

TEXT 1:2-4

FIRST SCENE—The King's Palace

SHULAMMITE: SOLILOQUY

- 2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine.
- 3 Thine oils leave a goodly fragrance; thy name is as oil poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.
- 4 Draw me; we will run after thee: the King hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will make mention of thy love more than wine.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:2-4

4. For whom does the Shulammitte maid long in these verses? Is it Solomon or the shepherd?
5. In what way is love better than wine?
6. Why not just ask for kisses? Why mention "the kisses of his mouth"?
7. The fragrance of the oils of the man involved compares to what in the personal grooming of men today?
8. What name would be appropriate as suggested in verse three?
9. Who are "the virgins" of verse three? Where are they?
10. What is meant by "draw me"? (verse four)
11. Why use the pronoun "we" in verse four?
12. Why mention the fact that she is in the King's chambers?
13. Is there a contrast between the King's chambers and the rejoicing and love mentioned in verse four?
14. Twice love is compared with wine—show at least two parallels.

PARAPHRASE 1:2-4

SHULAMMITE'S SILILOQUY

- 2 Oh, that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For thy endearments are better than wine.
- 3 Thy perfumes have a delightful fragrance;
Thy name is as perfume poured out;
No wonder the damsels adore thee.
- 4 Draw me after thee; let us hasten away!
(For the king has brought me into his inner apartments).
We will be glad and rejoice only in thee;
We will praise thy endearments more than wine.
Deservedly do the damsels adore thee.

COMMENT 1:2-4

Our comments throughout this book will be threefold: (1) To give as careful an exegesis of the text as possible. We are concerned about every word in the Song of Solomon and its meaning! (2) The application of the text to the husband-wife relationship. We believe this book can become a veritable marriage manual in the area of love that should and can exist between those who are married. (3) As much as we need help in our day for our shakey marriages, we need more help in establishing a deep union and communion with our Lord. We shall relate the text to the mutual love between the believer and his Lord.

Exegesis

By reading 6:12, 13 we conclude the Shulammite maid was kidnapped—perhaps willingly, by the servants of Solomon. She was taken to the palace of King Solomon. Perhaps this palace was one of his northern summer houses—or was it at

Jerusalem? At least there is a garden present with a lattice-work trellis. It is springtime. She is confined to the King's inner chambers. The women of the court or "daughters of Jerusalem" surround her. When the impact of what has happened hits her she cries out in deep longing for her betrothed—"Let him kiss me with his mouth; for his love is better than wine." Even the wines of Solomon cannot make her forget her beloved. In memory and imagination she can remember the fragrance of his presence. We would compare such fragrance to cologne used by both men and women of our day. The thought of his familiar fragrance prompts her to epitomize the total personality of her betrothed with the symbolism of the fragrance of his oil poured forth—"Thy name is as oil poured forth." In her soliloquy she is saying—"You are as attractive to me in your personality as the cologne is to my sense of smell."

What is meant by the phrase, "therefore do the virgins love thee"? We see the Shulammitte dreaming of her wedding day. All her girlfriends who share with her in the wedding party also share her estimate of the groom. These virgins love the shepherd, not, of course, in the same relationship as the bride—but they understand the beauty of his character and appearance and therefore admire him greatly.

The girl from Shunem asks the groom to indicate by some word or gesture that he wants her with him (i.e., "draw me out")—only a slight indication and "we shall come running." We can see the girls and the bride of the wedding party frolicking on the green meadows of northern Galilee. All of this is fancied in the mind of the maiden as she waits in the King's chambers. She is waiting for a wedding—but not with Solomon. The king wants her to rejoice and be glad in him and all the things he can give her. The Shulammitte assures her far off lover that her heart is with him—her joy is in him—she will tell the daughters of Jerusalem of her true lover—she will speak of him to them of his endearing charms.

Marriage

All husbands would be delighted to have a wife who loved them as this maiden loved her betrothed. And perhaps at one time such love existed as a mutual deep affection. What happened? Well, no perfume lasts forever—or very long at all. If we refer to only a surface put-on physical attraction we are sure this is true. But if it is true hidden fragrance of the man of the heart we are just as sure that such fragrance will not leave or change. Your wife has always wanted you with your kisses. Yes, she wants your kisses but not without you. The sense of smell has more power in it for recall than any of the other senses. We all associate some pleasant experience or the opposite with some fragrance. Today, we with tears remember, as we catch again the fragrance of yesterday—how poignant and sad. What has changed? Not the perfume—but what it represented. There is only One who can give any of us a lasting fragrant personality. Please notice that the words concerning other women and their admiration of the husband are in the mouth of his wife—not in his. She knows her husband is attractive to other women and she is ready to admit it—not out of fear, but admiration. She is confident and secure in his love for her. She does suggest to her husband-to-be that she has an interest in expressing her love—but it is the shepherd who draws her out. The expression of not only physical love but all love in the husband-wife relationship is reciprocal. Many husbands would be pleasantly surprised to know how very often their name is mentioned in conversation shared by their wife among other women. Your wife wants to rejoice and be glad not only in your presence but in her constant pleasant memory of your presence. There is a lovely intoxicating quality in a true love affair—and it does not last for only a brief day, it is the continuing of the love of marriage where giving and not getting is the center.

Communion

Is it difficult for you to relate these words to yourself as the bride of Christ and to Him also as the groom? Or more to the point—can you relate them to yourself as the betrothed and our Lord as the One to whom you are promised? We are not suggesting that everyone will emotionally respond to what they can remember of their Beloved. Many believers have not spent time enough in the gospel accounts to get personally acquainted with the beautiful One there revealed. Is it at all possible to fall passionately in love with Jesus of Nazareth who is the God of love in human form? Perhaps we should ask—if we do not love Him deeply from the heart what has prevented it? Do we expect from Him a relationship in which our senses will respond to His near, dear presence? The words from His lips are found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These words are expressions of love to us—when we read them as such we cannot prevent emotional response—when we “abide” in His words we are moved emotionally. We are NOT saying this is our *only* response to His words—but we *are* saying this is *one* of our responses!

