

# Benchmarks Of A Gospel-Driven Marriage

(A Summary of the Song of Solomon)



When it comes to damaging the witness of the Gospel, one of the most sadly effective means of damage is something called “compartmentalization”, or separating what God has joined together. When we separate our lives into the “physical”, the “relational”, and the “spiritual”, we ignore the fact that we are both body and soul, joined together and lived out in a whole-life context. Everything has a spiritual aspect to it, including our marriages and everything that happens dynamically within our marriages. For better or worse, Christian marriages showcase the Gospel. Question is,

what is being displayed? There are standards in the Bible against which we can measure our marriages. Song of Solomon offers ten benchmarks by which we can measure the level of “Gospeliciousness” in our marriages!

## 1. CHARACTER counts; and is, in fact, irresistible!

1:2-4; 2 Corinthians 2:15

ESPECIALLY for men! The man’s name (his reputation, character) is like a fragrant anointing oil. For that reason, the lady folks are smitten by him, he is seen as quite a “catch”. Ultimately, what matters is character. Both to people and to God. Christians are to be an aroma unto life in a world that, morally and spiritually, stinks. *ESV 2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, Do people like to be around you? In fact, the aroma of our character should stir up a thirst and hunger for the Gospel among those we are around. And ultimately, a woman wants an HONORABLE man rather than a defensive, snarky jerk who stinks [Ernest . . . ].*

## 2. WORDS carry great POWER in marriage.

1:6-2:7; Colossians 4:6

Words reveal how we perceive ourselves. And words can transform those we love – for better or for worse. *ESV Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.* A lot of regrets come from words wrongly spoken in marriages [“Shut

up & submit, woman!"]. But a good word to your spouse builds up marriages. It goes both ways. <sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 4:6** *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.* Honest praise is always a good thing to offer, and constructive criticism (5-1 ratio).

### **3. TIMING is important, both before *and* during marriage.**

*2:7-17; Galatians 4:4-5*

While God's Word is NOT prudish about marital intimacy, there is a context of timing for expressions of physical intimacy within marriage. The foxes in the vineyard must be taken care of if there is to be truly open intimacy within marriage. Deal with pride, selfishness, an unforgiving attitude, and unspoken expectations that hinder intimacy. DON'T COMPARTMENTALIZE! Of course, the consistent counsel for singles is WAIT! – for the right person (a husband) and the right time (AFTER you say "I do"). Then, the timing will be beautiful <sup>ESV</sup> **Ecclesiastes 3:11** He has made everything beautiful in its time. And you will reflect the image of the One Who waited until just the right time to send the Bridegroom to the bride, <sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 4:4** *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* <sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 4:5** *to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

### **4. True love PURSUES its beloved.**

*3:1-11; Luke 19:1-10*

In the context of marriage, true love PURSUES his/her beloved. Marriage is not a couple of passive people sitting around hoping the other one will make the next relational move! In this pursuing love, we follow the example of our Bridegroom Who came not to be served but to serve and to pursue sinners. The "Seeker" in the Biblical seeker mentality is GOD.

### **5. The world has it all WRONG about BEAUTY *and* physical INTIMACY.**

*4:1-5:3; Matthew 5:16*

In marriage, nakedness is a beautiful but private thing. Physical intimacy means something; it means unity. Some people worship sex; Christians see it as a blessing and a bridge to worshipping the God who provided the gift of marital intimacy. When we follow what the Bible says, we set a standard that people might not understand or agree with, but it gets their attention and eventually their praise – which we deflect to the LORD! <sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 5:16** *In the*

*same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

## **6. Marriage is never CONFLICT -- free.**

*5:2-6:3; Genesis 3:24*

To be realistic about marriage, you need to understand that since the fall, ALL marriages are lived out EAST of Eden, in the context of a fallen world. <sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 3:24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.** The opportunities to be insensitive and selfish abound in marriage. Yet the wife speaks well of her husband rather than joining in the “. . . all men are jerks . . .” chorus. So, GET REAL! Marriage is between 2 fallen self-centered people who have to learn together to be less self-centered. Husbands, you’ve been happily married how many years? How about your wife? Is it the same number of years?” The idea of a perfect marriage is an IDOL, so don’t worship it! Marriage is an opportunity to deny yourself, to grow more altruistic, and grow more like Christ, who is the least selfish person in the universe! So open your eyes to the GIFT that is your spouse! Open your mouth and talk through whatever conflict you’re having. And rather than the “fight and flight” routine, be open and communicate to your spouse, “There’s nothing you can do to make me NOT love you!” (Although there is consequences!)

## **7. Beauty and pure PASSION are part of marriage.**

*6:4-8:4*

Beauty was never meant to be an end in itself but something that reminds us of a God who LOVES beauty and Who IS beautiful. The Bible NOTES and VALUES feminine beauty; and husbands need to affirm what is unique and awesome in their wives. After all, the wife is in the image of an awesomely beautiful God. Also, in the BIBLICAL view of passion, it is patient, pleasurable yet private, and the best protection against impure passion. The world notices those who wait. They may scoff, but they also appreciate our stand and boundaries.

## **8. Love and MARRIAGE really *do* go together!**

*8:5-7*

Love is . . . a wife leaning on her husband for affection, protection, and provision. The man IS the leader of the marriage; and he’s either a good one or a bad one. Love is also bigger than just the two of us. There’s family, lineage, the family tree, and society. Community is part of love. And love in marriage is a PERMANENT and COVENANTAL COMMITMENT. Real marriage

is forever. Like death. And it's a flame that NOTHING can put out! There's persevering permanence to marital love. And there's not price tag on this kind of marriage and love. \$\$ is temporary, love is permanent! Just like God's love freely given to us in the Gospel!

## **9. Purity before marriage is a TEAM EFFORT!**

*8:8-14*

There's a 5 point protection plan to help a young lady remain a WALL until the DOOR of marriage opens. FAMILY. PEERS. COMMUNITY, or the CHURCH FAMILY, SELF-RESOLVE fueled by Holy Spirit fed wisdom when it comes to not putting oneself in a compromising position. SELF-KNOWLEDGE about who you uniquely are as a male and a female, as taught by family and church. Peace is a result, because there's no regrets, and freedom to give ALL our love ONLY to EACH OTHER. We need to communicate that God, our family, our church family, and our friends all care about purity. Ultimately, we must care more about the Lord and HIS ways that following our physical urges.

## **10. Marriage is about LONGING and WAITING.**

*8:8-14; Revelation 22:20*

*<sup>ESV</sup> Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!* The book begins and ends with longing. There's waiting BEFORE marriage and WITHIN marriage. Marriage, like life, is about longing and waiting. And that's counter-cultural. But in the Christian view of living, patience is a virtue to be cultivated, a virtue that builds faith and hope and prompts prayer and thanksgiving. We live out waiting and longing, and we live out the hope that is ours in the Gospel!