

# Explore the Bible: August 23

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***Relational Foundations • Song of Songs 2:15-3:5***



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Every year engaged couples look forward to their wedding day! Venues have been booked months in advance. The “mark the date” announcements mailed, bridal showers planned, wedding attire purchased, flowers ordered, and the honeymoon destination booked. This year the Covid-19 pandemic brought modifications to the wedding plans. But one thing did not change, the meaning of a covenant marriage and the preparedness to guard the bonds of marriage.

Today’s lesson will focus on the relationship and establishing the foundation of fidelity and discretion in a marriage. The Song of Songs (1:1), continues with poetic, Wisdom literature, as in Proverbs. The Song of Songs relates the story of a dramatic love song between Solomon, “the beloved,” and the Shulammite maiden, his first wife (Eccles. 9:9), from engagement through their first year of marriage and possibly up through the second.

Throughout this short book, carefully observe who is speaking. Also, note the rich blend of literal and figurative language. There are passages difficult to understand. Beautiful expressions of love, give the reader insights into the joys of passion and romance in marriage.

**Preventative Care (Song of Songs 2:15 ESV).** The explanation of three words in this verse will assist in the interpretation of this difficult passage: "Vineyards" refers to marriage; "blossom" refers to the beauty before the harvest or the beauty of two lovers anticipating marriage; and "foxes or little foxes" refers to anything that could be harmful to the marriage.

Foxes are notorious for destroying and damaging vineyards, especially in the ancient world. Usually, they attacked at night, dig below the vines, killing the root structure, and eating the fruit. Destruction resulted if the farmer didn't take the necessary steps to steps to protect the crop. Something was bothering the bride-to-be. Steps were needed to discover and resolve the issue. If not, like the fox in the vineyard, destruction could come to the blossoming relationship.

Not tending to the fox could be defined as 'neglect.'" H. A. Ironside said it this way, "Neglect is also a problem in human relationships. A little neglect can cause a once-thriving relationship to go into decline. They are often "little foxes," choices and actions that seem insignificant at the time, but whose cumulative effect destroys the relationships we cherish most. They may take the form of allowing our jobs to consume our attention so that we neglect those we love, or allowing a passing attraction to someone else to go unchecked."

**Build Trust (Song of Songs 2:16-17).** Verse 16 opens with, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." The young woman, speaking in these verses, refers to the exclusivity and preference of a covenant relationship (Song 6:3 and 7:10). She is looking forward to the day of their marriage, "until the day breaks."

Trust is essential in any relationship, it sustains a marriage. "Trust is the bedrock of true love and marriage fidelity. Once trust is broken, it is very difficult to

recover” (Lifeway). God created marriage (Gen. 2:23-25), one man and one woman in a covenant relationship for life. This oneness is inclusive: mental, spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational unity.

**Restraint Required (Song of Songs 3:1-5).** Many scholars believe these verses describe the young woman’s dream. Her search for her soon-to-be-husband takes her to the city through streets and squares. When she does find him, she brings him to her mother’s house, thereby demonstrating her willingness to practice restraint and control regarding intimacy until marriage.

Then, in verse five, she is asking her friends to hold her accountable. The statement, “Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires” is a strong warning to keep sexual desires under control and within the context of marriage.

The pronouncement at the end of the wedding ceremony “...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:9 KJV)—foundational for marriage!

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