

God's Plan for Intimacy

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Text: Song of Solomon 4:1-5:1; Hebrews 13:4¹

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Series: Song of Solomon (Passion, Purity, & Fidelity)

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Solomon 4:1-5:1**. We continue in a series of messages entitled "Passion, Purity, and Marital Fidelity". The title of the message is "God's Plan for Intimacy".

Hebrews 13:4 really summarizes our message in Song of Solomon chapter 4 when he says this: "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be [kept] undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

God has a plan for intimacy. Very simple it is this: it is only beautiful in marriage. But intimacy outside of marriage is ugly and monstrous. Within marriage it is the most exalted form of human love. Outside of marriage it is taking something beautiful and dragging it through the mud. It is taking a beautiful face and scarring it up! It is taking the sacred and spitting on it. Marital intimacy is beautiful in God's sight.

God designed marital intimacy

God designed intimacy to be between one man and one woman in a monogamous relationship for the entirety of life. God made marital intimacy to be pure and undefiled and holy. It is designed by God. It is the most exalted human love that there is.

Marital intimacy is a picture

But please understand this, both married and single people. It pales in comparison to the love that we have in Christ. The love of Christ is exalted far above all human love. Marital love and intimacy is a faint picture of the powerful love that we have in and through Jesus Christ.

My point today is that if you are married, you need to keep the marriage bed pure and undefiled. That's done through listening to each other, forgiving each other, and keeping a very close relationship with one another. That's on the human level.

But this message is not simply about marital love. I have much to say about your walk with God today. And whether you are married or single, I want you to understand the exalted love that God has for you if you are in Christ.

God has used marital love to be a beautiful picture of His love for the church. He has made the marriage bed pure, undefiled, and holy.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

So many do not have a clue how sacred marital love is, and they have become sexually immoral. Our society is saturated with sexual immorality. Intimacy is reserved for marriage alone.

Let me try to explain how powerful physical love is and how it should be carefully guarded and protected. I want to do this by sharing a little parable I once heard by a pastor by the name of Tom Nelson.

Parable of the Crocodile

Once upon a time there was a man that went to live among the people a great River. And he sat by to eat with these people. Then he noticed out of the corner of his eye was a 1700 pound crocodile. As the crocodile approached the table, the man yelled out: “There’s a crocodile coming at us!” As he did that a woman shushed him and said, “We don’t talk about crocodiles—it’s impolite.”

If you walked around town, you could see many people who were torn up by these crocodiles. Some wounds were fresh. Others were scarred over and over again. But there were no signs to warn the people of crocodiles. And no one wanted to talk about it. It was something they all just lived with.

That’s how many churches deal with intimacy. Most young people learn about God’s gift of marital intimacy on the playground and on the streets, and so he does. You people see it in magazines and hear about it through stand up comedy.

But he never really understands God’s gift of intimacy is only beautiful in marriage. If it is hatched before marriage, it is monstrous and destructive. He never hears God’s perspective on it. Then when the kid’s about 14 or 15 a crocodile comes out of the river and puts a permanent scar on that young person. They have the most powerful overcoming urge that comes upon them, and it is something that can cause untold pain and heartache and tears with long lasting wounds and unhealed marks. And the young person gets married, but he’s never talked about it. He’s learned to sweep it under the rug in the home and in the church. He’s not to talk about it.

But all of the sudden he gets married and the problem is glaring in neon lights every day. And if this is not talked about, you can have singles and married people who go through years of silent pain and anxiety and maybe even anger and bitterness and frustration. It can become the bar of leverage that separates and sears couples or makes a single person who’s messed up think they could never enter into marriage.

We are talking about God’s plan for intimacy today. It is reserved for marriage. But some of you—single and married people need to know that God can cleanse every wound of sin. He can purify all of us today. We need to come to the healing fountain of Jesus’ blood. No matter what has happened to you in your life, understand, where sin abounds and heart ache and pain because of sin abounds, grace much more abounds!

God gives us an entire chapter of His Word to tell us how beautiful marital love is, and why marital intimacy is reserved for marriage.

God's gift of intimacy can be a great blessing to married people, but He will judge and is judging people every day for defiling it. Internet pornography and the steamy lust of many television commercials is destroying marriages and keeping people from eternal life.

