

How Beautiful??

Song of Solomon 6:4-8:4



How many of you grew up watching the “Dick Van Dyke Show”? How about “I Love Lucy”? What was the bedroom arrangement on television shows back then? And how different is it now? TOTALLY different! Two extremes of the spectrum. And how about how the body is displayed these days as opposed to those days? As Bob Dylan said, “The times, they are a-changing”.

While preparing for these lessons, it’s been interesting to note: John Calvin never wrote a commentary on Song of Solomon. Some older pastor/preachers and theologians (like Matthew Henry & Charlie Spurgeon) “spiritualized” the book, making everything symbolic and totally an analogy, with no real connection to the physical world. Henry even wrote, “*When we read this book . . . we must forget we have bodies.*” Really? How? And WHY?!?

What is NEO-PLATONIC THINKING, and why should we even care? Where did this “Scripture avoids dealing with the body” idea ever come from? NPT is something that has in the past affected the church, especially when it comes to how we view the human body / passion. In NPT, the BODY is BAD, the SOUL is PURE. So the BODY is basically a BAD container that houses a GOOD soul. It is a NECESSARY EVIL, and we’d be better off without it. St Francis who was a sissy even referred to the body as a useful but infuriating beast. Death, then, is a FREEING of the soul from the body. We should care because ANY belief that sees our bodies as essentially BAD is NOT a belief founded on the BIBLE.

Part of what this Song-book brings to the table is a Biblical view of both the *essential beauty* of the body *and* the *essential goodness* of pure passion. But before we examine these twin themes, there’s a basic principle we need to remember.

**** There’s nothing so BEAUTIFUL that it cannot be CORRUPTED by the devil and DISTORTED by “religious” beliefs not GROUNDED in God’s Word. **** The devil takes beautiful people and tempts them to use their beauty for corrupt purposes. Samson didn’t fall for Delilah because she was so physically ugly, nor did David fall for Bathsheba because

she looked like a beached whale when she was bathing. Nor did Herod do whatever Salome suggested because she danced like Steve Urkel. It's called the appeal of LUST (which we'll get to later . . .) It's a modern media marketing technique. Or to put it another way, "sex sells". Bimbos and hunks make for appealing commercials. And of course, when it comes to the body and how it is displayed, "women's equality" movements are just plain ridiculous. [cf Asheville, NC . . .]

On the other hand, religious groups that basically wear burlap bags over their bodies (and the women are chastised for showing "too much ankle") are displaying an unbiblical view of their bodies, also. Ultimately, when it comes to the body, excessive exposure and excessive cover up are not the answer! Why? Because both go against how God's Word speaks of our bodies.

1st, Consider BODILY BEAUTY.

- **Ultimately, what does *all* beauty in *any* part of creation point to? Cf *Romans 1:18-25; Psalm 19:1* Everything in creation displays the GLORY of God, which is often referred to as a beautiful light. One of the ways God gives us a glimpse of His glory and His Beauty is by giving us glimpses of His glory and beauty dia His CREATION. A BEAUTIFUL God created a BEAUTIFUL world with BEAUTIFUL image-bearers as a post-it note reminder to all that "Hey, what you see is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the beauty that is part of Who I am!" Whenever and wherever we see beauty, we should praise the One who makes ALL THINGS beautiful.**
- **Yet, there's a *danger* in beauty, a problem. What is it? Cf *Proverbs 31:30; 6:25* // Beauty is VAIN, transient. Doesn't last. In spite of face lifts, tummy tucks, wrinkle creams, botox, and hair dye. And beauty can ALSO be dangerous. Regarding the Adulterous woman of Proverbs 6:**

[New International Version](#)

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.

[New Living Translation](#)

Don't lust for her beauty. Don't let her coy glances seduce you.

[English Standard Version](#)

Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; [“ . . . just one look . . . that’s all it took . . . “]

An aside. Sexual assault is WRONG. Period. ALWAYS wrong. And there’s no excuse for SA. And there IS no punishment SEVERE ENOUGH for those who sexually assault other people. It is an unspeakably evil act. Having said that, when a woman knowingly dresses as provocatively as she can and acts as provocatively as she can and either ALLOWS herself to be photographed in provocative poses and/or posts pictures of herself in all kinds of provocative poses and basically tries to “market” her sexuality & then COMPLAINS about being “objectified” and/or “seen by men as a sex object,” that woman is talking out of both sides of her mouth! My Parents had a name for girls who were like that, and it was NOT a flattering name. Ok, now I’ll dismount from my high horse. Just sayin’.

