Charlotte and I had some dear friends in Dallas who would come over to our home and eat pizza and drink Diet Coke on a regular basis. I remember on one occasion my wife was standing in the kitchen getting some drinks ready. Just sort of spontaneously and without really thinking about it, I said to her, “Charlotte, girl, I do believe you are about the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.” She smiled at me and I smiled back. Then one of my friends, whose name is Cathy, said to me, “Danny, I love it when you say nice things about Charlotte in front of other people, and you do it a lot.” I had not really thought about it that much before, and so I turned to Cathy and said, “You mean when John (her husband) says nice things about you in front of other people, it means a lot?” She responded with a twinkle in her eyes, “Hardly anything he does makes me feel more special.” I share that story with you because Cathy, when she was about 31 years of age, died of breast cancer. It was a difficult time for all of us, especially her husband, John. You see, God had blessed them with a wonderful marriage and a truly beautiful love affair. Yet, for some reason that we do not know, God only gave them ten years of marriage together. I am quite certain that John does not regret any of the times that he said nice things about his wife, Cathy, in front of other people. (By the way, God brought another precious lady into John’s life a short time later. I had the honor of performing their marriage.) Men, we need to be reminded

¹³ *Christianity Today* (2-7-00), 55.

that words of appreciation and affirmation, in front of other people, speak to one of the deepest needs in the life of our wife.

3. She needs personal affection and romance. 6:8-9, 11-13

Romance for a man means sex. He cannot imagine romance without having sex. On the other hand, romance for a woman can mean lots of things, and sex may or may not be a part of it. Solomon recognizes the need to cultivate an environment of romance, and so he tells Shulamith in 6:8-9 that no one compares to her when it comes to other women. She is his perfect one (v.9). All those who know her call her blessed and they praise her. In vs. 11-13, we find her response to the praise that has been showered on her by Solomon. She moves to the garden to see the beauty of it and the fresh evidences of their love. This is depicted by her desire to see whether the “vine had budded or the pomegranates had bloomed.” She goes on to say that even before she was aware of it, her soul had been enraptured and she was as one of the chariots of her noble people. Verse 13 pictures her being swept away while those who gaze on her beauty and perfection (at the encouragement of her husband it should be noted) plead with her to return and not to go away. A woman who responds in this kind of a way has had her deepest need of affection and romance met by her husband.

I recognize men sometimes need a little motivation in this area of romance, so let me share something they discovered in Germany several years back. If a man will kiss his wife in the morning before leaving the house, he will 1) live 5 years longer, 2) have 50% less illnesses, and 3) make 20 – 30% more money. Guys, even if you don’t like her, it will still pay to kiss her each day before heading off to work! You’ll live longer, be sick less, and make more money. This is a no-brainer.

It is crucial that a man learn how to speak to the needs of his wife’s heart in the area of romance. He must demonstrate to her both in word and deed that he understands her unique needs and appetite in this area. The fact of the matter is that most men do not understand romance from the female perspective. Indeed, most of us of the male species would not recognize romance as women understand it if it were to slap us in the face or bite us on the nose. I became acutely aware of this when I came home one day when we were living in Dallas and I asked my wife Charlotte, “Honey, do you think I’m romantic?” She yanked her head around so quickly, it is amazing to me that she did not permanently damage her neck. There was a look in her eyes that I had never seen before, but I was quite certain that I was not going to like what would follow. Well, being the loving wife that she is, she began by saying, “Let me start by saying that I do love you, and I cannot imagine being married to anybody else. You are a good husband and a wonderful father. However, I must tell you that the answer to your question is no. You are not romantic. I doubt that you would recognize it if it slapped you in the face or bit you on the nose.” Well, as you can imagine, my feelings were hurt, and so I responded rather sternly, “Well, I’ve been reading a lot about this stuff lately, and all these books that I have been reading say you need it.” She responded by telling me that she did, and so I told her that I might try to begin to give it to her in the near future. I must add at this point, I had no idea exactly how that was going to happen, but I was pleased when she said, “Well the fact that you’re even going to try, I find romantic.”

