

Words, Metaphors, and Metamorphosis

Song of Songs 1:6-2:7



“You’re something special.

You’ll never amount to anything!

You’re a Loser!

You make me sick!

You are so beautiful.”

You’ve heard “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me?” Don’t believe it.

Truth is, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will break by heart!” [Story of “You mean Pizza

Face over there?” girl and how you could literally see

her shrivel up inside; preferring a kick in the stomach or a slap on the head to 6 words crammed through her ears and down into her heart...] Words have power. A whole lot of power. Build up or break down power. Power to heal or to hurt. Power to cure or power to kill. Words are just that much of a very big deal in our lives (*cf Job 19:2; Proverbs 12:18; *18:21; Ecclesiastes 12:10; *Matthew 12:36-37*). For a look at the transformative power of words, we need look no further than the Song of Solomon! Some discoveries about words and their power.

1. Words reveal how we perceive OURSELVES.

They are a window revealing our self-image, how we see ourselves. **This woman’s self-perception is basically a NEGATIVE one.**

- **Of her BODY (1:5, 6 Contrast with Esther 2:12).** This woman describes her body as unattractive in @ least 2 ways. 1st, she is too tan. It’s a team effort of an angry sun and angry half-brothers who made her work outside. [a Cinderella story w/minor character alterations . . .] A beautiful young girl forced to work outside in the Vineyard digging ditches, clearing stones, planting vines, building watchtowers, clearing out wine vats, picking and squashing grapes, driving away thieves, foxes, and wild boars. The brothers, while protective of her when it came to men, did not protect her attractiveness. This lack of protection had burned her already dark Mediterranean skin to a dark that was too dark and like ‘the tents of Kedar’.

Every culture has cosmetic standards for what is considered beautiful. And since the Fall, women have allowed themselves to be measured by culturally-conditioned standards for what beauty should look like. Lean, muscular, and tan is in for women today. In that day & culture, pale and plump was the gold standard for beauty. Darker skin & muscles = working class trash. Lighter skin & muscle tone = upper class posh-ness.

Add to that, according to **Vs 6**, unlike Queen Ester who had her skin softened w/oil or Myrrh for 6 months & then spices and ointments for another 6 months, this woman does not have time to attend to her own attractiveness. She’s been on her feet all day, she’s “hit the wall” & is too tired to attend to herself. She has a working-class complexion, AND her hair is undone, AND her attire, her clothes, are unattractive. She looks like an unmade bed.

- **Of her BEING (2:1).** Her self image is not overly negative, but mostly negative. She’s a natural beauty & she acknowledges that (**1:5** dark but attractive curtains). But by comparing

herself to a Lilly, she's saying (and don't women almost ALWAYS take positives about themselves and turn them into negatives?) "There's nothing special about me. I'm like a common wildflower growing by the road. I'm pretty, all right . . . Pretty COMMON!" [Pre-marital counseling experience on how NO WOMAN likes her body; and they focus on the flaws. It must be DNA'd!]

So WHERE is the woman going to hear positive words about herself? NOT from herself! Then from WHOM is she going to hear of her beauty? That's where the MAN comes on stage to turn that frown upside down!

2. Words we use can TRANSFORM those we love.

Let's hide and watch how these METAPHORS the man uses METAPHORHOSE this lady's body AND being. See how she is TRANSFORMED by the power of positive words!

- **Three times he calls her BEAUTIFUL. (1:8, 15)** That's NOT a "pick up line" @ a singles bar like (holding up a "Sweet One" packet and saying, "I see you lost your nametag" or "Do you have a Band-Aid? B/C I just scraped my knee falling for you!" or "I'm not a photographer, but I sure can picture me and you together." Or "Do you have a map? I'm getting lost in your eyes!" or "Are you from Tennessee? b/c you're the only '10' I see!" Groaners!

Women w/any cognitive facilities @ all have a built-in radar know the difference between a "line" of flattery and an honest complement.

