

Love is . . .

Song of Solomon 8:5-7



How would you complete this sentence?

“When it comes to a man with a woman (in marriage), love is . . . “

The way that sentence has been competed down through the ages ranges from the insightful to the interesting to the entertaining to the idiotic. **[John Lennon: Love is real , real is love // Love is feeling , feeling love // Love is wanting to be loved // Love is touch, touch is love // Love is reaching, reaching love // Love is asking to be loved // Love is you, You and me // Love is knowing we can be // Love is free, free is love // Love is living, living love Love is**

needed to be loved /// Forest Gump, “I’m not a very smart man, but I know what love is . . . “] In the 1960’s, Kim Grove and Roberto Casali offered several insights on love that began as little love notes and eventually got published as a series of single-framed **cartoons of a man & a woman modestly UNdressed** in the New York Times, entitled *Love is . . . in bloom*. **Some of the sayings and drawings were inappropriate, most were like this: Love is turning his head . . . helping him stick to his diet . . . wearing his biker jacket . . . having someone to act goofy with . . . knowing you married your best friend (ahhhhhh . . .) . . . hearing him tell a friend he’s ‘out with some skank”** Seems everyone wants to complete the sentence “Love is . . . “ **In fact, you’ll get over 1 BILLION “hits” on the internet if you just type in the phrase “Love is . . . “** Here in *Song of Solomon Chapter 8*, we encounter three simple pictures with three captions (and a soundtrack?) teaching us God’s Universal Truths about marital love.

1. Love is . . . L3ANING on your HUSBAND.

8:5a

- WHO is the WHO, and WHO is the beloved? The WHO is the young bride, the BELOVED is her husband. Just how they’re referred to tells us something about their relationship **[Vs “the old ball and chain, the arm candy, the bridezilla, the beast, the dragon lady, or even the heifer . . .]**
- What kind of journey is being alluded to in this verse? **The imagery (remember this is poetry) is that of coming out of the “wilderness” of their lives before marriage (being single doesn’t HAVE to be a wilderness experience, but more often than not, it is) and love bringing you home to a**

kind of promised land with milk & honey & wine & fruit. Marriage itself IS a journey, with ups and downs, highs and lows, experienced together.

- Are they reminiscing or coming back from the honeymoon? **They've moved back into what was once His Mother's home, they're returning to their old home and reminiscing (like I do whenever I go to 200 Short Bay Street) & reminiscing. We don't know. Newly wed, or 55 years truly wed. There's poetic ambiguity, for the TIME doesn't matter, it's the IMAGE of . . .**
- What does "leaning" bring to mind? Are there any Gospel connections? **This LEANING is obviously a sign of affection and security . . . picture the lady w/her head resting on the side of his chest . . . I think of "Leaning . . . leaning safe and secure from all alarms . . . on the everlasting arms . . ." I think of John leaning on Jesus' chest . . . John sees Jesus as just that loving and lovable . . . It's a sign of affection and dependence on Jesus.**
- How does this speak especially to wives and their husbands? **A wife does not depend on her husband for everything, but a wife SHOULD be able to lean upon her husband for: LOVING LEADERSHIP, WHICH MEANS AFFECTION, PROTECTION, AND PROVISION. So men, are you LOVINGLY LEANABLE?**
- What position is the husband in? **According to [Ephesians 5:23](#), the inescapable fact is that the Husband IS the head of the wife. Men, we are in a position of INESCAPABLE LEADERSHIP. We either lead *poorly* by NOT serving, sacrificing, protecting and providing, or we lead *well*, by exercising Christ-like loving leadership. *A husband who leads like Christ will often find his wife's beautiful head leaning against his chest!***
- What is different (and surprising) about this image? **In a book FILLED with sensual imagery, THIS image is very much NON-sensual. Unlike the movies that build to a bedroom scene, this couple is settled in simply a secure love of leaning on each other, through life! It's just an image of a couple enjoying each other's company because they enjoy each other's company. It's a great thing to see these days when children grow up thinking that Mom and Dad don't even like each other! [Let's play marriage . . . and start screaming . . .] No need to say anything; they're just "settled in" in their love for each other, enjoying each other's company. A beautiful picture, indeed, of how LOVE can take the ORDINARY and make it SPECIAL!**

2. Love is . . . BIGGER than us TWO.

8:5b the woman is speaking . . . this is where love between HIS PARENTS was awakened, the place where HE was born.

