

# **THE GREATEST LOVE STORY EVER TOLD**



**The Song Which Is Solomon's**

The Song of Solomon claims to be: 'The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's' (1:1), that is the greatest of all love songs. Some wonder how this romantic and even erotic love poetry could have made it into the Bible! What could it possibly tell us about God?

## **A LOVE THAT GROWS AND BLOSSOMS**

Well, first of all by it God is affirming the growing love between a man and a woman as they get to know each other, and the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife. Their wedding night, where they are naked together for the first time is described in Chapter 4, finishing with God's approval: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved' (5:1).

Although the Song upholds sex within marriage it is against sex outside marriage. In fact, the repeating refrain is her advice to her girlfriends: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awaken love (sexual passion), until it please (until the right time)" (2:7, 3:5, 5:1, 8:4). In this ideal romance, we see he allows the relationship to develop in its right timing, so that love grows like a flower. They open up to each other and reveal themselves more and more without rushing things. This especially applies to sex. They hold themselves back until they are married. Going physical too soon interrupts the development of emotional intimacy in courtship. Letting love develop in it's right timing is a major theme of the Song. In this way you can get to know the real person first, so that their relationship and love is based on who they are rather than something purely physical. She has come to know and fall in love with Him and His Character (Name): "your NAME (Character and Reputation) is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love you" (1:3). It is important that you get to know the person you are going out with before you marry, so you know (1) they are a believer, and (2) that they are of good character. Otherwise, you asking for a world of trouble and pain!

This issue is highlighted in 8:8, when they visit her family, while on honeymoon. The brothers remember discussing how they would guard her as she was growing up: "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts (when she was just entering puberty). What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for (how can we best prepare her for the day of her marriage) ?

Their decision is in 8:9: "If she is a wall (if she knows how to keep the boys away from her private parts), we will build upon her a battlement (towers) of silver (we will trust her more, and let her dress up with some jewellery); and if she is a door (if she is loose, easily swinging open to let men in), we will enclose her with boards of cedar (we will enclose her, and make sure she does not open up too soon)." TLB: "If she is a virgin, like a wall, we will protect her with a silver tower. But if she is promiscuous, like a swinging door, we will block her door with a cedar bar."

Then she describes herself in 8:10: "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers (she was now full developed but had stayed a virgin); then I became in his eyes as one

who found peace.” Because she had kept herself pure for her right man, she had won his respect, admiration and favour (shalom).

So to understand the Song, we must first understand it in its plain meaning, as a true romance between a man and a woman, and as such it is God’s affirmation for the love between a man and a woman, exalting its joys in courtship and marriage, teaching that sexuality should not be despised or abused as something base. God created sex as good. It is part of God’s creation, and thus we should follow His instructions in this area. The Song contains much wisdom for lovers in how to let their relationship grow (especially teaching that sex is for within marriage).

## **THE INTIMATE LOVE OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE**

Although this is a love Song about a man and a woman, it is also in the Bible to provide a picture of the intimate love between God and His People, between Christ and the Church. From its literal meaning, we can learn much about our spiritual love walk (relationship) with the Lord. The Bible is all about a Divine Romance. It starts with the Marriage of Adam and Eve (another picture of this truth) and ends with the Marriage of Christ and His Bride. We are the Bride of Christ, He is the Bridegroom (1Corinthians 11:1-3, Ephesians 5:22, Revelation 19:7,8; 21:9; 22:17).

God wants us to know that He loves us with a most passionate love. He is the Lover of our soul and wants to have the closest possible relationship and fellowship with us. In Redemption, He has paid the ultimate price (of His Blood) to remove every barrier between us, so that we can be united with Him forever. We are saved for this very purpose. This is the heart of the message of the Bible. So right in the heart of the Bible is this Song revealing God’s heart. It is considered ‘the Holy of Holies’ of Scripture by many; the height of God’s revelation, for it reveals God’s ultimate purpose and desire, to have loving, deep and intense fellowship with us.

In the Song, SOLOMON is the Groom. Solomon means ‘Peace’ He reigned in peace and is a picture of the Prince of Peace who will reign forever in righteousness and peace. He is the son of King David, a picture of Christ, the Greater Son of David, the majestic King of Kings who chooses a Bride (SHULAMITH, a picture of the CHURCH) to reign with him. ‘Shulamith’ also means ‘peace’- the feminine form of Solomon, like ‘Christ’ and ‘Christian.’