- **An Insight: The Bible NOTES and VALUES feminine beauty! Cf *Genesis 12:11, 14; 24:16; 29:17; 1 Samuel 25:3; 2 Samuel 13:1; Ester 1:11; 2:7; Job 42:15.*** Abraham’s wife is recorded as being beautiful in appearance, in fact, VERY beautiful, as was Isaac’s wife Rebecca. Rachael is recorded as being beautiful, as is Abigail, as is Tamar & Ester AND the daughters of Job. Their beauty is mentioned with no negative connotations attached!
- **Biblically, physical beauty is like a CUT ROSE. Beauty is worth beholding, even though you know beauty is withering away.** [Men, you walk into Kroger or Whole Foods and you’ll be greeted with a display of beautiful roses. If you’re head’s screwed on right, your 1st thought should NOT be, “Oh, well, those roses are going to fade and smell bad a few days after I bring ‘em home, so no point in buying some roses for my wife / girlfriend.” You WANT to buy those roses b/c: 1st, your wife is WIRED to enjoy the beauty of flowers, AND to enjoy the fact that you were just that thoughtful. 2nd, YOU enjoy beauty, and those roses remind you of your beautiful wife . . . “ . . . And now YOU come home drunk! . . . + “These roses are like you. They look good right now, but they will dry up later.”] Exile to the doghouse. BEAUTY is worth beholding for its own sake, regardless!
- **In Song of Solomon, “beautiful” is used at least 16 times!** And that adjective “beautiful” is used to describe ALL the body parts mentioned in the Text. Yes! Her

BODY is BEAUTIFUL, and the Bible does NOT hesitate to record for us what the Husband thinks of the Wife's body – in the context of marriage.

- **The full body look, which only the HUSBAND should see, is both sensory and symbolic! What about the description on her nose, her body, her head, and the rest of her?** Men are very VISUAL, primarily [Cohen Brother's *Shallow Hal*]. Women will usually or ultimately be drawn to a man's character or repulsed by it, and attracted by the man's intellect or bravery or humor. MEN are VISUAL. VERY visual. The EMPHASIS here is on the FACE. That's only natural since the FACE is a person's most distinctive feature and tends to represent one's personality. ["You have mischief in your eyes . . . Chester has sad eyes . . . Oliver has BULGING eyes . . ."]

NOT saying she has a BIG NOSE ["Your nose looks like the Empire State Building in NYC" or "I could drive my car up one of your nostrils and out the other nostril"]. To someone living in Israel, the tower was a symbol of excellence & a recognized standard of great value, like the Taj Mahal or the Biltmore Mansion. [Basketball player who you can count on the ball going in the hoop, "He's \$\$" not literally made of \$\$ (unless he's with the NBA) // He's saying like wheat gathered and bundled together, she has what we could call an "hourglass figure". Mt. Carmel is known for being "Strikingly beautiful".] The whole description is using natural analogies to describe his wife's majestic beauty and grace.

- **The "Big Picture" is that of a bride-lady (NOT a "bridezilla"!) who is both UNIQUE and AWESOME! Cf 6:4, 5, 8-9, 13-14; 7:5 (NOT "DIFFERENT" & "OVERWEALMING"!) She looks so great that he can't even keep his eyes on her very long, her eyes "overwealm" him (6:5); she has a stunning royal look and classy manner about her and he is held captive by her tresses (hair) 7:5. Whew! Goodness, gracious, great balls of fire . . . I'm all shook up . . . You got me straight trippin', boo! The cool points are out the window and she's got me all twisted up in the game."**
- **We need to recover and *aesthetic theology*. Why? Cf John 1:14 (and the "can't wrap out minds around it" Revelation of Isaiah 53:2; 4:2; 33:17).** Because, the TOTAL of what men and women are – soul AND body – is the image of God, reflecting SOMETHING of God's divine glory and beauty. And remember this: When the 2nd member of the Trinity came to this planet, He did NOT come here as a stone, a plant, a donkey, wind and water, North Star or Black Hole. Jesus became a man, a PERSON,

a PERSON who people were DRAWN to. Jesus was a man who was evidently ordinary looking but @ the same time a person of great beauty. In fact, Jesus IS the most beautiful and desirable person ever! Creation and redemption both EMPHASIZE and HIGHLIGHT God's LOVE for incarnating beauty. And the New Heavens & the New Earth will GLISTEN with pristine beauty (Rev. 21-22)! God loves beauty. God's Son is beautiful. We are created in the image of a beauty-loving God. So why NOT love beauty?

