

Solomon on Sex - Avoiding Marital Disaster

Sign Title: Solomon on Sex - Avoiding Marital Disaster

February 12, 2012

Good morning Faith family. We are in our sixth week of our study in the Song of Solomon. Last week, we looked at the last half of chapter two. It was a flashback to Solomon and the Shulamite's dating years. In that section, the Shulamite told us about a time Solomon came to her house so they could go for a date in the park. It was a time for them to have some much needed conversation about where their relationship was headed.

Last week we learned Solomon is motivated and positive about his relationship with his future wife, the Shulamite. While the Shulamite loves him, she is more realistic and cautious about the challenges she will face marrying a king. She playfully talked about catching the little foxes that could destroy their relationship. As we learned, in Middle East farming, foxes were little pesky creatures that couldn't be ignored. They were little annoyances that turned into a big problem over time. In the same way, while their romance is in full bloom now, they needed to solve the little problems in their dating years before they made a disaster of their marriage.

Before we discover what is on her mind, I want to prepare you for the text. It is not straight forward. When I first studied this section, I was confused. In this section, she is still dating Solomon but she shares with him a dream of what she thinks will take place. It is not just any dream. It is more like a nightmare. It is a recurring nightmare because the word *night* in the Hebrew is in the plural.

On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves. Song of Solomon 3:1 (ESV)

Before we look at this dream, I want to take a few minutes to talk about dreams, fantasies, nightmares and the power of your mind to make any relationship succeed or fail.

Guard your thought life.

A big disconnect for many Christians is the importance of honoring God in our thought life. Many of us think God is just concerned with actions. We consider our mental life our own business. If you look at secular literature on spicing up marriage, you will see they encourage you to spice up your marriage through fantasizing and not limiting your fantasies to your own spouse. Will those kind of thoughts get your motor running? What do you think? But they are sinful thoughts.

This is a particularly difficult temptation for women who are tempted to read romance novels. Ladies, when you are fantasizing about a relationship outside of your marriage that is sinful. Some ladies don't read. Instead they are caught up in fantasizing about soap operas and day-time television. Ladies, you are fantasizing about a relationship that is not your own.

Guys, we are also tempted to fantasize. Most guys do not fantasize about a relationship that is not theirs, instead, they fantasize about another woman's body that is not their wife's. They look at a woman lustfully and undress her in their mind.

Sinful daydreaming doesn't have to be sexual. If you have experienced serious levels of conflict, you are tempted to lay in bed at night and imagine some of the worst and most hurtful thoughts.

Sinful fantasizing is still sin, even if the actions do not accompany it. Not only is it sinful but what we think in our mind will determine what we do in our life.

Why is this? Fantasy is only one step removed from reality. What we role play in our mind, we will real play in our life. This is especially true for the intimate areas of our life.

Ladies, do you want to have an affair? Spend time around another man enjoying his presence instead of your husbands. Spend time thinking about him. Spend time sharing with him. You haven't done anything wrong on the outside of your life but you are greasing the skids to do something wrong in your thought life. When that man makes an advance towards you he will slide right past your defenses faster than a greased pig. Why will the affair be so hard to resist? What you role played in your mind will become what you real play in your life.

Guys, you want to ruin your marriage? When your wife makes a mistake, even though you may not verbally call her a flaming idiot, if those are the words you allow your mind to dwell on, even though you avoided speaking them, you did not avoid the sin of thinking them. The next time there is marital conflict, under pressure it is likely you will say what you are thinking.

Let's see what the Bible says.

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

I love the way Paul says this. Our thought life tends to run out of control. He pictures us needing to catch our thought life like we are calf-roping at a rodeo. For some of us, getting our thought life under control is a little harder. Instead of

calf roping, it is more like bull roping. It may not be easy, but it needs to be done. Thoughts that are not brought into submission to Christ are sin.

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Ephesians 4:26–27 (ESV)

When you go to bed angry, you give the devil an opportunity in your life. That is not what you want. Talk it out before you go to sleep. Even if you can't solve it all before bed, reaffirm your love for one another before bed. If you don't, during the night, your emotional world will begin to spinning out of control.

