

The Secret to Lasting Love: Song of Solomon 1:9-17

Scriptures for Today

Song of Solomon 1:9-17

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. 10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. 11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver. 12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. 13 A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. 14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi. 15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes. 16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green. 17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

INTRODUCTION

Let me ask you a question. Why do so many relationships start so well and end so badly? Nobody stands at the altar thinking, "I hope we're divorced in ten years." Nobody says, "I hope one day we stop talking." Nobody plans for bitterness. Nobody plans for distance. Yet it happens every day.

Why? What's the difference between a love that fades and a love that lasts? Song of Solomon answers that question. Not with psychology. Not with romance novels. Not with Hollywood. Not with movies that come and go. God shows us what lasting love actually looks like.

I. REAL LOVE SEES VALUE

Song of Solomon 1:9-11

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. 10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. 11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

Let's stop right there because this sounds strange to us. Imagine going home today and saying to your wife, "Honey, you're just like one of Pharaoh's horses." Does that sound like, in today's world, a good compliment or a loving compliment? So what does Solomon actually mean?

These weren't ordinary horses. Pharaoh's chariot horses were the finest horses in the world. They were carefully chosen. Strong. Beautiful. Majestic. Expensive. They were reserved for the king himself. Solomon isn't calling her a horse. He's saying, "Out of everyone I could compare you to, you stand above the rest. You are beautiful. You are precious. You are magnificent."

Then look at verse 10. "Thy cheeks are comely." The word **comely** means beautiful or lovely. "With rows of jewels." These were beautiful ornaments worn around the face and hair. "Thy neck with chains of gold." He notices her beauty and he isn't afraid to say it.

Then verse 11 says, "We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver." In other words, "You are worth honoring. You are worth blessing. You are precious to me."

Notice something about Solomon. One of the very first things we hear him do is encourage her. He doesn't begin with criticism. He doesn't begin with complaints. He begins with appreciation. Think of someone making you dinner. They paid for it. They spent time to fix you an amazing dinner. They serve the dinner to you. And as soon as you get it, you start complaining.

Instead, you should think about that person more and how much time they spent on you because they love you. That's far more important than the quality or taste of the food. Pam spent time making me biscuits and gravy when we were 16 years old. It didn't matter to me what it tasted like. She made it for me.

How different would marriages be if husbands and wives spent as much time expressing appreciation as they do pointing out problems? Imagine bringing home a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Would you immediately start pointing out everything wrong with it? Of course not. You enjoy its beauty. You don't try to find everything that's wrong.

Real love notices what's good before it notices what's wrong. Now think about our own words. How easy is it to become experts at criticism? "You forgot this. You always do that. You never do this. You never do that. You never listen. You never help." You actually talk yourself into those things even though it's not true.

People criticize others constantly. People make fun of others. Sometimes children learn it from adults. Remember the sermon from 2 Kings 2? Those young people mocked Elisha. God showed us that mocking people isn't a small matter. We've all been guilty of saying hurtful things. I know I have. You probably have too. But God wants us to grow beyond that.

Words can leave scars that last for years. Your words matter. One sincere compliment can stay in someone's heart for years. One cruel sentence can do the same. Ask yourself: What kind of words are people hearing from you? Are your words building people up OR tearing them down?

Real love chooses words that help instead of hurt. Real love sees value in other people because that's exactly how God treats us. We have real value to God. He loves us so much. When we truly love God, we'll naturally begin treating people differently. We'll stop looking for opportunities to criticize and start looking for opportunities to encourage. That's one of the secrets to lasting love.

II. REAL LOVE WANTS TO BE TOGETHER

Song of Solomon 1:12-14

While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. 13 A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. 14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.

These verses are filled with pictures that don't mean much to us today. But God does this because He wants us to study. These are actually very strong examples. Look at verse 12. "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." What is **spikenard**?

It was a very expensive perfume. It wasn't something people used every day. It was precious and valuable. She's saying that simply being near the king fills the room with sweetness. His presence brings joy. For example, just you being here today to worship God brings joy to me.

Then verse 13 says, "A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me." Myrrh was another costly perfume or fragrant spice. People often carried it in a small pouch around their neck so its fragrance stayed close to them throughout the day.