“The Lord Jesus excels in all the fragrant graces of a perfect character.” (Clarke) To become so intimately involved with Him in an appreciation of His character and His sacrifice on our behalf is better than wine. Can we say the joys we experience in our knowledge of Him creates a sensation (based on our knowledge) better than the physical inebriating capacity of wine? These are mere poetic words without meaning to those who have never hungered and thirsted after Him (who is our righteousness).

Jesus was “the anointed of God”—He was thus anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. (Acts 10:38) The Holy anointing oil of the Old Testament was a combination of lovely fragrances (Cf. Exodus 30:22-25). The name of a person stands for or represents the person himself—His name is “The Anointed One”—He is even as His name—fragrant in beauty beyond human description.

We are glad to affirm that our Lord has many, many times drawn us out in our love for Him. If we *want* His love He will provide the circumstance in which we can find it. You will find His love revealed in His word and in your meditation and prayer before Him. Do you want to spend time with your beloved? Ask Him—he will draw you out by arranging your schedule in such a manner that whereas you had no time or place—then suddenly there it is!—When He has shown us the way, are we ready to run in it? Taking delight in the Lord is a cultivated capacity. Wine and its enjoyments is here contrasted with our Lord and His enjoyments. Which will it be? We cannot kiss two people at the same time.

FACT QUESTIONS 1:2-4

4. Why do we believe the Shulammitte maiden was kidnapped?
5. Where is the maiden when she gives her soliloquy? To whom does she address these words?
6. Why mention wine and perfume?
7. What is meant by saying "Thy name is oil poured forth"?
8. What is meant by the phrase, "therefore do the virgins love thee"?
9. Explain the phrase "draw me."
10. The Shulammitte is waiting for a wedding but it is not as Solomon planned. Explain.
11. What is shared with the daughters of Jerusalem?
12. The Shulammitte surely offers all wives a grand example. How so?
13. What do we mean by saying "no perfume lasts forever"?
14. Explain the thought that your wife has always wanted you with your kisses.
15. Discuss the powerful recall capacities of the olfactory sense.
16. There is a way to always be fragrant. How?
17. Who said the groom was attractive to other women than his bride? Why?
18. There must be a mutual expression of love but someone

must lead. Discuss.

19. What is the large topic of conversation among women? How does this relate to the conduct of the husband?
20. Discuss the lovely intoxicating quality of a true love affair.
21. Why would it be difficult for some persons to relate the words of 1:2-4 to our Lord and His bride, the church?
22. Many people never emotionally respond to their heavenly groom. Why?
23. We are not saying emotional response is all important, nor our only response. What are we saying? Discuss its importance?
24. In our relationship with our Lord what is better than wine?
25. Jesus is "The Anointed One." What does this mean to us?
26. Explain how our groom has often "drawn us."
27. Taking delight in our Lord is a cultivated capacity. Explain.
28. What is meant by saying "We cannot kiss two people at the same time"?

TEXT 1:5, 6

APPEAL

- 5 Black am I, yet comely, ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the hangings of Solomon. Look not on me because I am black, because the sun has scorched me.
- 6 My mother's sons were angry with me, appointed me as keeper of the vineyards—mine own vineyard have I not kept.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:5, 6

15. Isn't "black" too strong a word as used in these verses? What is meant?
16. Does the girl know she is attractive? Is this an advantage or disadvantage? Discuss.

17. How does she compare with both the tents of Kedar and the hangings of Solomon?
18. What made this maiden conscious of the color of her skin?
19. Is there some reason for saying "my mother's sons" instead of "my brothers"?
20. What are the responsibilities of a keeper of a vineyard?
21. What is meant by a reference to her own vineyard?

PARAPHRASE 1:5, 6—APPEAL

SHULAMMITE TO COURT LADIES

- 5 I am black but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem!
 (Black) as the tents of Kedar,
 (Comely) as the tapestries of Solomon.
- 6 Do not disdain me because I am so dark,
 Because the sun has deeply tanned me.
 My brothers were angry with me;
 They made me keeper of their vineyards;
 My own vineyard I could not keep.

COMMENT 1:5, 6

Exegesis

We much prefer the translations which suggest the maid to be "dark" or "sunburnt." Perhaps she becomes somewhat self-conscious of her darker complexion as she mingles among the secluded bleached out women of Solomon's harem. "The tents of Kedar" refers to dwelling places of the descendants of Ishmael who roamed the deserts of northwestern Arabia. Their tents were made of black goats' hair. Such tents are still in use today in several parts of Israel and Arabia. The cloth is a close-weave and waterproof.

The tapestries of Solomon were those beautiful hangings

used in the temple and many of the royal buildings. The rich colors and embroidery work made them a topic of conversation throughout the land.

This maiden offers to all maidens after her a grand example of proper self-image. She quite candidly recognizes both her limitations and potential. She is less than perfect but she is valuable and comely. She offers this evaluation of herself before she hears from "the daughters of Jerusalem."

Peer group pressure has not been suddenly discovered by our generation. If we do not dress alike or comb our hair alike we are scrutinized with a critical eye. The Shulammite was different. She explains her appearance. We do not feel there is veiled criticism in the phrase "my mother's sons," it is but another way of identifying her brothers. Why did they send her out into the hot sun to work the vineyard? They were upset with her for some reason. Perhaps it was her shepherd lover. Maybe they felt she was too young. It would seem they wished to remove her from the family home. She was busy all day in the vineyard and perhaps stayed in a near shelter at night. Such is only conjecture and we must leave it there. The reference to "mine own vineyard" refers to her complexion and grooming, which was in strong contrast to what she saw in the pavillion of Solomon.

Marriage 1:5, 6

As we have observed above: the woman who knows her limitations and does not feel inferior, the one who recognizes her comeliness and is yet not proud will make an ideal wife and mother. It is so important that such an attitude be expressed and maintained among other women. This will not be an easy task. Perhaps we should be reminded that family influence will carry over into marriage relationships. How the wife treated her brothers might be similar to her treatment of her husband. We detect no resentment in the explanation of the treatment she received from her brothers.