- **He calls her a LILLY among the THORNS. (2:2; 5:9; 6:1)** In fact, he turns that "common lily" idea of the woman around to an uncommonly beautiful flower **Jesus** said was more spectacular than Solomon arrayed in all his glory (**Matthew 6:28-29**)! "Line up all the ladies, let me look. Compared to you, the other ladies look like thorns. YOU are a looker! And by the way, you smell sooo good!" You can almost see this lady opening up to the warm rays and gentle rains of His words, can't you?
- **He also calls her a HORSE! (1:9)** Whoa, Nelly! Whatsup with THAT?!? He's not saying she looks like the daughter of "Mr. Edd", the talking horse. [a horse is a horse]. He's not saying "When you walk, you look like a Clydesdale horse prancing down Main Street!" He is comparing her to something stately & beautiful ENOUGH to be included in the best of the best, like one of Pharaoh's horses. Think of the classis book Black Beauty or the movie "The Black Stallion" & the majestic beauty of those horses, and you get the picture!
- **He says she's STUNNING. (1:9-11)** The visual similarity between his bride and a horse is that they are both adorned w/jewels. Israelite women wore elaborate jewelry headdresses on their wedding day. Here's an equation: Silver & gold adorning her hair + white wedding dress + on a darkly-tanned women = a groom w/his jaw dropping to the ground in amazement!
- **He says she's got those EYES! (1:15; cf Matthew 6:22; 10:16)** Van Morrison wasn't the 1st poet to talk about a girl's eyes [Brown-Eyed Girl]! Could be the comparison is that like a dove, her eyes dance & flutter & dart around like a dove. Or compared to the translucent beauty of doves. Most likely, the comparison is that of intimacy and innocence. Intimacy b/c to really see someone's eyes, you have to get into their "personal space" [Lady @ Asheville]; innocence b/c of what Jesus says, "Be wise as serpents but innocent as doves".

- **He speaks with INNOCENSE because she is INNOCENT.** There's no leering "dirty old man" tone to what he's saying. It's in the context of marriage. He's telling her in a # of ways how beautiful she is to him. ["You Are So Beautiful" Men: SING to your wives! ** CD Alfalfa to Darla **]

**** What she does in 1:7 is what she SAYS in 2:7. There's consistency with her! **** She doesn't run after him like a veiled woman, who was often a prostitute. She doesn't throw caution to the wind. She doesn't go and retrieve him from the men's locker room. No hint of impropriety. Nothing shady. Nothing sleazy.

HOW DOES THIS SPEAK TO HUSBANDS?

- **COMPLEMENT your wife's BEAUTY.** [I'll ask . . . husbands to be, specifically] [A man who in order NOT to have lustful thoughts about another woman would focus on something UNATTRACTIVE about her. Not a good Idea! On an airplane, "What are you doing??" "Sorry, I'm just looking for imperfections to focus on. This won't take but a few minutes!"] Instead, I recommend this: Men, think often about what you find ATTRACTIVE, and BEAUTIFUL about your wife.

Familiarity, flattery, and (honest) praise . . . Men, The 1st time you saw a rainbow, it was awe-inspiring. You could look @ that rainbow all day. But now do you even stop and take a good look? It's still beautiful. It's still inspiring. But to you, it's commonplace. The RAINBOW hasn't changed. YOU have. Familiarity has bred if not contempt, @ least complacency. Let him who has ears, hear what I'm saying! One man once told me, "I would rather DIE than praise my wife". He just might get his wish!

It's been said, "Flattery will get you nowhere". But *honest praise* WILL get you somewhere . . . namely into your wife's good graces. And KEEP you in her good graces!

HOW DOES THIS SPEAK TO WIVES?