When she says, "He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," she isn't trying to shock anyone. She's describing something precious that stays close to her heart. Between your breasts is where your heart is located. In other words, **"I want him close to me. I treasure him. I delight in being near him."**

For example, many husbands and wives today don't even sleep in the same bed. If that is you, you need to fix that immediately. I am not sleeping somewhere else. I want my wife right next to me. I love her. Sometimes she lays her head on my chest and we fall asleep that way. I don't want her somewhere else. I want her with me and close to me.

Then look at verse 14. "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi." Camphire was a fragrant flowering plant. En-gedi was an oasis in the wilderness near the Dead Sea. Imagine traveling through a dry, hot desert and suddenly coming to a place filled with fresh water, green trees, and beautiful flowers. That's how she describes the man she loves. "When I'm with him, it's like finding an oasis in the middle of the desert." Think about that.

She isn't talking about his money. She isn't talking about his palace. She isn't talking about his success. Those things are far less important. She's talking about **his presence**. She simply enjoys being with him. That's what you want in a husband or a wife. Simply enjoy being with that person. The other things are not so important.

Imagine two elderly people sitting on their front porch. No phones. No television. No distractions. No big vacation. No expensive restaurant. They're simply talking. Laughing. Remembering. After fifty years, they still enjoy one another's company. That's beautiful.

I took Pam and my kids to get some ice cream one night. We saw this older man and older woman just sitting there talking and enjoying each other. You don't see that much any more. When they were leaving, he said: "Would you like to go sit on the porch with me when we get home?" And she said, "Yes, I do." They don't need all these expensive things. They enjoy each other.

The strongest marriages aren't built on expensive gifts. They're built on thousands of ordinary moments together. One meal. One conversation. One walk. One prayer. One evening sitting beside each other. Real love isn't built on constant excitement. It's built on fellowship.

Ask yourself this question. **Does your spouse enjoy being around you?** Do your children enjoy being around you? Do your friends enjoy being around you? Or have busyness, work, phones, and distractions stolen the fellowship that God intended?

One of the secrets to lasting love is learning to enjoy the greatest gift God has already given you: Each other. Hey, we need to simply enjoy the times we have together. For example, I love the time I get to spend with my wife, my Dad, my Mom, Nathan, Robert, Chris, Parker, and my kids during soul winning. I enjoy those moments we have together.

For example, I know it doesn't sound fun but one day I fell down a few front steps during soul winning and rolled a short distance. Robert was standing right there watching. He said, "Are you okay?" Yep, I'm okay. Before that, he fell on ice another day just down the road from here. I said, "Are you okay?" Yep, I'm okay. I remember those moments.

That's how you build friendships. That's how you love each other. You spend time with each other. All of those ordinary moments add up into love and friendship. Please, spend more time with us here. I want to spend more time with all of you. Enjoy each other. Be good to each other.

III. REAL LOVE SPEAKS LIFE

Song of Solomon 1:15-16

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes. 16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

Notice something beautiful happening here. Solomon compliments her. Immediately she compliments him. This isn't one-sided. They're building each other up. This isn't flattery filled with lies. They are telling the truth.

Look at verse 15. He says, "**Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair.**" He repeats it. Why? Because he wants her to know he truly means it. Then he says, "**Thou hast doves' eyes.**" What does that mean? Doves were known for being gentle, peaceful, and pure. Solomon isn't just talking about the color of her eyes. He's complimenting her gentle spirit and the kindness that shines through her face. Then she responds in verse 16.

"Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant." She doesn't ignore his kindness. She returns it. Think about that. Neither one is trying to win an argument. Neither one is keeping score. Neither one is waiting to criticize. They're trying to encourage one another.

Imagine your marriage is like a bank account. Every compliment is a deposit. Every "thank you" is a deposit. Every act of appreciation is a deposit. Criticism and harsh words are withdrawals. If all you ever do is make withdrawals, eventually the account is empty.

Imagine trying to keep a fire burning. Every piece of wood you add makes it stronger. Stop feeding it, and eventually it dies. Relationships are the same way. Encouragement keeps love burning. Constant criticism slowly puts the fire out. Words matter.

God says in Proverbs: "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue.**" Think about that. Your mouth has the power to encourage or discourage. To heal or to wound. To build or to tear down. How many marriages would change if husbands and wives spent as much time speaking encouragement as they do pointing out faults?

Imagine coming home every day and hearing: "I'm thankful for you. You did a great job. I appreciate everything you do. I love you." Wouldn't your home feel different? Now imagine hearing every day: "You forgot. You always. You never. Why can't you." That home slowly grows cold. One kind word can brighten someone's entire day. One harsh sentence can stay in someone's heart for years.