Communion 1:5, 6

The Christian is indeed "black but comely." We do not refer to an inward blackness of sin from Adam's transgression, but of the effects of external influences upon him. Because he has responded to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life" (I John 2:15-17) he has entered the blackness of death in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1ff). But he is also very comely—he is created in the image of God and has all the potential of a child of heaven. He can be made whiter than snow; he can be raised out of his death into new life (Colossians 3:1ff). Among the "daughters of Jerusalem" the Christian must maintain his integrity. He is a sinner like those about him, but God so loved him that he is now the comely child of God. We all have a strong tendency to either think too much of ourselves and emphasize our comeliness or deprecate ourselves unnecessarily and remember how black we are. We can say in genuine humility—"I am a black sinner made comely by grace." We could see a comparison in the action of the brothers of this text to our fellow sinners. They have had an influence upon us and we could blame our sinning upon them. A little thought will let us both know that we were the ones outwardly responsible. In this same context we can say we were so busy in the affairs of this world we never even considered what tragic influence it was having upon our standing before God.

FACT QUESTIONS 1:5, 6

29. Why not use the term "black"?
30. What probably produces the awareness that she was "sunburnt"?
31. What were "the tents of Kedar"?
32. Why refer to "the hangings of Solomon"?
33. This maiden offers a grand example of proper self-image. How?

34. How does "peer-pressure" relate to the circumstances described here?
35. Why was she a keeper of vineyards?
36. In what way does this Shulammitte become a pattern for a good wife and mother?
37. What was the attitude of this sister toward her brothers?
38. Explain how the Christian is "black but comely."
39. We have a strong tendency to emphasize either our blackness or our comeliness. Explain.

TEXT 1:7

SOLILOQUY 1:7

- 7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock, where thou makest it to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of thy companions?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:7

22. To whom are these words addressed?
23. Why does she want to know where the flocks are fed?
24. What is meant by "one that is veiled"?
25. What danger seems to be present in the circumstances described?

PARAPHRASE 1:7

SHULAMMITE'S SOLILOQUY (aloud)

- 7 Tell me O thou whom I dearly love, where thou doest pasture thy flock, where thou doest make it rest at noon; for why should I wander about like a wanton among the flocks of thy companions?

COMMENT 1:7

Exegesis 1:7

In her imagination the maiden has left the chambers of the King. She is out again in the open fields of her home in northern Canaan. She can see her beloved shepherd with his flock. She wants to sit down with him at the same oasis at noon. She longs for his personal interest and concern for her, so she simulates a situation where he can express his concern and show personal interest. "Suppose I cannot find his flock, and I must wander across the fields from flock to flock? What will the companion shepherds of my beloved think of me? The obvious conclusion would be that I am a prostitute in search of business. Do not let me be thus misrepresented—it is the anthesis of my true self. Help me!"

Marriage 1:7

There is much to learn in this one verse. Women are given to day-dreaming—witness the immense popularity of the afternoon soap operas on TV. But contrary to what men believe they are not dreaming about men as such—but about the love and concern men should have for women. Yes, the maiden wanted to be with the shepherd—longed earnestly to see him. But for what reason? So he might take an interest and show personal concern for her. This is not primarily an erotic interest but a total-person interest. It is the nature of your wife to seek protection and help.

Communion 1:7

Surely we can address our Lord with the words of this verse: "O thou whom my soul loveth." Far more than a mere academic relationship exists between the bride and the eternal

shepherd. The two works of the shepherd are the two needs of our soul: food and rest. We can observe other sheep who are fed and rested. We long for this same relationship. Our request will not go unanswered. There is food and rest for anyone who will come unto Him—take upon him His yoke—he shall find rest and will be led into the green pastures.

Other shepherds have flocks—we have often wandered among these flocks and found neither food nor rest.

FACT QUESTIONS 1:7

40. In her imagination she has left the chambers of Solomon—Where is she?
41. She wants personal attention and interest from her shepherd lover. What does she do to get it?
42. Do you feel we have fairly represented women in their day-dreaming? Discuss.
43. Show how the two works of the shepherd are the two needs of our soul. Discuss.

TEXT 1:8

COURT LADIES RESPONSE 1:8 (ironical)

8 If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherd's tents.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:8

26. Evidently the musings of the maid of Shunem was expressed out loud. Why the sharp retort?
27. Did anyone say the heroine of this story was the "fairest among women"? Why used here?

28. The humble beginnings of the Shulammitte are here emphasized. Why?
29. Are we to identify the maid as a shepherdess?

PARAPHRASE 1:8

8 If thou know not, O fairest among women! Go, follow the tracks of the flock, and pasture thy kids by the shepherds' booths.

COMMENT 1:8

Exegesis 1:8

It would seem the ladies of the court would be glad to be rid of their rival. "If you want your shepherd lover—go find him," they seem to say. It is impossible to shine as light and not reflect upon the darkness. The simple expression "I am comely" is here exaggerated to mean "the fairest of women." Perhaps the women of the harem would reflect Solomon's attitude. They are expressing in jealousy his estimate of the newest arrival. What a humble task is suggested to the potential bride of King Solomon. Women were given the task of caring for the newborn of the flock. We see in the sarcastic words of these women a humble peasant girl leading a little flock of young sheep or goats across the far reaches of the hills of Galilee. With difficulty she directs them to the protection of the shepherds' booths.

Marriage 1:8

"All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" II Timothy. Girls who accept our Lord as their life-style will without question stand out among women without Christ

as the Shulammite in the court of Solomon. They can expect the same treatment. A Christian true to her Lord is looked upon by many as being both weak and ignorant. Many times your presence will be an embarrassment to others and they will wish you were gone. Please notice that there is no response from the maid. Light, truth and love need no defense, they will speak for themselves by their nature. At the same time, we need to remind husbands that all battles for our Lord are not fought nor won in the environment of their jobs and friends.

Communion 1:8

A happy relationship with your wife or husband is the very best protection against illicit sex. It is only where we are vulnerable that words of criticism touch us. When our Lord is as real to us in our imagination as the shepherd was to this shepherdess we will be able to turn a deaf ear to reproach—yea, more, we can rejoice in it for we are sharing the proper response to His likeness in us. Our job is humble compared to some. Our work is always humble as compared with anyone. Humility is our garment. Are we to resist likeness to our Lord? The Great Shepherd's task was the lead and feed sheep—young and old. We hear Him say to us as He did to Peter—“feed my sheep—feed my lambs.” (John 21:15ff)

FACT QUESTIONS 1:8

45. What would indicate the women of the harem want the Shulammite to leave? Why?
46. Who said she was the fairest of women?
47. What task did women have in the care of sheep?
48. We have many women today like the Shulammite. Who are they?
49. Show how the response of the maid is a good example for us.