Now I want all of you to know that what I am about to tell you is absolutely the truth with no embellishment. Feel free to look up my wife anytime and have the story verified. It was a Friday night when we were living in Dallas, TX. I snuck up behind Charlotte feeling that it was time to be romantic (you guys know what that means!). I began to rub her back and neck. After just a couple of moments she turned around and looked at me and said, “Why don’t you go on, leave me alone, and quit bothering me.” I responded by telling her that I thought that was romantic. She informed me that it was not romantic now, nor would it be romantic later either. I clearly understood what that meant, and so I went off to bed early that night by myself. There was no need in waiting up. The next morning my wife took a shower. Now when Charlotte takes a shower she always loves to put on her body an Avon product called Skin-So-Soft. Those of you who are familiar with it know that it does three things: 1) it smells really good, 2) it will slime your dry skin if it needs it, and 3) it also happens to be a wonderful insect repellent. Well, Charlotte will put this on her body and then wipe it off with a towel. Her towel was lying on the bed after she had gotten out of the shower. I walked over and did an unusual thing. I picked up her towel and I smelled it. I turned to Charlotte and I said very innocently, “Honey, this towel smells like you.” She responded by saying, “Now that’s romantic.” I looked at her and I said, “You don’t have to make fun of me. I am really trying at this romance thing.” She responded by telling me that she really did find my statement romantic and she walked out of the bedroom. At that point, I looked up into Heaven and told God there was no hope in this area as far as I was concerned. I would never be able to understand romance from the female perspective. It was at that point that God was very gracious to me and He gave me insight as to how this romance thing works from the female perspective. I now share it with all my fellow males throughout the world.

Romance is basically a game. It is a very specific game. It is the game of Hide & Go Seek. She hides it and you seek it. Now, if you find it, like that wonderful philosopher from Mayberry, Andy Griffith, you will indeed agree that it’s GOOOOOOOD! On the other hand, if you don’t find it, you have one of two options. First, you can get nasty, mean and bent out of shape and just be a miserable old grouch for the rest of your life. I have met a number of men just like that. Secondly, you can remind yourself, it’s a game. Sometimes I win, and sometimes I lose. But that’s the fun of playing the game. So it is the game of Hide & Go Seek. But there’s a second part to this game, and this is not fair. However, we dealt long ago with the fact that some things aren’t fair, it’s just the way they are. Guys, you must understand. What is romantic to your wife, say, on Monday, may not necessarily be romantic on Tuesday. Indeed, women are quite adept at moving the romance on a regular basis, sometimes even hiding it in places where they can’t even find it. However, when you are searching for this romance in the place where it used to be, but now you discover that it is no longer there, don’t be surprised if looking over your shoulder is the woman that God gave you, and with her eyes she says something like this, “Yes, my darling. I moved the romance. It’s somewhere else now. And, I’m going to wait to see if you love me enough to look for it all over again.” Now again guys, you can get angry, mean, and bent out of shape, or you can remember, it’s a game. And games can be fun. Sometimes you win, and sometimes you lose. But it’s all a great game. Men, if you will approach romance in this kind of a way, not only will you find it fun, but you will also get better at it along the way. Carlin Rubenstein reminds us, “the level of romance in a relationship is a kind of barometer of love:

When romance is low, couples have sex less often, are less happy about love, and are more likely to consider divorce.”¹⁴

4. She needs intimate conversation. 5:16

Shulamith states that Solomon’s mouth is sweet and that he is altogether lovely. When one compares this verse with verse 13, it is clear that she has in mind, at least in part, his kisses and physical expressions of his love. Yet as we have seen in this book, statements are often capable of more than one meaning. I am quite sure that at this point she is also complimenting him with respect to the words that proceed from his mouth, and that they, indeed, are sweet. A woman has a need for intimate conversation. She needs a husband that will talk with her at the feeling level (heart to heart). She needs a man who will listen to her thoughts about the events of her day with sensitivity, interest and concern. Daily conversation with her conveys a desire of her husband to understand her. Wise men learn very soon after marriage that women are masters of code language. They say what they mean and expect you to know what they mean, and the particular words really don’t matter. Unfortunately some men are simply ill prepared and a little dense at this point, and it often gets them into serious trouble. How often it is that a man will come into the house in the evening, walk into the kitchen, give his wife a kiss on the cheek and ask her the question, “Honey, how was your day?” He will receive the response, “Fine.” Now if he is listening to the tone in which the word “fine” is delivered, he will pick up that “fine” does not mean “fine,” “fine” means “bad.” Unfortunately, he isn’t listening. He retires to their family room and grabs that male therapy device, the remote control, unaware of what just transpired. However, about three hours later it hits him. She didn’t fix me any supper. Men become amazingly sensitive when they’re hungry. And so this starving warrior makes his way to the bedroom where he finds his wife, and he asks a very simple question, “Honey, is anything bothering you?” She simply and curtly responds, “No.” Now of course, this “no” means “yes.” It also means this: “You weren’t interested in finding out three hours ago, and I’m not about to tell you now. Indeed, this world will come to an end before you know what’s bothering me.” Now a man could try to blame this whole episode on his wife, but the fact of the matter is, the blame lies at his feet. When he came in and kissed her on the cheek in the kitchen and asked about her day, she screamed loud and clear, “I’ve had a horrible day. Nothing’s gone right. I need you to stay here for a few moments and let me just vent and get some things out of my system.” Ten minutes of undivided attention can absolutely revolutionize the way the rest of the evening will go. A man must learn to meet his wife’s need for intimate conversation.