Here's another example. When someone greets you and says, "Hey, how are doing today?" They are asking because they care about you. You don't need to respond nasty or negatively. People remember that. I had a boss named Larry. People would greet him in the morning. And he would just stare you down and not say anything. One man named Glenn said, "Hey Larry, what's your problem?" I was just saying good morning. He goes, "Do you know how many people say good morning to me? I don't feel like talking to everyone." And Glenn said, "It's not that hard to say good morning back." And that man, Larry, the boss, was a miserable man. And the whole place was miserable because a place follows after the leaders. Your tongue matters. Your attitude matters. One word at a time can just destroy your home, your work place, and your church.

Ask yourself: **When people leave a conversation with me, are they stronger because of my words or weaker? How am I affecting people?**

Do your husband, wife, children, friends, and coworkers hear words that give them life? Or words that slowly tear them down? One of the secrets to lasting love is learning to speak life into the people God has placed around you. Real love doesn't look for opportunities to criticize. **Real love looks for opportunities to encourage.**

IV. REAL LOVE BUILDS A HOME

Song of Solomon 1:17

The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

The chapter ends with a picture of a home. "The beams of our house." Notice that little word. Our. Not my house. Not your house. Our house. They're building something together. Then notice the materials.

"The beams of our house are cedar." Why cedar? Because cedar was one of the strongest and most valuable woods in Israel. It was known for lasting a very long time. It didn't rot easily. It was beautiful, strong, and dependable.

In other words, they're not talking about throwing together a temporary shelter. For example, many people won't get married but they will live together. That's them saying well this might be just temporary. No, God doesn't want your relationship to be temporary. He says to get married.

They're talking about building something that lasts. That's exactly what a marriage should be. Not something you throw away when times get hard. It's something you build for a lifetime.

Imagine watching two men build a house. One says, "I'm going to do it right." He digs a solid foundation. He measures carefully. He uses quality materials. The other says, "I just want to finish as fast as possible." He skips steps. Cuts corners. Uses cheap materials. From the outside, both houses might look the same on the day they're finished.

But wait ten years. One is still standing. The other is falling apart. Marriages are built the same way. They're not strengthened by one grand romantic moment. They're strengthened by thousands of ordinary choices. One conversation. One apology. One prayer together. One act of forgiveness. One kind word. One sacrifice. One decision after another. Day after day. Year after year.

Strong marriages aren't built overnight. They're built over a lifetime. For example, I would rather die than lose my wife. If she needs something, I'm going to give it all I got to provide for her. But, in those times, God **MUST** always be first. We can't get things out of order.

Ask yourself: What kind of house am I building? Are you building with patience or impatience? With forgiveness or bitterness? With encouragement or criticism? With faithfulness or selfishness? One day your children—and even your grandchildren—will live with the results of the house you're building today.

Real love doesn't just build a wedding. Real love builds a home.

CONCLUSION

So let me ask you one final question. **What's the secret to lasting love?** Is it beauty? No. Beauty changes with time. Is it money? No. Money comes and goes. Is it romance? No. Romance has its highs and lows. Is it feelings? No. Feelings change from day to day. Then what makes love last?

Song of Solomon gives us the answer. Real love sees value. Real love enjoys being together. Real love speaks words that give life. Real love builds a home instead of tearing one down. And through all of that, **real love keeps choosing the other person.** Every single day. Choosing patience. Choosing forgiveness. Choosing kindness. Choosing encouragement. Choosing faithfulness. Choosing love.

That's exactly what God has done for us. He set the example. Think about it. How many times have we failed Him? How many times have we fallen short? How many times have we disappointed Him? Yet He has never stopped loving us. The greatest example of lasting love isn't Solomon. It's Jesus Christ.

When we were sinners, He loved us. When we failed, He loved us. When we wandered away, He loved us. When He went to the cross, He proved that love isn't just something you say. **Love is something you choose to do.** So husbands choose to love your wives. Wives choose to respect and love your husbands.

Parents, choose to love your children. Children, choose to honor your parents. Because the secret to lasting love isn't finding the perfect person. It's becoming the kind of person who chooses to love God's way. Real love doesn't quit when it's difficult. Real love keeps choosing the other person.

Let's pray.