Marital intimacy is not something to play with. It is something to guard and reserve for the right time! It is designed by God, and it is special.

I. Marital love is **pure** and encouraged by God! (vs. 1-5).

Only in marriage, a man is encouraged by God to look upon the beauty of his bride. Although there may be many beautiful women in the world; in marriage the husband has vowed to take an interest in her womanly beauty in particular. It is important that the husband regularly praises his wife's beauty. We see this here at the Honeymoon for Solomon and his Shulammite bride.

A. Married men should **admire** their wives.

Solomon looks upon his bride behind her veil (vs. 3b), and says to her in **verse 1a**, "<HE> Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful!" The Honeymoon begins! They have just been married, and he is delighted with her. He tells her of her beauty!

Note: As you read this passage, you are going to find how strange Solomon's comparison's are for his bride. The imagery which Solomon uses in praising his Shulammite bride are drawn from a setting she would have been familiar with: the green pastures of a shepherdess. And so though Solomon is a king, and he knows of gold and silver and palaces, he does not use that language. He uses her language—that of doves, goats, sheep, pomegranates, fawns, gazelles, mountains, hills. Solomon's bride, was raised in the country, and she would have so appreciated these images.²

Men, you need to speak in words your wife will appreciate. You need to work on your communication with her. She needs to know she is loved! This praise and admiration of his wife would bring a sense of peace and security.

Married men, is your wife secure in your marriage? Do you speak to her with words of gentleness and love?

1. Solomon admires his new bride's **eyes**.

²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:1018). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Verse 1b, “Your eyes are doves behind your veil.” The dove represents a bird that usually likes to hide away in rocky places where it remain safe. But in a beautiful picture here, the young bride is peeking out from behind the veil, which covers part of her face. Solomon can see her eyes as she senses that she is now safe with her beloved on their wedding day! The bride feels safe and peaceful in the presence of her husband. And so it is with the church. We know that there is safety in Christ! ***There is no condemnation!***

2. Solomon admires his new bride’s **hair**.

Verse 1c, “Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.” This hardly sounds like a complement! Seen from a distance the dark hair of Palestinian goats was beautiful in the sunset as a flock was **descending from** the mountains. The dark hair of Solomon’s bride had the same beautiful quality.

3. Solomon admires his new bride’s **teeth**.

Verse 2, “Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young.” It was rare to have all your teeth in the ancient world! And not only did this girl have all her teeth, they were very well aligned, like “bear twins”.

It seems that this bride had a sweet smile on her face and she felt happy being married to the king! O the joy that the church has in Christ.

4. Solomon admires his new bride’s **lips**.

Verse 3a, “Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely.”

5. Solomon admires his new bride’s **cheeks**.

Verse 3b, “Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.” All of this is while she is still behind her veil. Perhaps the vows have been made but the honey moon has hardly begun. Yet he is admiring her as if for the first time.

Let me say a word about purity and how preserving yourself is worth the wait! Solomon it seems has a clear conscience. He has preserved himself for marriage, and now that he has vowed his love to this girl he is free to look upon her and admire her.

And this is not a cheap glance of lust, but a deep gaze of love, because Solomon is not in this for some quick thrill, but he has now pledged his life to this girl! And now he admires her behind her veil.

6. Solomon admires his new bride’s **neck**.

Verse 4, “Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.” Again, this doesn’t sound like a complement, but it surely is. Upon David’s tower there in

Jerusalem would have hung thousands of shields of those warriors who had fought for him. They were a sign of allegiance and love.

Solomon was admiring the jewelry on his bride's neck, and expressing his undying loyalty to her to protect and love her all the days of his life.

Admonition: Married men, you need to know that marriage is HARD WORK. You need to constantly make sure that your wife feels safe in your marriage.

7. Solomon admires his new bride's **form**. We need to realize that these **Verse 5**, "Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies."

This is shockingly intimate to us, but the Scripture is making at least two points here:

- (1.) First, **marital love is pure and holy and good within the bounds of marriage**. It was before the fall that man and woman were "**naked and unashamed**". So it is in marital love. There is no shame in marital love.

Outside of marriage, if a man gazes upon a woman, it is sin. He is taking that which is precious and putting graffiti on it. He is defacing it. But within marriage, God says, yes! I made this for you. It is reserved for this! It is godly and holy for the groom to the beauty of his wife.