50. Some are immune to and some are very vulnerable to temptation. What is the difference?

TEXT 1:9-11

SOLOMON: FIRST ADVANCES TO THE SHULAMMITE
1:9-11

- 9 To me, my darling, you are like My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.
10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads.
11 We will make for you ornaments of gold with beads of silver.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:9-11

30. It seems strange to compare a beautiful woman to horses in Pharaoh's chariot. What possible parallel is present?
31. How could jewels make cheeks comely?
32. Just what picture do we get from these descriptions?
33. We can appreciate a beautiful necklace. Is this the point here?
34. What is the purpose of Solomon in his reference to so much gold and jewels?
35. There is a promise in verse eleven. What is it?
36. What conditions are assumed?

COMMENT 1:9-11

Exegesis 1:9-11

The comparison here made by Solomon was a very acceptable compliment or it would have not been given. To horse-lovers today it is not difficult to see comparable qualities. The

effortless grace of an Arabian horse could be very much like similar movements on the part of a beautiful maid. Solomon and many men since have been connouseirs of the movements of both horses and women. The perfect symmetry of both is another obvious likeness. The word "horses" used here suggest a mare horse which makes the comparison even closer. We must not overlook the tremendous value placed on horses from Egypt. (Cf. I Kings 4:26, 10:28). It is of some interest to point out that the expression "my love" used by Solomon means literally "companion" or "female friend"—it is used twice by Solomon—here and in 6:4. He is not necessarily deprecating her and refusing to marry her, for the shepherd uses the same word seven times (Cf. 1:15; 2:2; 10:13; 4:1; 7; 5:2). We know Solomon's intentions were to add her to his already large harem. This was not the purpose of the Shepherd.

Solomon is now using his imagination—he sees the charming maid with a headdress holding two rows of jewels which decorate either side of her face. How beautifully do those dangling rows of jewels set off your cheeks. Perhaps this rustic country maid has around her neck a simple inexpensive necklace—it will be replaced with a brilliant expensive gold one. Solomon wants to overwhelm and impress her with his promises. There is nothing personal in what he says—any beautiful girl would fit the description given here—it probably is not the first time he used it. The phrase "ornaments of gold with beads of silver," is difficult to visualize. Moffett translated it "We will have golden beads strung around you, studded with silver." These were not idle promises—they were backed by all the wealth of a billionaire—but how empty of personal interest! Solomon is due for a shock.

Marriage 1:9-11

How would your wife respond to such flattery? We would all like to believe they would be as impervious as the maid from Shunem. We want to assume our wife would not be

interested in gold and silver. Her head would not be turned by extravagant words of praise. But if we have long ago left her for other interests she has since felt bereft of personal concern and appreciation. She has built up a deep hunger for appreciation—if such appreciation (however false) is tied into a solid financial gain who is to say what would happen? Please do not say “this cannot happen to me,” it *is* happening today in a thousand homes. And with offers far less attractive than the one offered by Solomon. Our wives must feel that we believe they are both beautiful and valuable. If they are not, why did we marry them?

Communion 1:9-11

Put these words in the mouth of Satan as he makes his offers to each of the members of the bride of Christ. These words all have a physical, sensual association. We want to appear acceptable if not beautiful in the eyes of men. For someone to tell us we appear to them as graceful and strong as some beautiful woman or handsome man could indeed get our attention. If while holding our attention an offer of a large sum of money is tied to the compliment we might give more than attention. Why? Because our image of grace and beauty is found in the person of man. The heroine of this love song was not at the least interested. Why? Because the beauty she saw in her shepherd and the value she found in his presence was far more than all Solomon (Satan) could offer her. Until our relationship with our Lord becomes far more personal and real than it usually is we *will be* tempted to join the harem.

FACT QUESTIONS 1:9-11

51. Show how the comparison made here of the maid to the horses of Solomon was a very acceptable compliment.
52. Give two or three parallels in the above compliment.

53. What is meant by the term "my love"?
54. How were the maid's cheeks made comely?
55. What is meant by saying the compliments given by Solomon were not personal?
56. Explain "borders of gold with studs of silver."
57. Did Solomon really plan on keeping these promises?
58. Does this episode have any real relation to present-day marriages? Discuss.
59. Show how the words of Solomon when placed in the mouth of Satan have application to us. Discuss.

TEXT 1:12—2:7

SHULAMMITE: NARRATION TO COURT LADIES

1:12—2:7

a. Explanation of her Situation 1:12

- 12 While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:12

37. Why is the King at his table?
38. Why is it the maiden is perfumed with spikenard?

PARAPHRASE 1:12

- 12 While the King reclines in the circle of his friends, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance.

COMMENT 1:12

Exegesis 1:12

The King has made all the provisions necessary for the contemplated wedding—or entrance into his harem. The prospective bride (or mistress) is bathed and perfumed with the rare and expensive fragrance of spikenard such as those used in Oriental courts. Such perfume was made from a plant grown in India and was imported for this purpose. Even as she speaks she can catch the impact of her wedding preparations through her olfactory sense.

If Solomon set his table for this maid as he did at other occasions this must have been an impressive feast. Read I Kings 4:22-27 and 10:21 to visualize Solomon's menu. Read also Mark 14:3 for a reference to the same perfume lavished upon our Lord by a woman in Bethany whose name was Mary. Cf. John 12:3. The fragrance filled the room—at Bethany as it did at the table of Solomon.

Marriage 1:12

At least Solomon was aware of the need to pay attention to the person of his prospective bride. It was much more important to her than to him. He could love one more wife without perfume—but she would not be as responsive to him. We must first of all make it very clear that we love the person of our wife before we make any identity with her body. But it is important that she know we want her total self. The atmosphere is almost as important as the action to our wife.

Communion 1:12

I have thought a number of times that the perfume of the scripture could accompany our reading and meditation on

His word and could of themselves contribute an atmosphere of peace and relaxation necessary to total concentration. We are not suggesting such is essential but we are saying the environment of meditation and memorization is important. While the prince of this earth reclines with his friends shall we enjoy the fragrance of His presence?