## **THE ROMANCE OF SOLOMON AND SHULAMITH**

At first reading, this Song can seem disjointed and confusing. It is like a lot of pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. We need to know the overall picture first and then we will be able to see how and where all the pieces fit together. So first of all we need to understand the overall story, and then we can easily fit all the pieces together.

It is clearly a romance involving SOLOMON and SHULAMITH. The main problem is that there seems to be 2 men interested in the girl. One seems to be a lowly SHEPHERD, and the other is the majestic KING (Solomon). These are either two men, or one man in two roles. This was exactly the question that Israel faced when

looking for her Messiah. There seemed to be 2 pictures of Him, one as a humble, Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep, and the other as the powerful Conquering King. Thus, many looked for two Messiah's, calling one 'the Son of Joseph' (John 1:45) and the other 'the Son of David'

However, we now know that they are both pictures of JESUS CHRIST: one describes His FIRST COMING, clothed in humility; the other describes His SECOND COMING, clothed in power and glory. In the Song, Solomon is both the Shepherd Lover and King, for Israel's Kings were often Shepherds first (e.g. Moses and David)

THE STORY. Shulamith (6:13) lives with her mother (8:2) and two brothers (1:6, 8:1,8) in the country (Shunem). She is the only daughter (6:9). They have inherited from the father a vineyard each (1:6,12). For a reason that will be revealed by the story, her brothers were upset with her, and made her work very hard; not just in the home, but in tending their vineyards, as well as her own. As a result, she has neglected her own vineyard: "Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept." This also means she had neglected her own physical appearance (c.f. 8:12). She became burnt and tanned by all the time she had to spend in the sun (1:5,6). We see she was obedient, unselfish and hardworking.

At first she just sees herself as an ordinary girl: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (2:1), but Solomon who had seen a lot of beauty sees her as very beautiful: "Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (2:2). "O fairest (most beautiful) among women" (1:8). "How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!" (1:15). That's how the Lord sees you - as uniquely beautiful and precious to Him. He loves you. As we have seen, she was a virtuous girl, who kept herself for marriage her right man (8:10).

King Solomon (1:1,5; 3:7,11; 8:11,12) takes a break from his royal duties in Jerusalem and goes into the country for a holiday to inspect his vineyards (8:11,12), and his herds of sheep (1:7,8). He learnt from his father David about shepherding, and so enjoyed being a Shepherd when on holiday. One of his bases was Megiddo, a chariot city that guarded the valley of Jezreel. He was within walking distance from Shulamith's home (Shunem) on the other side of the valley.

Now the romance starts: Dressed as a Shepherd, he comes across Shulamith working in the vineyards, and is immediately attracted to her. She has never seen the King, so she does not know who he really is (they didn't have photos then!). Thus, we have a classic romantic plot - the rich King comes dressed as an ordinary man, with his majesty, riches and power veiled, and falls for an ordinary girl (she is not royalty). This way, she gets to know him and love him for who he really is, not for his wealth and power. That's why when she asks about where his herds are, he becomes evasive (1:7,8), as he does not want her to find out yet. Later on, of

course, he will reveal and declare his Majesty to her, and he makes her his Queen, and she will rule and reign with him.

Soon after he finds her resting under an apple tree outside her home, and here they fall in love. He declares his love to her and awakens her love: "I awakened you under the apple tree" (8:5). They enjoy a wonderful courtship in the countryside. Notice how they use the images of nature around them to describe their growing love (1:7-10, 1:15-2:3; 2:8-15). For example:

Song 1:16,17: "Behold, you are handsome, my beloved!  
Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green.  
The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Song 2:1,2: "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." (He then says): Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

Song 2:3 (She says): "Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods (strong and fruitful and offering shade from the heat of the sun), so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

Initially, he just presents himself to her as a SHEPHERD. It seems that she had once unsuccessfully tried to find him among the shepherds. When she tried to find out more about how to find his dwelling place he was evasive (1:7,8). This was because he wanted to keep his kingly identity a mystery, so that it would not spoil the courtship.

Finally he would have proposed, revealing who he really was! She has to take him at his word, but by now she has come to know and trust him and she believes him and accepts his offer of covenant-love: and they become betrothed to each other, saying vows to each other of their undying love.

Song 8:6,7: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love, all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised."