Application: Husbands should regularly admire and compliment their wives. This is part of the mystery of marriage. There is a time and a place that God allows a man to gaze upon a woman and desire her. That time is any time after the wedding ceremony—after the covenant vows of marriage have been given.

- (2.) Second, this woman now belongs to this man, and this man now belongs to this woman. More will be said later. Suffice it to say that **this is not lust**—this man has pledged his life to this woman. This is holy and godly love with God's approval.

Let me say that this love is so sacred we dare not say any more than the Bible says. We dare not cheapen it!!

Transition: Marital love is so strong and powerful. It is so sacred and holy. And it is this way because there is a deeper meaning to all this. ***Married people are a living picture of Christ and the church.***

- B. The admiration of the married man for his wife is a picture of Christ's love and admiration for His bride. The love between a married couple is the highest human love there is. But Christ's love for His church is infinitely more exalted than the greatest human love.

We read in **Song of Solomon 8:6**, "...love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD."

This love is so strong, it is the very flame of the LORD!

1. A Christian is **spotless** and lovely in the eyes of Christ. Christ tells us, "**You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you**" (vs. 7). The One who has saved you has made you this way. He has declared you to be like this. He shed his blood for you.

If you are here as a believer and you are struggling against sin, and your heart's desire is to please Jesus Christ, but you look in the mirror and you see all the ways you come short and all your failings and all your blemishes, you need to know this: "where sin abounds grace much more abounds" (**Romans 5:20**).

When Christ looks at you he sees no blemish because He Himself has put away your blemishes with His own scars—His own wounds, with the wrath of God that He took on that cross in your place. You are all together lovely in His sight! You are "justified by faith apart from works of the law".³ You are "cleansed with the washing of water by the word".⁴ You are "accepted in the Beloved One".⁵

2. God **treasures** you in Christ. He has reserved a universe that He has not yet even created. He wants to freely and "graciously give us all things".⁶ We are called "the apple of his eye".⁷

If you are in Christ, if you have "married" Him, then you are loved with an infinite eternal love. **Jeremiah 31:3**, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you". God is faithful to us because of His love for us, not because of our love for Him.

3. Yet we often **struggle** with the idea that God loves us. We feel that we haven't done as much as others, so God must love us less. God must love Tyndale and the martyrs and the missionaries and Paul more than me! Listen, the love of God is not a ladder to climb. There is not a love scale that God

³ Romans 3:28

⁴ Ephesians 5:26

⁵ Ephesians 1:6

⁶ Romans 8:32

⁷ Psalm 17:8

measures us by. That's all our American mentality. God loves for us is not dependant upon us!

4. His love for you is based on **His work** for you, not your work for Him.

You are precious to Him because of Christ's work. You cannot do anything to make him love you less. You cannot do anything to make him love you more. You didn't form the righteousness that makes you lovely. Jesus paid it all. Your sin is gone, and Jesus' lovely righteousness make you lovely.

He loves you because you are in Christ. You don't deserve this love. If you plant 1000 churches you still will not deserve this love. You are loved because you are God's child. He's made you into His own likeness in Christ. He loves you because you are now His son or His daughter.

There is no flaw in you. You are sinless and perfect before His almighty holy throne in Christ. Rejoice in His love for you.

You are altogether lovely in His sight!

II. Marital love **protects** us from the dangerous defilement of the world (vs. 6-11).

In marriage, a man is encouraged to often **Retreat** with his Bride. Listen to Solomon's invitation to his new bride in **verses 6-8a**, "Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. 7 **You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.** 8 **Come with me** from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon."

Solomon wants to ***retreat*** with his bride. He wants to retreat with the one he loves. It's a refuge from the dangers and difficulties of life.

A. God has designed marriage to be a place of **refuge**. As husbands, it is our responsibility to make our home a place of love and security and safety for our wife. She is vulnerable and we need to make a place that is safe and protected. A man should make his home a place of protection and safety. He should find his home and his wife a retreat from the world.

1. Christ says to His church—come away from all your busyness and your crowded life and your overburdened thoughts and come away with me! Find rest in Me!

We often think we just need to work harder to be holy. And we crowd our schedule. We need to be alone with Christ. We need the quiet rest available in Christ.