FACT QUESTIONS 1:12

60. What is meant by the phrase—"While the King reclineth at his table"?
61. Why was the Shulammite wearing perfume? Tell what you know of the "spikenard" here mentioned.
62. Solomon did know something of the needs of women. Discuss.
63. How can we apply this verse to marriage today? What is so important about atmosphere? Discuss.
64. Do you accept the suggestion that place and circumstances are important to our study of His word? Discuss.

TEXT 1:13, 14

b. Estimation of her Beloved 1:13, 14

- 13 A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts.
- 14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of En-gedi.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:13, 14

39. Is there a comparison made here with the spikenard of verse 12? i.e., is myrrh compared with spikenard?
40. In what sense was the shepherd a bundle of myrrh to the maid?

41. Why mention the bundle of myrrh between her breasts all night?
42. Are we to consider the myrrh and the henna flowers a keepsake from the shepherd to his shepherdess?

PARAPHRASE 1:13, 14

- 13 A sachet of myrrh is my beloved to me; It shall lie all night in my bosom.
- 14 My beloved is to me a posy of henna flowers culled in the vineyards of En-gedi.

COMMENT 1:13, 14

Exegesis 1:13, 14

The term "my beloved" here used twice by the bride-to-be is used by her twenty-five times—each time in reference to her shepherd-lover (Clarke). This is a beautiful metaphor—but what does it mean? Are we to believe she is treasuring the bundle of myrrh left with her by her beloved? To keep his presence near, does she often lift his sachet of fragrance from her bosom to overpower the scent of the spikenard? It is interesting to contemplate—especially when we know that myrrh carries a bitter-sweet association. It is sweet in fragrance but bitter to the taste. We do associate certain persons with certain fragrances. She can turn in her sleep and catch a breath of myrrh and smile as she thinks not of Solomon, but of her shepherd.

Henna flowers were sometimes white and sometimes of pastel color of very light brown to beige. They were fragrant and most popular as flowers for the hair. In the far-off oasis of En-gedi in the desert by the Dead Sea has my love gathered the most beautiful and fragrant of these lovely blooms—he left a cluster of them with me just before I was stolen away by Solomon. More precious to me are his flowers than all the riches of Solomon.

Marriage 1:13, 14

If we have not fairly represented the captive of Solomon's chambers we do hope there *is* somewhere a girl like this—what a wife she would make! If we have given the girl we married the same care and devotion as the shepherd-lover we could expect the same response—but not until, and only when we do. What keepsakes have we left with our wives? Something distinctively personal and full of fragrant beauty. In the midst of the multiplied tasks of the day and the sometimes overpowering pressures of life this dear girl we married wants, needs and deserves an oft given remembrance or two from you and me.

Communion 1:13, 14

Has our Lord left us anything by which we can remember Him? To ask is to answer. We could easily suggest His bread and His cup—or His external words of love recorded in the gospels, or the Other Comforter. But we pause to contemplate how very lightly such dear sweet remembrances can be treated. It is our love, yea our deep, personal love *for the One who gave them* that impregnates His gifts with beauty and fragrance for us.

Would we overtax the figure to suggest that we could once again enter into a courtship with our Lord? Would you read again His love letters to you—sometimes called the Gospels?

FACT QUESTIONS 1:13, 14

65. How is the expression "my beloved" here used? What is meant by the metaphor of "my beloved is a sachet of myrrh"?
66. Explain the figure of the henna flower.
67. These verses have a most poignant application to marriage. Explain.

68. There is in these verses a beautiful analogy as we relate them to our communion with our Lord. Discuss.

TEXT 1:15—2:6

- c. Description of a conversation between the Shepherd and the Shepherdess, 1:15—2:6.

Dialogue: Shepherd, 1:15

“15. Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves.”

Shulammitte, 1:16—2:1

“16. Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea pleasant: also, our couch is green. 17. The beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs.” “2:1. I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 1:15—2:6

43. Are we to conclude that the shepherd has made an actual appearance? Discuss.
44. The words of the shepherd are so important to the shepherdess that she has remembered them verbatim—is this the thought?
45. In what particular manner were the eyes of the Shulammitte like doves?
46. How is the term “pleasant” used in verse 16?
47. Where was the green couch?
48. The description of beams and rafters is poetic—what is actually involved?
49. In the context the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley is in reference to the maiden. Why is it so often applied to our Lord? Discuss.

PARAPHRASE 1:15—2:1

Dialogue: Shepherd, 1:15

15. Lo, thou art fair, O my companion!
 Lo, thou art fair, thine eyes are dove-like!

Shulammitte, 1:16—2:1

16. No, thou art the fair and pleasing one, my beloved,
 See, our couch is green;
 17. The beams of our apartments are of cedar,
 and our rafters of cypress.
 2:1 I am but a wild flower of the Sharon plain, a common
 anemone of the valleys.

COMMENT 1:15—2:1

Exegesis 1:15—2:1

The shepherd speaks again of his rapture in the presence of his bride. Actually all of this dialogue is but a soliloquy on the part of the bride. She in imagination hears him say these words to her. Perhaps she had heard them often before so it was easy to repeat them. Constant companionship is a large part of courting. As he once again looked into the eyes of his beloved he sees in their open, transparent, soft expression something similar to what he often observed in the eyes of a dove. The total impression of the dove is included in the comparison. The alertness, the quick perception, the softness are all involved in what he sees. "Doves are thought of as emblematic of gentleness and guilelessness (Matt. 10:16). They are noted also for constancy, having but one mate for life, and are said to mourn when the mate is absent." (Clarke)

The bride reciprocates, she says in effect, you are the fair one. The term "fair" refers to physical appearance, she adds a word—"not only are you acceptable to the eyes—your personality is most pleasing." Both the outward and the

inward view are a source of happiness. In her heart, the green couch of the woodland is much to be desired over the luxuriant divans in Solmon's palace. In but recent days they had sat together and shared the communion of lovers.