- The Bride's Mother is mentioned at least 3 times prior to this reference. Cf **3:4; 6:9; 8:2**; and at least once is referred to as the Bride's teacher. What is she teaching? Cf **Proverbs 30:19**. What does that tell us about a Mother's role with her daughter (a countercultural concept, to say the least!)? **In the Bible, FAMILY is VERY important to society. And the MOTHER had an important role in explaining the whole "birds and the bees" thing to her daughter. If that seems awkward to you Mothers, would you prefer that your daughter learn about this from the advice of fools given in the context of the girl's locker room, or dorm room, or slumber party, or high school cafeteria? And PLEASE, don't make "the talk" sound like a lecture in mechanical engineering! And don't give the talk a "EWWWWW!" factor that actually SCARES them! [I'll be able to see it in your eyes!!!] Don't make something which is IN THE CONTEXT OF MARRIAGE a GOOD thing & turn it into an ORDEAL to be DREADED!**
- How does God's Wisdom speak into our world of "privatized intimacy"? **In our society, parents are NOT consulted about "living arrangements" where people privately agree to live together to "see if things work out" as if you're "test driving" a car to see if you like it. That kind of private arrangement has not the approval of the family, the church's blessing, nor is it recognized by state law. LISTEN: You want to see a society crumble? Just make the ONLY rule about love be that love is NO BIGGER than the 2 of us, that it's private, personal, and nobody's business. That "It's nobody else's business" attitude (promoted by, even justified and glorified by television where anyone who frowns on a couple living together is seen as a killjoy and a "Johnny Raincloud" raining of their love parade) KILLS community and rips apart the fabric of a society!**
- Why are the "DOJs" hanging around, anyway? **They seem to hover around MANY scenes in this Song. For two very good reasons!!**
 - ➔ Reason #1 **The DOJ are STUDENTS, learning about love and ESPECIALLY the lesson that TRUE LOVE WAITS!**

➔ Reason #2 The DOJ are there to WITNESS TRUE LOVE. They seem to function as BRIDESMAIDS, they are there to say, “Yes, we APPROVE of this union!” And sometimes, they are there to say, “Hey we saw you say the vow, ‘for better or worse,’ so yall work through this problem and get OVER this problem, b/c you’re NOT getting OUT of this marriage!” With these witnesses, There’s an element of ACCOUNTABILITY. [Some people take a large group picture of the Husband and wife WITH ALL THE WITNESSES in the wedding . . . the husband and the wife do NOT stand alone in this marriage!

- What is being communicated through the image of the Apple Tree? Some scholars in the context, the setting of this verse, take the APPLE TREE to symbolize what we would call a “FAMILY TREE”. You know, “first comes love, then comes marriage . . . THEN . . .” There is a flow of history here, and this couple does NOT stand outside their family genealogies. Picture names carved into a tree, couple by couple. [Carnes or Wiggins, Edd & Winnie Jussely, then Edd & Gail, David & Andrea, Steve & Carol, then Josh & Rachael, Daniel & Lucy, Johathan & Kimberly, then Jason & Ellen, then very soon, Grant & MC . . . then all their children when THEY get married . . . and on an on . . .] The idea being that LOVE IS BIGGER THAN JUST US TWO . . . love was here before us and love will be here when we’re gone . . . we are part of a LINEAGE of love passed on and passed down through our families, for all generations! Each marriage, for better or worse, is literally a marriage for the ages!

3. **Love is . . . Wearing your WEDDING RING, always!**

8:6, 7

- In the ancient world, what was a person’s seal? [I’M NOT much of a jewelry person. In fact, until I got married, no piece of jewelry stayed on me. Even got into trouble on my honeymoon for taking my wedding ring off and putting it back on me. Now, the ring NEVER comes off. The RING is a symbol of “HAPPY PERMANENCE”! My marriage is both PERMANENT and HAPPY!] In the ancient world, a person’s seal was the guarantee of his/her identity, like a photo ID or a signature today. Often the seal was on a signet ring, & was pressed on to wax to make a document official.
- What is the significance of a seal on the heart *and* the arm? The idea here is that of taking on one’s mutual identity as being two, yet one. “Mr. & Mrs. --” So first of all, I want to be identified w/you deeply and inwardly on your

heart. And also outwardly, publically, and externally, upon your arm (maybe a tattoo??) – Today, like a wedding ring. The OUTWARD symbol is an expression of an INWARD REALITY: We are two, yet we are ONE. We are Steve & Carol, yet we are THE JUSSELY'S. But firsts, we are united in our HEARTS, THEN publically. The ring is a SYMBOL of our COMMITMENT to each other!