2nd, Consider PURE PASSION.

A lot of symbolism wrapped up in the Mandrakes, love-apples, and pomegranates. In the interest of not turning this into an awkward moment, I'll not comment. Go get a commentary! I'll suggest some to you.

In a Biblical view of passion,

- **Pure passion is PATIENT. 8:4.** Pure passion WAITS for the right person @ the right time, & in the right place. The proper PERSON is one's own spouse, and the proper TIME is MARRIAGE, and the PLACE is a PRIVATE PLACE. God gives us boundaries for our own good, and for the good of Society. A society w/out boundaries violated in movies and television shows that invite people into the bedroom – that kind of society will basically bring itself down by its own lack of restraint and control. Rome corrupted INTERNALLY before it was sacked by enemies EXTERNALLY.
- **Pure passion is PLEASURABLE yet PRIVATE.** 7:9-8:3 seems to say it's OK in the context of marriage for a husband and wife to enjoy each other. [I've always found it rather humorous to sit across from a husband and wife who wont drink after one another . . . ewww! But yet I would HOPE they would kiss. So . . . please explain the difference???) But yet there is a PRIVACY about their deep affection. They do not make a PUBLIC SPECTACLE of their affection for each other.

To parents, you need to keep that balance of showing affection to each other in front of the children so they will see affection between a husband and a wife tastefully played out before them [Sad when children grow up never seeing their parents kiss or show affection . . . at the same time, we parents shouldn't be so over the top with our

affection to where the kids are saying “Gross” or “Get a room”.] Affection is neither a show nor is it something to be ashamed of, either.

- **Pure passion is a PROTECTION against IMPURE passion.** You can’t fight something with nothing. Simply saying to young people “don’t do it” is like telling them NOT to think of a dog, or a cat, or the color red. The ANTIDOTE for IMPURE PASSION is PURE PASSION, in the context of a committed covenant marriage between a man and a woman.

Note: The Bible sees LUST and LOVE as two separate issue. *Cf Proverbs 5:15-20* God’s Word often places LUST next to LOVE to give us a choice and an ANTIDOTE to lust, which is LOVE.

- **A walk through most any bookstore reveals who is winning the cultural battle between lust and love. The stats and stories all point to the temporary winner.** LUST is winning. Romance Novels. Movies on DVD. Television shows on DVD. Even the “self-help” and “relationships” section are lust oriented. Go beyond the bookstore to the internet and beyond, and LUST is marketed and gobbled up like peanut M&Ms.

In the early 1980’s HARVARD UNIVERSITY did a study on allusions to physical intimacy on television. In 1980, 79% off ALL references to PI involved unmarried couples or just singles “hooking up” for the night w/PI. Even the HEROES of the stories on television – the GOOD GUYS – are more often than not living together and being Physically intimate apart from marriage. Do you think this portrayal has gotten better, or worse since the 80’s? Or let me just ask you this: When was the last time you saw a show or movie where the leading man and woman were happily married and devoted to each other? Or where single couples were staying pure. Tune in Tonight? Coming to a theatre near you? Don’t hold your breath.

- **As Christians, we need to have firmly fixed in our mind what the world notices . . .** The world notices the single person who waits. They notice the married couple who are in love and committed. The world notices the single girl who won’t compromise herself physically. They notice Daddys who care enough to make sure their daughters don’t leave the house dressed provocatively. They notice a Christian couple who’ve been married 40-60 years who enjoy being around each other, holding hands, hugging, and tastefully kissing. [Not the soundest or most consistent theology, but a song written about him and his wife, Charlie Pride, “You got to kiss an angel each

Morning, and let her know you think about her when you're gone. Kiss an angel good morning, and love her like the devil when you get back home."] YES, the fallen world find this kind of behavior STRANGE, yet something deep inside them CRAVES this kind of pure affection, sanctioned and blessed by the Lord!

The self-righteous merely CONDEMN PI outside of marriage, but offer no alternative. Christians DISPLAY unpretentious affection, publically, for their spouses – within limits, of course!

"Beauty is the battlefield where God and Satan contend with each other for the hearts of men."

-- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

"Everything beautiful has a mark of eternity."

— Simone Weil, *Lectures on Philosophy*