"To the Shulammite's poetic fancy the interlacing boughs of cedar and cypress trees formed overhead the ceiling of 'their' house." It is no uncommon thing for lovers to dream of their future house. She may be intentionally suggesting a contrast with the splendors of Solomon's grand house (I Kings 7:1ff). "*House* ('houses' the Hebrew plural of excellence). The thrice repeated 'ours' shows a sweet consciousness of a shared possession." (Clarke)

We should ignore the chapter divisions. The bride is still speaking—she considers herself as but a wild flower. She identifies herself with one of the two most common flower varieties. The "rose" of the plain of Sharon was most probably a narcissus or meadow saffron.

The term "lily" is used six times in this book—2:1, 2; 2:16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2, 3; 7:2. It most likely refers to the scarlet anemone which grows in such profusion in several places in Samaria and Galilee. Matthew 6:28 seems to be a reference to such a lily.

A not too covert comparison is being made in such a reference. She is saying—"How could you find me among the many maidens of the village?—I am so small and ordinary."

Marriage 1:15—2:1

Our wife will never know how she appears in our eyes unless we tell her! Our compliments must not only be sincere but distinctively individual. If your wife's eyes do not look like those of a dove do not use this as a compliment. There is indeed a metaphor or simile especially applicable to her. You can be sure your wife will respond very much like the Shulamite—she hardly knows how to handle it, except that she is pleased and returns the compliment. Once again, we must

be reminded that environment is so important to our wife. She does not remember your kisses only, but also the green couch and the beautiful ceiling where they were given. As much as at all possible we should prepare the place for her. Comfort, and natural beauty are a much more meaningful gift than a multitude of "things" which many times have no personal meaning.

So many wives have a very low self-image—they want to believe they are indeed "the fair one" in the eyes of their husbands, but many times they feel much more like a very ordinary rose among ten thousand more on the wide plain of Sharon; or like a humble lily hidden away in a valley. How fondly do they hope someone will notice them and lift them out of obscurity and anonymity. Each person has an important identity of themselves but your wife to a large extent has her identity with you and of you. The person who cannot appreciate another will themselves fail to be appreciated.

Communion 1:15—2:1

We believe the words of these verses can have a wonderful meaning for the believer and his Lord. Can we imagine our Lord speaking of us in the words of verse 15?—"Lo, thou art fair, O my companion"! Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, when our Lord considers us as justified, sanctified, redeemed, adopted, saved, are indeed "fair." It is an imputed beauty—but a beauty none-the-less.

That He would condescend to be "our companion" is a wonder of all wonders. As we abide in Him and with Him does He see in our eyes the dove-like quality of trust and purity and fidelity? The eyes are the windows of the soul—what would it be to have Him look fully into our eyes? He does, He is! Companionship with Him can allow the dove within us i.e., the Other Comforter to develop His life within us—some-day it will be no longer self who looks out of this house but heaven's dove.

It is easy for us to lavish praise upon Him—we are quick to return the compliment and at the same time we are humbled by His attention to us. Our beloved is indeed “fair and pleasant.” We read of His beauty in the gospel accounts and find it true in our experience. He is not only fair to observe but pleasant to live with. We offer no sensual association in our communion with our Lord, for He is Spirit and not flesh and bones. We feel none-the-less a strong attachment to Him and count the times and places of deep communion and meditation as a trysting place of love. As the maiden remembers her “house” which became “our” house, we can remember many occasions and places we could call “Bethel” i.e., the house of God and the gate of heaven.

All of this for one who is but a poor rose and unnoticed lily!

FACT QUESTIONS 1:15—2:1

69. Did the shepherd ever actually say what is attributed to him in verse 15?
70. In what way were the eyes of the maid “dove-like”?
71. Doves are emblematic of what?
72. What is meant by the term “fair” as used here?
73. Why add the term “pleasant” to the description of the shepherd?
74. Where and what was the “green couch”?
75. To what does she refer in reference to the cedar and cypress?
76. How is the terms “rose of Sharon” and “lily of the valley” used?
77. Should we “make up” compliments for our wives? Discuss.
78. In our attendance to our wife what is she the most likely to remember?
79. Do some wives have the wrong self-image? What should we do to help? Discuss.
80. Can we really imagine our Lord describing us as in verse 15? Discuss.
81. What happens when we are willing to have our Lord as our

constant companion?

82. How is our beloved both fair and pleasant? Discuss.

83. Have we exaggerated the comparison in our discussion of verses 16 and 17 as related to the communion of the Holy Spirit? Discuss.

TEXT 2:2—2:7

Dialogue: Shepherd 2:2

“2. Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens.”

Shulammitte, 2:3a

“3a. Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men.”

Aside to Court Ladies, 2:3b-4

“3b. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. 4. He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.”

Appeal to Court Ladies, 2:5, 6

“5. Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am lovesick. 6. Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me.”

Adjuration to Court Ladies, 2:7 (first)

“7. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the hinds of the field, that you will not arouse or awaken my love, until she pleases.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 2:2-7

50. The shepherd accepts his bride's estimate of herself but turns it to her advantage. Why? Was it true?
51. The shepherd is compared to an apple tree—do apples grow in the Holy Land? What is meant by the comparison to the other trees?
52. Two thoughts seem prominent in 3b. What are they?

53. What type of banquet house could a humble shepherd afford? What kind of meal would be served?
54. How is the term "banner" used? (What was the purpose of the banner? This is the crucial question).
55. The maiden is in distress as stated in verse five. What is her problem and what assistance does she suggest?
56. How does verse six relate to verse five?—i.e., does verse six offer a solution to the maid's problem as stated in verse five?
57. Verse seven is repeated twice more in the text (cf. 3:5 and 8:4). Please attempt an interpretation of your own. Is there any application in this for us? Discuss.

PARAPHRASE 2:2-7

Dialogue: Shepherd 2:2

2. As an anemone growing among brambles
so is my companions among the maidens.

Shulammitte 2:3a

- 3(a) As a citron tree among the trees of the forest,
So is my beloved among the young men.

Shulammitte to Court Ladies 2:3b-4

- 3(b) In his shade I delight to sit down,
And his fruit is sweet to my taste.
4. He has brought me into his banqueting house,
And his banner waving over me is inscribed, "love."
5. Sustain me with raisin-cakes,
Refresh me with citrons,
For I am lovesick.
6. Oh, that his left hand were under my head,
And his right hand supporting me!

