

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON FOR GROUP OR PERSONAL STUDY.

### PART TWO – CHAPTERS 4-8 – THE ROMANCE MATURES

In chapter four it is again the bridegroom's turn to describe his beautiful bride. His farming background is evident in the extravagant language he uses to picture this amazing woman. It is interesting to list all the animals, farmed and wild, and the plants, cultivated and wild, which form part of his description. To him she is perfect. He uses four of the five senses to express his passion for her. It appears that she is from Lebanon, the country on the northern border of the land God promised to Israel.(Josh:1:4) Under Solomon's rule Israel claimed more of the land promised to them than at any other time in their history.(I Kgs.10:19) Was the bride actually an Israelite or a foreigner like Ruth,(Ruth 1:4) who had come to know the God of Israel?(4:1-15) The chapter ends with the bride's response. If she is to be compared to a luscious garden, she hope her beloved will come and enjoy its fruit, which is her!(4:16)

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. How may God use the backgrounds from which we come to allow us to express our deepest feelings for the one we love?
2. What are the challenges of loving someone from a different culture and country?
3. How will God cause us to be as passionate by the end of our lives about the one He gave us as we were at the beginning?

Chapter five begins with the bridegroom inviting his friends to celebrate with him his coming joy in marriage. This could be anticipating the coming wedding reception.(5:1) The bride is dreaming again of her lover arriving to claim her. He is outside on a wet night and wanting to come in. Her first reaction is to refuse to get up from bed to welcome him. His hands come through the door and she knows she wants him but by the time she has opened the door he has disappeared. She runs outside and cannot find him. As she goes through the streets looking for him she again meets the night watchmen who this time wound her and steal her shawl. She calls in desperation for the help of her bridesmaids to find him.(5:2-8) This seems to be the first time the relationship between the future bride and groom is struggling. The chorus ask her what kind of man they are to search for.(5:9) Now the bride describes the wonderful man of her dreams, a handsome hero who reminds her of the best of her home country, Lebanon. He is not only her loving husband to be but he is also her best friend.(5:10-16)

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER FIVE

1. Why does even a beautiful relationship between two people deeply in love struggle at times? What do we need to do to resolve this if we are the couple?
2. How can the rest of us who care, the chorus, help or hinder at this time?
3. Why is it important for our lover also to be our best friend? How can this friendship be strengthened?

In chapter six the chorus begin by asking for instructions from the bride as to where to find her beloved? They are wise to ask for insight before doing it their way.(6:1) The bride now knows the answer – he has gone to check on his flock and crops. These assets will presumably be his way of supporting his wife and family in the future. She reaffirms her confidence that they belong together. The uncertainty of the previous chapter has gone.(6:2,3) The bridegroom responds with a whole new range of compliments, comparing his bride to Tirzah, the future capital of the northern kingdom,(I Kgs.15:33) Jerusalem the capital of all Israel and later Judah. Both must have been impressive cities. Then he includes an army ready for battle. He was realising that she was not just a meek young lady but a woman of fire and spirit! The way she has looked at him has confused him. He has more to learn about her. He returns to familiar images he has used in chapter 4. Finally he refers to Solomon’s queens and mistresses, already many in number, but later to increase even more. His beautiful bride outclasses them all and they would admire her. He compares her to the sun and the moon and again to an army ready for battle. He leaves again to check on his crops and dreams of himself as a general in charge of an army. Perhaps she was the army?(6:4-12) The chorus call the bride back for another look at her. They are seeing aspects of her which are new. She is described as the Shulammit, a title nowhere else mentioned or explained. It could have been her home town. The bridegroom questions their intention, comparing her to Mahanaim, the place where Jacob realised he could trust God’s army or his own little group as he goes to face his brother and their past conflict.(Gen.32:2) His love for her is preparing him for an exciting challenge.(6:13)

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER SIX

1. Why is it important for a bride to learn how to let her future husband develop his career which will be the means of support for the whole family?
2. Why do husbands sometimes feel threatened as they start to see a strength of character in their wives? How can we learn to respond positively to fire in our partners?
3. How can we best tell our wives how much we love them as the years pass?

In chapter seven the language of love becomes more intimate suggesting that the couple are now married and anticipating their love-making together. The poetic description by the bridegroom of his bride is even more extravagant. He is now appreciating physical aspects of her beauty which he only hinted at before. He calls her a prince’s daughter. Does this mean she was from a royal family or is he simply saying that she is a princess in his eyes and therefore he can regard himself as a king? He pictures kissing her as being like the best wine.(6:1-9) She responds by looking forward to his kisses sending her off to sleep. They are now committed to each other. She proposes that they spend the night together not in a luxurious palace but enjoying the simple life of the village. She has saved her love only for him like the best fruit of the harvest.(6:9-13)

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER SEVEN

1. What place does our appreciation of the beauty of the body of our partner have in a marriage relationship? Isn’t it immoral to think in this way?
2. What is the secret of keeping physical attraction unique to our spouse only?
3. How does our faith in Jesus Christ make this possible?

In chapter eight both the bride and the bridegroom reflect on their birth and childhood. First the bride thinks of her new husband like a baby brother who shared in the nurture of her mother. A marriage made in heaven not only means that we love our partner in a romantic sense and as our best friend but also that we see ourselves as a brother and sister in Christ. Using this image, God is the Father of both of us and His church, His bride, is our mother who feeds us first with milk and then with solids. Mothers also begin the process of teaching their infants. This puts mothers-in-law in a wonderful new light instead of the traditional jokes which regard them as a threat to married bliss. The bride finds this view of them both an encouragement to enjoy the intimacy of their marriage.(8:1-3) Once more the bridegroom instructs the bridesmaids not to wake his new wife until she is ready. Perhaps he will then bring her breakfast in bed.(8:4) Now the friends and family welcome the newly married couple as they return from their honeymoon in the village. Support from those who care is just as important in the days and years after the wedding as it was in the time of preparation.(8:5)

Next it is the turn of the bride to think of her mother-in-law and how grateful she is for bringing her husband into the world. She imagines herself waking him as a new baby so that right from birth he would regard her as intended to be committed to him alone. She is well aware of the power of a God-ordained love to create a marriage where the flame will never go out whatever pressures come and disasters flood over them in the years ahead. Love quite rightly gives rise to a fierce jealousy if threatened. The love of God is a fabulous treasure beyond all our dreams. Guard it well!(8:5-7) Again the family and friends have a vital part to play in guarding the young child from harm of all kinds including sexual damage, in anticipation of her marriage to come. "It takes a village to bring up a child."(8:8,9)

The bride realises how her safe journey to adulthood and marriage means she can be at peace about their relationship with no bad memories to spoil it. She pictures this care she received from infancy to marriage as being like the king's vineyard, probably the best in the country, taken great care of until its fruit could be presented to the king. She wants all those who had a part in her upbringing and preparation to know how grateful she will always be to them.(8:10-12) Both bridegroom and bride now have a brief final word. He wants everyone to hear her voice whether speaking or singing. She wants him to stop messing around at work and get home to her fast.(8:13,14)

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER EIGHT

1. What is meant to be the role of parents and parents-in-law in preparing for and maintaining a good marriage? Why does this so often go wrong? How can this damage be avoided or repaired?
2. If God is a jealous God, what understanding does this give us of the place of healthy jealousy in guarding our marriages?
3. How can we give our children a sense of the special plan God has for them, perhaps including marriage? What difference will this make to their future?