We often go about trying to be successful in ministry or in life or at work. That's utterly fleshly and wrong-headed. It's turned upside down. Listen to me on this: ***if you will make it your goal to commune with God and make that be the main work of your day, everything else will fall in place.***

2. Remember the words of David. He did not seek to accomplish **great things**—instead he sought God's face—look at David's words in **Psalm 131:1-2**, "my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. 2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me".

We must not go about setting great things before us. We must set our great God before our eyes.

- B. In marriage, we come down from **dangerous** places to the place of God's protection. Strong desires outside of marriage easily turn into lust, and lust will kill your spiritual life! So we hear the groom, King Solomon saying to his Jewish bride...

Verse 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards."

Hebrews 13:4, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be [kept] undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Marriage protects us from the defilement of lust and fornication. God has given all of us a legitimate way allow our passions to burn.

1 Corinthians 7:9—Paul says if a believer "cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion." The burning of these passions outside of marriage is illegitimate, sinful and dangerous.

Look at how King Solomon describes the dangers. He says in **verse 8**, "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards."

The Lebanon mountains are a very high and dangerous mountain range which includes the peaks of Amana, Senir and Hermon mountains. There are dangers there such as lions and leopards that will tear you apart! There are hideouts where the wild animals live!

A good marriage will keep you from the misery of this world. **Proverbs 5:15** tells us, "Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well."

Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 7:5**, “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Application: Fill your cup at home. Don't fill it through lustful thoughts. Don't fill it through other friendships. Don't fill it by working longer hours and ignoring problems. Come down from the dangerous mountains and fill your cup at home!

This is not the voice of a drill sergeant or a task master. This is the voice of one who deeply loves you saying, “Stay away from those mountains. Come to the place of safety.” It is a father calling a child away from the edge of a cliff. It is a lover calling his love away from lust that can destroy and rape and pillage and do harm that cannot be undone.

There are young people who feel they can be alone together. They may be very godly. But even the godliest people cannot overcome love. “Love is strong as death.” You will not overpower death when it comes. Neither can you overpower this kind of love. It is powerful!

That is why you must never be alone with someone of the opposite gender unless you are married to them. The lions and the leopards of lust will eat you alive. You cannot overcome it!

Let me warn you that Paul did not say try youthful lusts or test them or play with them. He said, “flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

1 Thessalonians 4:1-6, “This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother [or sister] in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”

Christ says, “Depart from the peak of Amana” (SS 4:8). Some of you need to cut your internet and your cable. It's killing your spiritual life. If you are regenerate, you know you cannot mock the Holy Spirit. He's convicting you, telling you what to do, and you need to do it. If you have no conviction, but only excuses, you need to “examine yourself to see whether you be in the faith”.

C. Marriage is a place of satisfying **joy** in a dangerous and difficult world (vs. 9-11).

Christians marriage can be and ought to be a very wonderful place of joy and refuge for the married people in our congregation. It's not easy. You must have a sufficient amount of love and respect.

The lead must begin with the man. There love must be a self-sacrificing effort on the part of the man (Ephesians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 Peter 3:7). It is the man in Scripture that must take the lead.

It is the man who communicates in this love poem. Look at **verse 9**.

Verse 9, "You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one **glance** of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace." How joyful it is for young newlyweds to be captivated with each other. The word "captivate" here could be literally translated, "to make the heart beat faster" (as in the NASB). Listen just a glance from me, and I can make Jill's heart beat faster.

We need to make sure our marriage is a place of joy and sweetness. We should learn to enjoy spending time together.

And of course, this is a picture of our communion with God. Just as my heart is captivated by Jill's glance, so God's heart is captivated with our glance to heaven in prayer.

- Consider the motivation for **communing** with God.

And just a glance to heaven, and we make God's heart beat faster. God is pleased when you pray—when we commune with Him.

He tells us in **Jeremiah 33:3**, "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."

Look again at **verse 9b** at what Solomon is captivated by, "you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with **one jewel of your necklace.**"

Where did the bride get a necklace? She gets it from her lover. Just like when Rebekah met Isaac. She was not embarrassed. Because Isaac had already given her something to wear. He had given her "jewelry of silver and of gold, and [costly] garments".

D. The focus is on the

- Consider God's **joy** in communing with you! **Verse 10**, "How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!" Solomon delights in his bride. Her beauty overwhelms him. Her love is intoxicating. Her fragrance is more

valuable to him than the most expensive spices. This woman is supremely valued.