Adjuration to Court Ladies 2:7 (first)

7. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles and the hinds of the field
That ye arouse not nor stir up love
Until itself is pleased to awaken.

COMMENT 2:2-7

Exegesis 2:2-7

The shepherd picks up the figure used by the Shulammitte and once again turns it to her advantage. He says in essence: "You are indeed a lily or flower but compared to those among whom you live you are like a lovely bloom among brambles." He could be emphasizing the jealousy engendered by her beauty in his reference to thorns or brambles.

The word translated "apple" in the American Standard version is much better thought of as "a citron tree." Apples do not grow well in the Holy Land. An orange tree seems to fit the description perfectly. Such a tree with its evergreen heavy foliage and golden fruit would indeed stand out amid the cypress, fir or cedar trees. Among the other young men so did her beloved stand out. It might be of import to notice the contrast: she is a flower, he is a tree. This is a subtle compliment on her part.

It is so refreshing to contemplate the transparent sincerity of this country lass in the affluence of Solomon's palace. She turns to the women of the harem, and with the direct simplicity of youth she describes her relationship to the shepherd. "In contrast to the trees with no fruit is my beloved who offers fruit and shade." The orange tree blossoms and bears fruit at the same time. "Refreshment and rest amid lovely fragrance are both offered by my beloved." She takes great delight in his presence and is satisfied with what he offers her of himself.

The maiden is in the banquet room of Solomon—but she much prefers the banquet hall of her beloved. And just what would that be? A humble, but beautiful vine arbor in the midst of the vineyards. Read I Kings 4:7, 22, 23; 10:21, for a description of the gold vessels Solomon used in his feasts. "A canopy was often spread above the host and principle guests at a feast and richly decorated according to the means of the former." (Clarke) Perhaps this is "the banner" referred to by the maid. It could be that "banner" is to be thought of as a

standard of protection such as those used in battle. Cf. Numbers 1:52; 5:10; 6:4, 10; 10:14, 18, 23, 25. It was a rallying-point and guide to give encouragement and confidence to those on a weary march or those amid extreme conflict. "So the bride, transplanted from her lowly station to new scenes of unwanted splendor, finds support and safety in the known attachment she has with her beloved." (Cook)

Are we to imagine that this bride-to-be is actually physically ill from her loss of her loved one? It is possible—she has lost her appetite and has not eaten—she is weak and in need of refreshment. "Sustain me with raisin-cakes, refresh me with citrons, for I am lovesick." There was someone else who was sustained by raisin-cakes—read I Samuel 30:12 to find out who it was. Orange blossoms were once used in the East to revive the bride—much like we would use smelling salts. It is from this custom that orange blossoms have been associated with marriage. It would seem that Solomon and his court and courting made her weak and sick but not of love.

As we attempt an understanding of verse six it would seem difficult to imagine a posture for the maiden and her lover in which his left hand could be under her head and his right hand supporting her unless they were lying down. This is an obvious reference to the intimate embrace of the marriage bed, it is repeated in 8:3. With this kind of total involvement in the mind of the maid, Solomon has but a superficial interest for her.

The seventh verse is most interesting inasmuch as it is repeated in 3:5 and 8:4. It seems to be a faithful axiom to which we should give heed. What does it say? "It is an adjuration that no attempt to kindle love by unworthy means should be made, for true love awakens spontaneously. It should owe nothing to improper stimulation by others, but be as free and unfettered as the life of the gentle creatures here mentioned." (Clarke) It would seem the ladies of the court were attempting to get her to accept the affections of the King much as they had. No doubt those members of the harem were quite proficient in the art of sex stimulation. Where such desires are

aroused apart from the person for whom they are reserved disappointment and frustration is the inevitable result. "Genuine love is a shy and gentle affection which dreads intrusion and scrutiny (here the reference to the gazelles and hinds, shy and timid creatures) but dangerous in its strength and vehemence, if heedlessly awakened—"as strong as death and as cruel as the grave" (8:4, 5). "Be shy of love, lest, like the silly fawn that runs to look the lion in the face, one heedless gaze betray thee to thy death." (Cook)

Marriage 2:2-7

How could we possibly find a more practical passage for present day marriage relationship? Believe it or not you could never, never tell your wife often enough that she is the fairest of women to you. (Of course, she must have been or you would not have made her your choice.) If we look closely she will become more fair each passing day. But she will never know it until we express it—and with evident feeling! Once we convince our wife that she is indeed in our eyes all we say she is we shall not wait long for a reciprocal response from her. We can easily be a "stand out" winner with our wife—who else has access to her heart like her husband? Do we offer protection and refreshment? We are thinking of much more than physical protection and refreshment. A constant consistent solicitous attitude about every relationship along with planned times of mental and physical refreshment will create a genuine appetite for a repeated visit to the shade of your tree and refreshment from your hand. How easy it would be to expand on this section until we had a sizeable marriage manual. We cannot do this but we do want to say every husband (beginning with the writer) must have a banquet room for his wife—he must often lead her to it—over it all is the lovely canopy inscribed "Love." We are thinking of all that nourishes—your words—which is food for the mind and heart—food also for the body, a sense of abundance in more than sharing—a total

giving of self for the needs and enjoyment of your beloved.

Of all persons our wives know the meaning of verse seven. When artificial or crude means are used in a vain attempt to awaken love the results might be disastrous! If we are not willing to accept the nature of love as possessed by our wives we had best leave the lovely creature in the seclusion of her own forest. She is willing to come out, nay she *wants* to be found—but not with a bull horn! If courtship is not continued beyond marriage we are due to find out just how strong and cruel love can be—and we deserve it! I shall not leave here instructions on how to attract your gazelle or lure your deer. After all she belongs to you.

Communion 2:2-7

As much as we see in this text for help in a happy marriage we see even more in a happy relationship with our Lord. Project yourself into this dialogue:

My Love to You:

“As a lovely flower amid the brambles of the earth so art thou my companion to me. In the midst of the many, yea multitudes who are lost I see each and every one who is saved. I would love to transform every thorn into a flower—but I want you to know that I am looking intently, with great fond interest on you—I can also identify every bramble and its relation to you. How beautiful you appear to me. How deeply I want your constant companionship.” We can hardly believe this. It is only true because in love He looks at us through grace.