Then Solomon has to return to Jerusalem to prepare a Place for her (the marital home). He promises to return for her and take her as his wife. This corresponds to Jewish marriage customs. When the Bridegroom comes back in a great procession with his friends and fetches his Bride (who has been preparing herself), and takes the bride to his home, they are then married and their relationship is consummated. There is then a Marriage Feast for a week.

Meanwhile, while he is away (perhaps 6 months to a year), she has to trust his word and prepare herself to meet him at his coming. She prepares herself to leave home and live with him as his wife. During this time, she has dreams that reveal her fears that it was just a holiday romance, that he does not really love her, that he will

forget her and won't come back for her (3:1-4). This time apart just deepens their love and their awareness of their need of each other. Absence makes the heart grow fonder!

Just imagine the reaction when she told her friends and family! "You know that young man, that I have been spending a lot of time with. Well, how I can say this? He is King Solomon. He proposed to me and I said 'Yes'! Now he has had to return to Jerusalem, but he will return to take me as his wife and I will be the Queen." They thought she had lost touch with reality, carried away by fairy tales, fooled by an adventurer, so they decided they needed to give her a dose of reality, and put her out to work hard in their vineyards, so that she had no time for this foolishness. They knew the King would not be interested in simple folk like them!

At last, Solomon returns, but this time it is not as a Shepherd, but as the King dressed in all his glory. As the Wedding Procession approaches, they all wonder at who it could be approaching them:

Song 3:6-8: "Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders? Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with 60 valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night. He is surrounded by 60 mighty men with swords - the guard of honour. They realise it could only be King Solomon himself!

Song 3:9,10: "Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin (royal covering). He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem."

As Shulamith looks to see the KING, she sees that he is indeed her SHEPHERD-LOVER. He has come for her! Her family and friend look on as he enters her course and carries her away. He then takes her back to Jerusalem, where they are to be immediately married, followed by a 7-day wedding celebration banquet.

Song 3:11 describes their arrival back at Jerusalem:

"Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him, on the day of his Wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart."

The Song opens with her sitting at a table on the first day of the Feast, with Solomon and the (unmarried) Daughters of Jerusalem (1:2-3:11). She tells them the story of how they met and fell in love, the waiting time and the wedding (1:5-10, 15-2:3, 2:8-15, 3:1-11), and looks forward to the first night together (1:4,13; 2:16,17). Their wedding night, where they are naked together for the first time is described in 4:1-5:1, which finishes with God's approval: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved' (5:1). They make honeymoon plans at this time (4:8)

She has a dream revealing her fear that their love will diminish and she will lose him and be rejected now that their first night is over (5:2-7). She wakes up and he has already gone out, so she looks for Solomon to make sure everything is all right (5:8). The women want to know how the first night went, and why she is so keen to see him so soon (5:9). So, she gives them a wonderful description of him (5:10-16). She knows he has probably gone to his favourite place to meditate (6:1-3). When she finds him, he reassures her of his love for her (6:4-7).

At the end of the Feast she went to the garden where Solomon surprises her by coming in the royal chariot to whisk her away for their honeymoon in the country (6:11,12). As they leave Jerusalem he publicly declares his love for her, and the people agree and call out praises and blessings to her (6:8-10,13). On their honeymoon she dances for him, which leads to more lovemaking (6:13-7:10). They honeymoon in the countryside (7:11-13; 8:3,4) and revisit her home and family (8:5). This sparks off memories of their courtship and betrothal (8:1-7). She remembers how her brothers protected her for her right man (8:8,9). She was a wall not a door (she was not loose, just letting any man in), keeping herself for the right man. This was vital for her in finding Solomon's favour (8:10).

Her vineyard also represented her body whose fruit she offers completely to Solomon, asking that her brothers get a reward for guarding her virginity (8:11,12). She has a lovely voice and so Solomon asks her to sing to him (8:13). The Song ends by her singing a song of invitation to love (8:14).

## **THE PICTURE: JESUS OUR SHEPHERD-KING**

This Song is a romance between SHULAMITH (The church) and SOLOMON (Jesus, our Shepherd-King).

Jesus is our Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15, John 3:29). He left His Throne in the heavenly Jerusalem, took off his glorious Kingly clothes, and came among us, dressed just like us, in human flesh. His kingly majesty was veiled. He came looking for a Bride.