Young people, we will see in verse 5 where she reminds her single friends not to fan the flames of intimacy until your wedding night because with a healthy dose of testosterone in your system, it is hard to keep your thought life under control.

This morning, we have a window into the Shulamite's thought life. She shares with Solomon her recurring nightmare. Here is the nightmare.

She is a simple country girl. He is a complex city boy. As the king, everyone demands his attention. Her nightmare is that *his kingly life will consume their home life*. Rather than having him around the house, she will be a wife that will spend evenings alone. She loves Solomon but she doesn't know if she can handle life as his queen.

What I like about her is rather than her fantasies spinning in a negative direction, they spin in a positive one. That is very important.

Lessons from the dream.

Be solution-centered not problem-centered.

On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. Song of Solomon 3:1–2 (ESV)

This dream takes place while she is still unmarried and living on the farm. In the dream, she is married to Solomon and living in Jerusalem. It is late at night and he is not home. She has gone to bed by herself. Maybe she had a special evening planned and he never made it home. Maybe she was lonely during the day and she was looking forward to seeing him for dinner, but after he never showed, she ate her meal alone. Cell phones and texting are not invented so he hasn't given her a call.

Ladies, if you were the Shulamite, what emotions would you begin to feel? You might begin to feel anger. You might begin to resent his job. What would your mind begin thinking? Would you begin to question his love? Would you begin to worry that another woman had caught his eye? I don't think it would take long for your mind to generate a vivid assortment of hurtful scenarios.

What I love about this woman is that rather than assuming the worst, rather than letting her mind stew and weaving a tapestry of caustic relational insults, she does something different. She gets on her pink bathrobe and puts on her fuzzy pink slippers and goes looking for him.

This is a solution-centered woman, not a problem-centered woman. If you want to circle the key words circle sought, rise, go and seek.

She cares about him. She cares about their marriage. She is not going to sit home and whine like a stuck pig. She is going to do something about her missing husband. Perhaps he has the royal budget spread out on the office floor and he is still crunching numbers for a budget meeting the next day. Maybe he was called out of the office for an emergency meeting. She doesn't know where he is but she is going to find him and she is going to let him know he is missed and loved. She is a solution-centered woman, not a problem-centered one.

Application: This is the point of application I want you to apply this week. Be a solution-centered, not problem-centered couple. Every week couples come into conflict. The wife says something that gets under her husband's skin. The husband is gone night after night, and wife feels like a single mother raising her kids alone. When a couple has those rubs, there are two paths it can take. The couple can choose to whine about the problem or work on a solution.

Avoid problem-centered whining. Many problem-centered people like to whine. Sometimes they verbally vomit over everyone around them. Others keep stuffing their anger inside like they are inflating a bicycle tire. Everything looks good until somebody touches them in the wrong way and they explode over everyone. Problem-centered people are usually sinful fantasizing people. They allow their mind to dwell on the problems so much they make out the problems to be bigger than they are. Because they are bigger, they always appear unsolvable.

Face your marriage problems; don't ignore them. Some problem-centered couples handle it differently. Rather than pumping up their anger, they ignore the

problem in their marriage and they begin pouring relational energy into someone else or something else. We often call these people the “friend-on-the-side” people. These are also known as the “I-live-for-my-hobby” people. Both of those options are problem-centered. They aren’t fixing the marriage. They are pouring their energies into someone or something else to fill that relational void.

Instead, be solution-centered. Talk about the problem. Try to solve the problem. Pray about the problem. Rather than sitting home stewing, put on your bathrobe and pink slippers and do something about it.

When headed for a marital shipwreck, swallow your pride and save your bride.

The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” Song of Solomon 3:3 (ESV)

In this part of her dream she looks for her husband around town. It is the middle of the night and he is not home. She runs across the night-watchmen.

As I put myself in that situation and imagined what it would feel like to talk with the watchmen. I wouldn’t want it going around as palace gossip that the king was ignoring his new bride and leaving her alone in the bridal suite. That would be embarrassing. I could see most people running across the palace guards and casually noting that it was a beautiful evening for a walk.