- **She calls him BELOVED, and KING, and other complements. (1:4, 7; 12-14; 2:3).** Ladies, just in case you have NOT figured this out yet, because being and feeling COMPETENT is a BIG DEAL to men, the way you motivate men is through PRAISING THEM. Your harsh criticisms are received by them as "Yeah, even my WIFE thinks I'm incompetent". Again, MEN ARE MOTIVATED BY PRAISE!!! Find your man doing something RIGHT and COMPLEMENT them, and they will do whatever you complement again & again & again! [shirt . . . cologne . . . mowed the lawn ON YOUR OWN!]
- **In fact, She takes his COMPLEMENTS and THROWS them back at him! (1:8, 15-16; 2:2-3)** It's called "echoing" and it's a good thing! Just make sure you adjust the metaphors (a man would rather be called a TREE than a LILY!).
- **Don't focus too much on the PHYSICAL, for her focus is JOY and PROTECTION! (1:16-17; 2:3a, 4)** Don't let your mind wander into the gutter projecting ONLY what YOU think might be pictured in these VS. Protection & Provision, Security & Shade is what these verses poetically communicate. She feels protected and provided for (unlike her brothers who did NOT protect her from the sun). MEN: If your wife doesn't feel PROTECTED, she DOESN'T feel LOVED! ". . . Banner . . ." = not only protection by an army . . . also, [movie scene] think of a plane skywriting "I love you, Cindy!" / or Janice!

HOW DOES THIS SPEAK TO ALL OF US?

- **Husbands and wives are to COMPLEMENT (or help complete) one another by COMPLEMENTING one another.** Complements bring CONNECTION between people. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, find SOMETHING to COMPLEMENT in your Spouse!
- **There's a broader range for the power of words, even in the CHURCH. (*Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29, 31-32*).** When you "live out" your new identity in Christ and become in PRACTICE what you have been DECLARED by God to be in PRINCIPLE, one of the manifestations of being "in Christ" is CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION that BUILDS UP instead of TEARING DOWN!

What we know . . .

- **God did not CHOOSE "us" because we were so GREAT / or ATTRACTIVE. (*Deuteronomy 7:6-8*).** The Lord did NOT set His love on Israel b/c of any natural beauty He saw in her. In fact, morally and spiritually, what The Lord Saw was BLACKNESS, LACK of light, death. There was no LIGHT attracting the Lord to His people – to us. The Lord LOVES us . . . b/c He LOVES us . . . Go beyond that, you you've getting away from GRACE!
- **God extends and re-extends His grace and mercy in our spiritual "BLACKNESS". (*Hosea 14:4-8; 2:16-20*)** In the Bible, spiritually & morally speaking, "black" is always negative and associated with SIN, with going AWAY from God, not TOWARDS God. Yet in Hosea, a book in which real-life adultery symbolized spiritual apostasy & unfaithfulness of God's people to their Bridegroom, in loving mercy & grace, God goes after His Bride. If you've come out on the other side of a spiritually "black" time in your life, don't pat yourself on the back! You're back in the marriage b/c of the MERCY and GRACE of your BRIDEGROOM!
- **God even extends His love, throughout eternity, to His natural born SINNERS. (*Romans 5:8; 8:35-39*)** Fact is, spiritually speaking, we were ALL born on the wrong side of the tracks; none of us were born with the silver spoon of righteousness in our mouths. But God loved us . . . because He loved us. And God's love has no expiration date. Once we are loved by God in Christ, NOTHING can separate us from that love!
- **God's love is both CORPORATE AND PERSONAL. (*Galatians 2:20*)** He died FOR HIS PEOPLE, and I AM ONE OF THE PEOPLE HE DIED FOR! I am LOVED by Jesus. [John Wesley's' And can it be . . . "Amazing Love how can it be, that Thou, my God, should die for ME?"]

**** A Prayer To Pray First Thing Each Morning **** *"Lord, open my heart to REJOICE in You; fill me with a spirit of GRATITUDE; and help me to love others with my WORDS."* Would you pray those words for at least the next week, if not EVERY day?? The power of life & death AND LOVE . . . is in the TONGUE, in the WORDS WE SPEAK!