The first time He came, He presented himself to us as the GOOD SHEPHERD who loves and cares for us; He kept His kingly glory hidden. He was not dressed as a King who demands our obedience by force, but in humility, as the One who wins (awakens) our love by His goodness and love for us: "We love him because He first loved us." He wants us to know Him first as the Good Shepherd, who lays His life down for us, His sheep (John 10). He wanted to prove His love to us, so we would love Him personally for who He was, rather than just having to submit to His power. Her response to this revelation of His character is to love Him: "Sweet is the savour of your good ointments; your Name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins (believers) love you" (1:3). Likewise, this is our response to our Lord Jesus. His name is His Character, His self-giving love. His life (sweet anointing oil) was put in a clay vessel. He poured His life out for us as a fragrant offering on the cross because He loved us (Ephesians 5:2). This is why we love Him. He wants our love. If

He had presented himself as the King she would have had to yield to His power out of fear and duty, but He wanted her to yield to His love, and freely respond to Him, returning His Love. He wanted someone who loved Him for who He was, not for His wealth and power. He did not want His overwhelming power to get in the way of their developing love.

Likewise, Jesus first of all, wants to have a relationship of intimate love with us. We were burnt by life: 'under the sun', but He still loved us. He looked past our life, our present condition and outward appearance, and saw what God made us to be and what we could become. He loved us and came to woo and win us by His love.

Solomon said: "Under the apple tree, I awakened your love" (8:5). Jesus declared His love to us under the tree of Calvary. Stretching out His arms, He said: This is how much I love you. This is where He awakened our love for Him (Romans 5:8). The Tree of Life was a type of the cross. If we eat of its fruit, we have eternal life: "He bore our sins on his body on the Tree, so that we might live" (1Peter 2:24).

This is where we received His love and were reborn: "As the apple tree among the tress of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (2:3). Jesus (by His death for us) is now our Tree of Life and He offers us protection and peace from the struggles of life (the sun). We can dwell (sit) under the shadow of the Almighty, trusting in His protection (Psalm 91). He offers us his fruit (life, love, joy, peace) in abundance. "He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love" (2:4).

Just as Solomon revealed His identity to her before He left for Jerusalem, and she had to take Him at His word and trust Him, so likewise Jesus also revealed He is the King of Glory who loves us. He wooed her and declared His love for her and proposed to her. Likewise, Jesus wooed us, declaring His special intimate love for each one of us and proposed to us, promising that if we give our lives to Him, we would be His and reign with Him in glory forever.

She believed him and accepted his proposal; and they become betrothed in her mother's house, declaring their vows of undying covenant love (8:5-7). Likewise when we respond and accept Jesus as the Lover of our soul, we become betrothed to him as His Bride:

2 Corinthians 11:2: "I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (also Revelation 22:17).

Their COVENANT COMMITMENT to each other is a model of our betrothal to the Lord, when we receive Him and are born-again. They said these words to each other:

"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a signet-ring on your arm!" (Keep me close to your heart forever-covenant loyalty).

"(My) Love is strong as death" (I'm ready to die for you)

"(My) Jealousy is unrelenting as Sheol, its flames are flames of fire, the



passionate flame of the Lord.”

(I will never let you go, or let another take you from me).

God’s love for us is passionate, He is jealous over us!

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” (‘Whatever happens I will love you’ - nothing can separate us from the love of Christ - Romans 8:35-39).

“If a man should offer all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.”

‘You are more valuable to me than anything else.’

These are words that Christ says to us and that we should say to Him, to declare our love and put Him first in our life and affections. This is a picture of Christ’s First Coming.

Then, Solomon went to Jerusalem to prepare a place (the marital home) for her, promising to return and take her as his wife. Likewise Jesus ascended to the heavenly Jerusalem to prepare a place for us, and will come again a second time to take us home in the Rapture to live and reign with Him forever in His Palace in the heavenly Jerusalem (John 14:1-4). Our Bridegroom will return in a great procession and take His Bride to His home. This time, He will appear to us as the King of glory. At that moment, we will be married. Our resurrection will be the physical consummation of our relationship, when we will be filled with His glory. We will then be a glorious Bride (Songs 6:10; Ephesians 5:27). Ephesians 5:25-27: “Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

The wedding procession will then go onto the earth, us with the Lord (Revelation 19:11-16; Matthew 25) where there will be a wedding feast (Revelation 19:9), after He has dealt with His enemies, followed by an eternal honeymoon (Revelation 21,22). In His first coming, He laid down His life and won our heart and we were betrothed to Him in covenant promise. In His second coming, He will fulfil His promise to us and we will be married (the covenant promise fully realised).