That is not her reaction. She is not embarrassed. She needs help, and she is not willing to be bashful about finding it.

This is another expression of the solution-centered nature of this woman. Unfortunately, when most marriages hit rocky times, neither the husband nor wife

will humble themselves to go for help until it is too late. Many men are more interested in saving their pride instead of their bride.

Application: When heading for the rocks, get rid of your pride and save the bride. If your marriage is in a rocky time, ask for help. Here are a few things you can do:

1. Faithfully attend this series. The second half of the Song of Solomon talks about Solomon and the Shulamite working through marriage problems. It will be helpful material for the married among us.
2. Invest in a marriage encounter weekend. Check www.solomononsex.com or www.christ2Rculture.com for this sermon. On the sermon page you will find a link to the dates for Family Life Conferences. If you want to go but can't afford it, I will find a way to scholarship you to go. If you can't go because of kids issues, talk to me. I will find child care to make it possible. I know there are always problems when it comes to these things but I am committed to finding solutions so you can go.
3. Read helpful books. There is no substitute for reading. I love to read and books are one of the best ways to grow. Do not go to Amazon and think everything in print is positive. There is plenty of trash. The resource page on the www.solomononsex.com website has helpful material. Read solid God-honoring material.
4. Talk to a pastor or elder. My favorite part of this series are the stories God is writing in the church family. I did a quick mental tally, and there are 14 individuals/couples that have talked with me in the last five weeks that took

big positive steps in their marriage and sex life through this series. God is putting his finger on the heart of people with his word. If God has his finger on an area of your life, come and talk with us. We would love to walk beside you.

Use a crisis to take a big step forward, not backward.

Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go... Song of Solomon 3:4 (ESV)

Most men like this verse. Husbands are always dreaming about what they can do to have their wife hold them close and not let them go. Some guys are thinking about staying late this week at work in hopes their wife will apply Song of Solomon chapter three by hunting them down and holding them close until daybreak.

Let me clarify. I am not recommending you stay late at work so your wife hunts you down in her bathrobe. I want you to picture in your mind the tension moment when the Shulamite finally finds Solomon.

I think it is safe to assume Solomon was tired and stressed. It is a fair assumption he feels guilty for leaving his wife home alone. He feels torn between home life and work life. If she is like most of women, her emotions are all over the map. She is absorbing public embarrassment with the night guards. She is tired. She is frantic. She feels rejected. She finds him and she feels she has every reason to give him a piece of her mind. In a dream, you can do and get away with it.

In her dream, rather than letting him have it with both barrels, she does the opposite. She grabs him and holds him tight. She won't let him go. She

preaches the gospel to him with her actions. She doesn't just show him mercy by not giving him the verbal lashing she feels he deserves, she shows him grace and gives him exactly what he doesn't feel he deserves, her love and affection. This is the Gospel in marriage.

The moment their eyes meet is an opportunity for their relationship to take a giant step forward or a giant step backward. It was an opportunity to build intimacy or to destroy it. By extending grace, she helps their marriage take a giant step forward. It is an opportunity to turn tragedy into intimacy.

Application: This week, when something goes wrong. Preach the Gospel. Show grace. Use it as an opportunity for your marriage to take a giant step forward.

Count the cost of marital sacrifice.

...until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. Song of Solomon 3:4 (ESV)

Now her dream takes a weird twist. If she is determined to hold Solomon, and not let him go, why would she want to bring him into her mother's bedroom. That sounds creepy. If Cindy was having a similar dream, I am sure she would take me to the tropics. Why does she take him there?

In her mind, the only place she knows she can have him all to herself is in her mother's home in the country on her turf. It is also a place of security and safety.

I think there is more to this part of her dream than her just having him to herself. Later in the book, we will learn the Shulamite has a mother, a younger sister and some brothers. Strangely enough, her father is absent from the

picture. Most likely, he died when the Shulamite was a young girl. We know this because there is a younger sister in the picture. I think the Shulamite misses her dad. It sounds like her father spent a good deal of time at home with his wife and kids. It sounds like she was daddy's little girl. She loved her father. She loved her time with him and the family time together. I believe her father was not prudish about his affections for her mother. I can see him hugging her while she cooked in the kitchen and probably giving mom a playful kisses on the neck as she stirred the soup. Then he died.