Get this saints, God is overcome with joy at how beautiful you are to Him. This is not a man centered statement, because it is the work of His beloved Son that makes you beautiful. God has great joy in communing with you and delights in your love to Him. It is better than wine or than perfume. This is not just “nice”. This is exalted!

Listen God does not just tolerate you. He welcomes you. He loves you. When I see my children, especially when they are so little and vulnerable my heart just leaps for joy. I walk into the door of my home, and my kids run to me and shout Daddy! They know I delight in them. I deeply delight and rejoice in them.

In that way, God rejoices in you. His banner over you is love. You are more precious to Him than all the gold or silver. You are the apple of His eye. You are precious.

E. Marriage is a place where **words** are said that can be said to no one else.

Verse 11, “Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.”

You don’t just say these words to anyone. You don’t kiss just anyone. At least I hope you don’t. There are certain words we don’t say to anyone of the opposite gender until we marry them!

Solomon describes this woman’s lips and voice like honey and milk. There is a fullness and a happiness and a joy in the sweet words of lovers.

Application: Isn’t it amazing how young lovers, if they are away from each other can spend hours and hours on the phone with one another!

- But let’s consider this in our communion to Christ. When you pray, do your lips drip nectar, or are your prayers as dry and dead as ever?

How much effort have you made to spent time with God? Do you hear His voice? Does He hear your voice? Have you gotten down on your knees and asked God to speak to you? Are you willing to bombard the gates of heaven until he that sweetness returns to your heart and you have returned to your first love?

III. Marital love is to be **preserved** until after the wedding vows are given (vs. 12-16).

- A. The husband should be able to boast in his bride's **virginity**. Solomon is very aware that his bride has kept herself pure.

Verse 12, "A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed. 13 Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, 14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices— 15 a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon."

See what deep respect King Solomon has for his new bride. He is in awe of her purity. Again, we dare not go beyond what Scripture says. Marital love is a delightful garden. Before supermarkets, people could only dream of these kinds of gardens that seemed to have every kind of delightful food and spice imaginable. The picture is joy and fullness. You say Pastor, what does all that mean?

1. It speaks of that which is sacred and reserved by God to be **delightful** to those who wait.
2. It also speaks of that which is **fruitful**. If you follow God's design for purity and marriage, you will be fruitful in life! You will be blessed by God!

In times of greatest fruitfulness I have exerted often less, much less effort. In seeking God in being united with our head, in being united with the vine, fruit just comes natural. You don't see apple trees out there doing calisthenics.

Applications

- **Be chaste, reserve yourself for Christ.** Let's apply this to our walk with Christ. Saints, we are to keep ourselves pure and reserved for Christ. You say, "I don't have time to pray". ***It's because you are spending time with another lover.*** It may be your job. It may be the internet. It may be sports. It may be a hobby. ***Whatever is stealing your time from Christ may very well be adultery.*** Christ wants your **best time**.
- **Bear fruit:** Christ wants you to cultivate a garden that will bear fruit. We see a lot of fruit in this garden of love. And there is great fruit in a happy marriage. There's enough fruit to sustain you in the hard times. There is enough fruit to sustain generations in godliness. Christ says that He is the vine, we are the branches (John 15). Any branch that abides in Him will bear fruit!
- **So Solomon boasted in his new wife's obedience to God in guarding her purity.** Great joy and years of delight come from obeying God. God

can and does forgive. He does cleanse. But sin always leaves scars. Some of those scars will not be removed until Jesus comes again.

So ladies and men, young people and mature people. Keep intimacy in marriage alone. Your body is reserved for your spouse, and for no one else.

- B. A virgin is to preserve herself for her **husband** alone. The man as well is to preserve himself for his wife alone. This is the plan of God. All this time, she has said, "Do not awaken love until it pleases" (2:7; 3:5). Now she boldly says in **verse 16**, "Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits."

Application: Listen to me unmarried ladies. Are you a garden locked, preserving yourself for that person to whom God would give you?

I'm certainly talking about your purity. Don't prostitute yourself before your wedding day. If you have done that, seek God with deep remorse, and He will cleanse you and purify and restore you.