Between His first and second advents is the waiting period, when we cannot see Him, but are to trust His promise that He will return for us. This is the time we are in now. In this time we are to prepare for His Return for us in glory, when we will be married to Him and share His glory and power forever, reigning with Him eternally (1John 3:1-3; Revelation 19:7,8). We must be ready for His return.

In this time, the Bride must walk by faith. She can’t see Him; she just has His promise that He is coming back for her. While He is away, she has to trust His word and prepare herself to meet Him when He comes, to leave her home and live a new life as His wife.

What did her family think when she said she was engaged to the King and that she was now royalty?! They didn't believe her and punished her by working her hard in the vineyards, perhaps trying to keep her feet on the ground. They made fun of her, but she rejoiced in the hope of seeing Him again, and then all would see it was true. Likewise, people may laugh at us during this time, when we tell them we belong to King Jesus who is coming again for us, and our faith will be tested by affliction and persecution, but:

1Peter 1:6-8: "we greatly rejoice...in manifold tests: the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though tried with fire, might be found unto praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, you love; in whom though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

In this time she has a dream that reveals her fears that he has forgotten her: Song 3:1-4: 1 All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him. I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares; I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him. The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. "Have you seen the one my heart loves?" Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me."

She found peace by holding onto him (faith in his Person, His Character) and by bringing him to her mother's house (the place where he gave her covenant promises - 8:5-7). Thus she strengthened herself in faith by remembering his character, promises and commitment to her. Likewise, in this time, we too must strengthen our trust in Christ by meditating on His promises and His loving faithfulness standing behind them.

As the royal procession approaches, the Bride thinks: "Could it be my lover? Is this One who comes in power and glory, the Good Shepherd who loved me and promised to come back for me?" As crowds gather the procession goes right to her house. The King gets out. As she dares to look at the King, she sees that it is her SHEPHERD-LOVER. The King has come for her! He carries her off (3:6-10). Now all can see that his promises to her were true. Likewise, at the Rapture the Lord will come personally for us, His Bride and soon after the Rapture, we will be married to Christ. Then follows the Wedding Feast.

They make their honeymoon plans at this time. He promises to take her to the mountains of Lebanon (heavenly places) where He will show her all His kingdom, her inheritance (4:8). This is a picture of our eternal honeymoon, where Jesus will show us all His riches of grace: "He raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

Christ came the first time to love us and draw us into eternal covenant relationship and fellowship with Him. God used marriage, the strongest and most intimate covenant relationship we know, as the picture of the eternal relationship between God and man. The ideal love story in this Song reveals God's purpose and love for us, and how we should respond in love so that our fellowship with Him is made complete. The Song reveals Christ's words of love to us and how we can respond and cultivate an intimate, deeper fellowship with the Lord. By presenting a picture of passionate love, it is designed to lead us deeper into a love-relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can rightly apply the words of the Song to our intimate fellowship with Christ. The words of love of Solomon to Shulamith are then Christ's words to us, and we can use her words to help express our love for Him.

Thus we sing:

"Your name is as ointment poured forth" (1:3).

"He brought me to His banqueting table and His banner over me was love" (2:4),

"My beloved is mine, and I am His" (2:16).

"I will rejoice and you will be glad, I will extol your love more than wine. Draw me after you and let us run together" (1:4).

The line of the great Hymn: "Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee" relates to Song 2:14: "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret (hiding) places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely." Christ is the Rock, split open for us that we could go into Him and be safe. When we trust in Him and His sacrificial love for us, we are then able to have intimate fellowship with Him, hearing and receiving His tender words of love which encourage and draw us to come out of ourselves to look at Him face to face and speak out our love and worship to Him.

He says to us: "Don't hide from Me, come to Me, let me see your face, for your face is lovely, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet." He says: "I love to see you, spend time with you and hear your prayers and praises."

Her words describing Solomon apply to Christ;

"My beloved is dazzlingly white (radiant) and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" (5:10). Thus the details of the Song also reveal much to help us cultivate an intimate relationship with the Lord, as well as teaching us about human love relationships

## **FIVE THINGS THE SONG OF SOLOMON TEACHES US**

(1) Our Relationship with Christ is based upon His grace and love. The Song shows how much Christ loves us: "His banner over me is love" (2:4). So we should want to return His love and give ourselves to Him. "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (2:16).