5. She needs honesty and openness. 6:10, 13

Solomon is utterly transparent and open in his affection and love for Shulamith. In 6:10 he says that to him she is as beautiful and bright as the morning, as fair as the moon, as clear as the sun, and as awesome as an army with its banners in full display. Nothing is hidden, everything is out in the open when it comes to his love and affection for her. A woman needs her husband to be honest and open with her. She needs a man who will look into her eyes and, in love, tell her what he is really thinking (Eph. 4:15). He will explain his plans and actions clearly and completely to her because he regards himself as responsible for her. He wants her to trust him

¹⁴ Carlin Rubenstein, “The Modern Art of Courtly Love,” *Psychology Today* (July, 1983), 46.

and feel secure. He wants her to know how precious she is to him. Growing openness and honesty will always mark a marriage when a man loves a woman.

6. She needs stability and security. 5:9, 6:1, 13

In 5:9, the Daughters of Jerusalem respond to the loving words of Shulamith in 5:8. They acknowledge that in her view, he is more beloved than any other. In 6:1, the Daughters of Jerusalem again request of Shulamith the location of the beloved. It is clear in their mind that she knows where he is and that she is secure and certain in that knowledge. Even when he has “turned aside” she is aware of where he is located. In verse 13 where her friends call for her to return, it is clearly implied that she is in his presence and that he is carrying her away to be with him. He has placed her on his chariot and they are going away. She is secure in the love of her husband.

A man who loves a woman will firmly shoulder the responsibilities to house, feed, and clothe the family. He will provide and he will protect. He will never forget that he is the security hub of the family both for his wife and his children. She will be aware of his dependability, and as our text indicates, so will others. There will be no doubt as to where his devotion and commitments lie. They are with his wife and his children.

7. She needs family commitment. 6:9 (cf. 8:1-2)

The family, and in particular children, is not directly mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Yet in 6:9 Solomon makes reference to the fact that she is “the only one of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her.” Solomon knew that drawing upon this family imagery would speak to her heart, and it would also impress upon her his interest in the family, and the importance he would place upon it. A woman longs to know that her man puts the family first. Such a man will commit his time and energy to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual development of the entire family, especially the children. For example, he will play with them, he will read the Bible to them, he will engage in sports with them, and he will take them on other exciting and fun-filled outings. Such a man will not play the fool’s game of working long hours, trying to get ahead, while his spouse and children languish in neglect. No, a woman needs a man committed to the family, she needs a man that puts his wife and children right behind his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“When 1,500 mall shoppers were asked what they wished for most when they blow out their birthday candles, men and women gave vastly different answers. The number one wish of women was “more time with spouse.” Among men that wish came in at 27th on the list. (What did the guys wish for most often? A lower golf score.)”¹⁵

Bill McCartney, former football coach of the University of Colorado and head of “Promise Keepers” says, “When you look into the face of a man’s wife, you will see just what he is as a man. Whatever he has invested or withheld from her, is reflected in her countenance.”¹⁶

¹⁵ *New Man*, (Sep. 1997), 20.

¹⁶ *Men in Action*, (April, 1995).

Conclusion

“An anthropologist once asked a Hopi why so many of his people’s songs were about rain. The Hopi replied that it was because water is so scarce and then asked, ‘Is that why so many of your songs are about love?’”¹⁷

When a woman puts her husband where her heart is, she makes it an ambition of her marriage to meet five basic needs in his life. When a man loves a woman, he makes it a life goal to meet seven basic needs of his wife. When a husband is committed in this way, and when a wife has the same commitment, it is not surprising that both husband and wife have a smile on their face and joy in their heart. This is the way God intended it from the very beginning. As persons committed to God’s plan for marriage, we should settle for nothing less.

¹⁷ Gregory McNamee , quoted in *Reader’s Digest*, (May, 2000), 87.