1. **Application to clothing.** I'm talking to all ladies now. So many young ladies think they haven't committed immorality because they haven't had intercourse. Or if you are married, you believe you are faithful to your husband, and you have.

But consider this. You are guilty if you dress in such a way that you frame your body and cause a man to lust. You need to wear loose clothing. It is so sad that today, there are plunging necklines and clothes so tight they leave not room for the imagination. If you have to spray paint your clothes on, God hates what you are wearing. Ladies, don't dress to strut your stuff. That's what prostitutes do. The Bible tells ladies how to dress, and it says that they should be "shamefaced" and "modest". There should be plenty of fabric to your clothing.

Ladies, listen to me. I have no business seeing you because you are not mine and I am not yours. No one has any business seeing you except the one to whom you will belong one day. The most beautiful, the most precious of all women is the one who considers herself to be what? A garden sealed up, a spring sealed up, covered.

Don't parade yourself whether you be male or female. Display what is beautiful in God's sight. Be a fountain sealed up. And only display yourself to your spouse in the privacy of the marriage bed where you can be "naked and unashamed". If you show the form of nakedness and do not cover yourself properly, you should be ashamed.

2. **Application to virginity.** Let me say this. Guard your heart and guard your body for marriage. Flee youthful lusts. Be a fountain sealed. Let the time that you say “Awake” be your wedding night.

IV. The God who created marital love is very **pleased** when we follow His design for intimacy (vs. 5:1).

Now here is something very important. This is a king. She has made a garden for a king. And this isn't just any king. I mean this king has thousands of people making gardens for him. Do you realize that? He has employed thousands upon thousands of people to prepare the gardens in his palace. What on earth does he need with a little puny garden from a little girl? Do you think King Solomon cares about this garden she's made for him?

He may have 30,000 gardeners working on a garden. He's the king. But the one that he loves the most is the garden that his wife has cultivated.

Verse 1 of chapter 5, “<HE> I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.”

There was some myrrh and spice that she had planted. There was honey and grapes and wine and milk. It wasn't impressive, but because of love, and because he knew it was her best and it was done out of pure love, this would have been the greatest give he could have received from his new bride!

- King Solomon is not just putting up with this garden. He is relishing it. Why? Because it came from the one he loves.
- Think about the stick man your child drew for you. I have this picture of my daughter Katie and I and it hangs in my office. She drew it when she was six or seven. It's not the MonaLisa, but it is more precious to me than any of the great masters' paintings. Why? Because my daughter drew a picture of her and her dad together. There's a smile on both our faces.
- In the same way, I want to challenge you to lift up your voice to God and it may seem pitiful to you, but know that He loves your prayers. He loves your effort. Because He loves you.

Application: Let me give you an application to married people. You give yourself to your spouse. Serve each other. Love each other. Marriage is all about giving, not getting. Find out the needs of your spouse. There are many. There are emotional, physical, social, and spiritual needs. Meet each others needs the best you can.

You might say, I have nothing more left to give. Men, you love your wife. You lay your life down. You never give up! You sacrifice your life for your wife. And if you have nothing left to give, then realize God has an infinite supply of grace. Go to Him and ask for all the grace you need, and He will give it to you.

There are ladies, and you say, I can't give any more. Yes there are great limits on what we can give. But you're going to the wrong source. Go to God. He has an infinite supply of grace.

Verse 1b, “<OTHERS-possibly *God Almighty*> Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!”

There is a place where there is total freedom in marital love. It is the marriage bed. Keep it undefiled and you will be blessed. Enjoy it, it's a gift from God. Defile it, and God will remove His blessing. You'll experience the misery and tyranny of the flesh if you give into it.

Application: What should I do if I have messed up? God didn't come to the earth to save the righteous. There's no one who hasn't messed up in one way or another.

There is victory. I'll give you the secret. It is through prayer. It is through radical amputation. It is through careful accountability and transparency. If you don't want to give up all for Christ and for victory then don't complain about your misery.

There is victory in Jesus!!

Conclusion: If you are single reserve those passions for marriage. If you are married, delight in your spouse. Whether you are single or married, rejoice in your walk with Christ.

If you are married, remember your marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. And we say with the apostle in **Hebrews 13:4**, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be [kept] undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”

May God guard us, both married and single people, to follow His perfect design for passion and intimacy. It is reserved for marriage alone!