Because He has freely given Himself to me ('He is mine'), I now give myself freely to Him ('I am His'). We should declare our undying Covenant Love and Commitment to Him (8:6,7).

Song 8:11: "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; He leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for its fruit 1000 silver coins." Some people give the King his due because they have to, it is the law and their duty. But she then says her relationship to the king is different: Song 8:12: She says to Solomon:

"My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have a 1000, and those who tend its fruit 200."

She owns her own vineyard (symbolising her body), so is not obligated by law to give anything to the King. But she acts as if He owned it, because out of love she has freely given Him all that she has and is. Likewise, because our Greater than Solomon has given us Himself, in love we are to give Him our life and all we have. Not because He forces to, but because we want to. It is the response of love and gratitude to His love and grace.

(2) He has initiated, but we must respond to Him by desiring and seeking intimacy with Christ, asking for closer union with Him. We must be thirsty for His Love: Song 1:2,3: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for your love is better than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your Name is like ointment (the oil of the Spirit) poured out. No wonder the maidens love you!" A kiss is a face to face intimate encounter with the Lord, where we allow Him to pour His love into us. It represents direct spirit to spirit contact of love. We have to desire this and ask for it. This is compared to drinking wine. We are to drink in His love. Wine represents His love and joy, the fruit of His life poured out for us through the Spirit, for us to receive (to drink in and be filled: "Be not drunk with (natural) wine, but with spiritual wine, that is, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18,19) When the Spirit fills us, it is His kiss of love. "His mouth is sweetness itself, yes, he is altogether lovely" (5:16). As we get revelation of Him: Who He is, what He is like, and what He has done for us (His loveliness), we desire to know Him better (v3).

Song 1:4: "Draw me after you and let us run together! Bring me, O King, into your chambers." "Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers."

We should call on Him to draw us closer to Him in our devotional life - we can't do it in our own strength. Close fellowship is two-sided, it's not automatic. We must desire Him to be close to us for it to happen. He respects our free-will. He does not force Himself upon us. We determine how close we want Him.

He calls us out of our comfort zone and to come with him, to walk and run with Him on an adventure together, hand in hand:

Song 2:8-13: "The Voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, He stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, gazing through the lattice. My beloved spoke, and said to me: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

(3) We must realise who we are through the New Birth.

He has made us beautiful, righteous and holy within. She said: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley" (v2:1). These are simple, common flowers, nothing spectacular, but the King has a different assessment. He renews her mind to her true value in his eyes: "As the lily among thorns - so is my beloved among the daughters" (2:2). Now she is His, she is changed into a lily (a most glorious white flower, a picture of the work of God's grace: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28,29).

You are beautiful to Him - a work of grace, a new creation, clothed in His righteousness. She says: "(Outwardly) I am black (unworthy) as the (rough) tents of Kedar, but (in my spirit) comely, as the (white, fine, linen) curtains of Solomon" (1:5). The curtains were in the Temple with God's glory within. She knows who she is in her spirit. She knows she is a Temple, with God's glory within her. She sees herself through His eyes. The white curtains represent her righteous reborn spirit clothed with His righteousness. Thus she knows she has access into His Presence and has confidence to come close to Him in full assurance.

(4) Guard your fellowship with Christ. "Let's catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes" (2:15). Her Vineyard or garden is her body. The Vine (in the Vineyard) represents the life of Christ in us and united to us (John 15). Our inner man is united to Christ and through our fellowship with Him, His life flows in us and produces good fruit. As life flows in the vine, fruit (wine) is produced, so our fellowship time with the Lord brings forth the fruit of the Spirit. Fellowship like flowers is delicate and must be protected. We must deal with the little foxes (careless words, unforgiveness, things that distract us and take up our time so that no time is left for the Lord), because they spoil our fellowship with the Lord and hence reduce the flow of His wine (the fruit of the spirit:) through us.

(5) Believe in Christ's love for you and drink deeply of it (John 7:37-39). "He brought me to his banqueting house (lit: House of Wine) and his banner over me was Love"

(2:4). He wants to pour the Wine of His Love into you. He wants you to drink of His love. God says to the lovers: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (5:1). Receive His love. Ask him to draw you closer and fill you with Himself.