- What are the reasons for this kind of commitment? Two images:
 - ➔ Death. The single-minded loyalty between a husband & a wife is compared to death b/c just as the grave is that place no one can dig themselves out of, so also MARRIAGE is not a place you can dig yourself out of. You are there. Together. Forever. Just like the grave. [Ruth Graham, "I don't believe in divorce, but I do believe in justifiable homicide!" Indeed, adultery KILLS a marriage.]
 - ➔ Fire . . . of the Lord. When fire and water go up against each other, water usually wins. But here FIRE wins because TRUE LOVE is literally the flame of the LORD, which no waters can quench. Some scholars even see the image as that of that burning bush of Exodus 3 at the bottom of the Red Sea, burning when the waters part for God's people to go across, and STILL BURNING when the Red Sea closes in over the bush. The fire and smoke are still rising above the waters! What we have here is a FLAME of love that can NEVER be put out! It's PERSEVERING PERMANENCE. It's TRUE LOVE!
- Does **7b** remind you of a song? It should!!! Why is that significant, especially today? "Money can't buy me love . . ." = the Beatles. Our LOVE is NOT for sale. B/C a price cannot be put on love. Our love cannot be compared to gold, diamonds, silver, or rubies. It's MUCH MORE VALUABLE than ANYTHING. It's a jab @ Solomon's thinking everything had its price, and it's a jab @ our own *Indecent Proposal* culture where everyone can be bought. \$\$ should have no bearing on true love b/c \$\$ is TEMPORARY, but LOVE is PERMANENT!
- **1st Corinthians 13:4-7** give an exclamation point to the idea of permanence! "Love NEVER ends..."

- What's the potential problem with couples making up their own wedding vows? ["I promise to whisper in your ear "I love you" every night before bed. I promise NEVER to lose that 'loving feeling'. I promise to run my fingers through your hair (and come away w/a hand full of hair spray!)."] Gag. You get the idea. It's a ROMANTICIZED VIEW of marriage. Fact is, in marriage, romantic compatibility WILL be challenged, and romance and passion will have its ebbs and flows, but . . . the SEAL on the HEART & the ARM remains. [I Dustin . . . take you Hannah . . . " And what SYMBOL do you give of your love? "I give you this ring . . .]

TWO IMPLICATIONS FOR MARRIAGES TODAY

- **Married love is an EXCLUSIVE, LIFELONG COMMITMENT.** Of the husband to the wife, and of the wife to the husband. Commitment to each other / marriage is a coin with two sides that cannot be separated.
- **Marriage is a picture of THE GOSPEL.** Or we could say marriage points BEYOND itself to the GREATER REALITY of the GOSPEL.
1 Cor. 15:55; John 11:25; Eph. 4:30; Rom. 8:35-38
The GOSPEL goes BEYOND death, we are SEALED in our relationship w/the LORD and even DEATH cannot break that seal or separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus love CONQUERED death and GUARANTEES that we who are the BRIDE of Christ will live forever in eternal bliss w/JX Who is OUR BRIDEGROOM.

Love in action: G. K. Chesterton and his Wife, Frances; B. B. Warfield and his Wife, Annie.

Chesterson (to his future wife Frances), "My views about death are bright, brisk, and entertaining; because death opens the doorway to eternal love, a love that our own love will merely be a foretaste of." IOW, I am free to love you in this life B/C of a GREATER LOVE that will swallow up even OUR love for eternity!

Warfield. @ age 25, BB married Annie. They honeymooned in Germany, where Annie was struck by lightning & paralyzed for life. BB never stopped caring for her. In fact he never left her side but for a few hours @ a time. He was a man of HONOR. He HONORED his wedding vows. He was COMMITTED to that COVENANT OF COMMITMENT he took when he said, "For better or worse, I do . . . " But Warfield was ALSO a man of HOPE. Warfield knew that one day, Annie would be resurrected & that

He would see His Wife's body whole, gloriously bright as the sun, as beautiful as the moon, her deep blue eyes, her flowing black hair, her beautiful smile, her walking straight and upright – leaping and dancing and praising God in the New Heavens & the New Earth.

Warfield was a man of honor. And hope. And love. Love is leaning on your husband. Love is bigger than the two of us. Love is wearing your wedding ring, till death do you part, until death itself parts . . . Or, in the words of the theologian Randy Travis, "I'm gonna love you forever and ever, forever and ever, AMEN."