The Shulamite's hero was her father. She grew up dreaming of the prince that would one day sweep her off her feet. I think she is looking for a man like her father. She is looking for a man that would be home at night. She is looking for a man that would be playful with her just like her father was toward her mother. I think this is why the Shulamite dreams they are at the old farm house again. She is dreaming of the good memories she had as a child being fulfilled in her husband.

Unfortunately, if she marries the king, he will not be home every night as she makes the meal. As the queen, she won't even have to chip a nail because she won't be in the kitchen. This gives us two points of application to work on.

Application:

Gals, prepare to shift your dreams to support a husband's calling. The Shulamite is wrestling with shifting her picture of the perfect marriage. The marriage she dreamed of will be different from the marriage she will have if she marries the king. If she can't make the shift, she should not marry him. Ladies,

you need to wrestle with this before you commit to a man. You need to be his teammate and his helpmate, not a burr in his marital saddle. Let me give you some examples of this.

I have friends in the military. Ladies, if you cannot be content with your husband deployed for a year at a time, don't marry a military man. If you do marry a military man, don't spend your marriage punishing him for doing his job. Get that fox straightened out before your wedding.

Guys, sacrifice your life to invest in your wife. Every wife has a picture of what her marriage would look like if it was perfect. Usually it involves more of her husband's undivided attention than she is getting now. Guys, one of the issues of sin in our life is bringing work home. When we are home, our body may be in the house but our brain is still at work. Here are my challenges for the husbands:

Be home at night. Some of you guys are gone almost every night of the week. You stuff your evenings like they are a Thanksgiving turkey. That doesn't work. Marriage is a relationship. Relationships take time. They don't just happen. You need to invest in them. I suggest you make a decision to be home *at least* three nights a week. I know this doesn't always work. Sometimes business takes you out of town, but try to block off *at least* three nights a week home with your wife and children. Schedule your family like it is an appointment with an important business client.

Give your wife and children your full attention. In the Shulamite's day, I don't think this was as much of a problem as it is today. When I first started preaching, I found myself in the basement working late at night leaving Cindy in

the living room watching television. My experience is late night work doesn't work. It took me more time to complete my work and the quality of my work was lacking. It also played havoc with my marriage. My general rule of thumb is when I come home, unplug and don't work on church stuff. If I have to work on a sermon, I will do it by talking about the sermon with Cindy. I want to give her my full attention, and my children deserve the same. I try to unplug my mind from church around my family and let my subconscious mind and the Holy Spirit work on material during the night. Generally, this works.

Be careful of electronics - iPhones, iPads, laptops and televisions have invaded our home so it is harder to separate home life from work life. It is easy to fill time in entertainment rather than investing in our family.

Husbands, your job is to put a limit on the Internet and electronics. Don't let electronics take over your life. Use them to help your home life, not to replace your home life. At home, be present with one another. Talk to your wife and kids more than your iPhone. If you watch television, turn it off after the program is done.

WARNING! Do not awaken love until it is time.

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. Song of Solomon 3:5 (ESV)

If you are a regular part of this teaching series, this verse will sound familiar. It is the same as 2:7. When somebody repeats something, they do it because it is important. They say it again and again to drive it into your brain. In this book, the Shulamite repeats this line a number of times because she wants her young friends to save themselves for their wedding night.

In essence, her relationship with Solomon has developed. Everything in her is looking forward to getting married. Does she want to deal with the little fox of their different backgrounds and their different expectations of what marriage should look like? Of course not. She just wants to get married. The pull of her passion is strong. But dealing with their differences before the wedding night is something she must do.

The most important way to avoid a marital disaster is to guard your mind, what you think and what you feel. It is not the romance; it is not the physical; it is not the feeling. It is what you are thinking about your future mate and your marriage that makes all the difference.

Questions and Answers

It is time for us to get to the Q&A portion of the message so I am going to invite my wife up.



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