We Respond to His Love:

“As an evergreen tree who constantly bears delicious fruit and delightful blossoms in the midst of a forest of trees with no foliage or fruit art thou to me. I have found much more than a refuge in your presence. In the contemplation of your beauty is the fullness of joy.”

We Advertise to Others:

Relish these words—rethink each one lest they become commonplace. “In the calmness that is mine through my

awareness of your love and omnipotence I delight to sit down. When I eat the words you leave me in your book they are so nourishing and sweet to my taste. The more I am willing to sit in your heavenly places the more overwhelmed I am with your abundant provisions. I find in my contemplation of just the four accounts of your love through your Life a whole expansive banquet room. The table is laden with all my favorite food. Upon entering the room I saw emblazoned over the whole wall a banner and on it were these words—“*I love you.*”

A Warning to Those Who Might Think to Presume Upon His Love:

I adjure you by all the meekness and tenderness of the lovely One: do not push into His presence and demand He express His love for you. Foolish One! How could He more fully show you His heart?—it was pierced for you! Stay with Him until in your meditation and exchange of conversation, emotions are awakened. Praise Him and sing of Him—He is love and you shall know it.

FACT QUESTIONS 2:2-7

82. What was intended as deprecation was turned to a compliment? How?
83. Show how the orange tree with its golden fruit perfectly fulfills the figure of speech here used.
84. There is a sharp contrast between the shepherd and other men—much like the contrast of trees—what is it?
85. What was the banquet room of her beloved?
86. What was the “banner” of the banquet room?
87. Are we to imagine the bride is actually physically ill with love? How was she to be helped?
88. To what act does verse six refer?
89. Give your own interpretation of verse seven.
90. Is it really necessary to tell our wives how attractive they are to us? Discuss.
91. We can easily be a “stand out” winner with our wife.

Explain. How? Why?

92. Every husband must have a banquet room for his wife. Explain and discuss.
93. Discuss the positive and negative qualities involved in discussing husband's among women.
94. Of all persons wives know the meaning of verse seven. Explain and discuss.
95. Love can be strong and cruel as well as soft and gentle. Explain.
96. Do you really believe our Lord looks upon us as we have described Him under *My Love To You*?
97. How can we compare our Lord to other persons?
98. Discuss the meaning and application of the thoughts expressed under "*We Advertize to Others.*"
99. Isn't the thought exaggerated beyond meaning under the heading *A Warning to Those Who Might Think to Presume Upon His Love*? Discuss.
100. What is the warning of verse seven—i.e., as it relates to our Lord?

TEXT 2:8—3:5

SHULAMMITE: NARRATION TO COURT LADIES

(perhaps later)

a. Invitation from the beloved 2:8-14

"8. The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. 9. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall; he looketh in at the windows; he glanceth through the lattice. 10. My beloved spake, and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. 11. For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; 12. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land; 13. The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth

their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
 14. O my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the steep place, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely."

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 2:8-14

58. Are we to imagine the shepherd has truly come for a visit to Solomon's palace? Discuss.
59. What is suggested by "leaping upon the mountains," and "skipping upon the hills"?
60. In what way does she compare her beloved to a gazelle or roe?
61. Why stand outside and look in? Why not knock and come in? Discuss the figure and its meaning.
62. Is the maid full of desire to escape her confinement and is this the reason for the invitation of verse ten? Discuss.
63. Why describe the time of the year?
64. What a lovely description of spring! What is "the voice of the turtle-dove"?
65. What hint is found in reference to the ripened figs? "Come away" from what to where? Cf. verse 13.
66. The attitude and response of the maiden is found in verse fourteen. What is it?
67. The invitation of the shepherd is to much more than physical relationship as seen in verse fourteen. What is involved?

PARAPHRASE 2:8-14

Shulammitte to Court Ladies:

8. Hark, 'tis the sound of my beloved! He comes
 Bounding over the mountains, skipping over the hills.
9. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young deer.
 See! he stands at our wall,
 He peers in at the windows,
 Glancing through the lattice.

10. My beloved said to me,
 "Arise, O my companion, my fair one, and come away!
11. For, see! the winter is past;
 The season of rains is over;
12. The flowers appear in the fields;
 The time of singing is come.
 And the cooing of the turtledoves is heard in the land;
13. The fig tree ripens its green figs,
 The blossoming vines give forth their fragrance.
 Arise, O my companion, my fair one, and come away!
14. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
 In the crannies of the precipice,
 Let me see thy face, let me hear thy voice;
 For sweet is thy voice and thy face comely."

COMMENT 2:8-14

Exegesis 2:8-14

We like the expression of Moffat as found in verses eight and nine. He says:

"Listen, it is my darling,
 There he is, coming to me,
 leaping across the mountains,
 bounding over the hills!
 There he stands behind our wall,
 gazing through the window,
 glancing through the lattice!"

The word "voice" in verse eight is better understood as "sound"; so the thought is that the maiden hears the footsteps of her beloved. "In his eagerness of love the shepherd scorns all obstacles that would keep lovers apart, yet as he nears the maiden's home he appears somewhat shy, not knowing, perhaps, what kind of reception he will get from the rest of the family (1:6, 2:15)" (Clarke) He is compared to a gazelle

because of his beauty of form—but also because of his alertness and timidity. It would appear that the shepherd is not the only one who is unwilling to express himself—when he arrives at the house why isn't the lovely maiden there to greet him? The "lattice" window refers to the form of construction. Glaze or glass windows were not used. Evidently, the latticework was so built that a person on the outside could not see in but those on the inside could easily see out.

It would seem that beginning with verse ten through verse thirteen we have an eight line stanza of the beloved's entreaty to his love. Notice: he invites her to come with him into the open country, which is now a place of unsurpassing beauty. The winter is over and the spring has come. It is a time of "mirth and mutual affection." (Cook)

It must be either the last week in March or the first or second week in April. Six signs of the season are given in these verses:

- (1) The winter and its heavy rain is over—"For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." (verse 11) For six months in the summer the rain rarely falls.
- (2) "Buds and flowers appear on the earth" (verse 12a). "When the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain." (II Samuel 23:4)
- (3) "The time for singing has come "or" the time has arrived for pruning the vines." It would seem considering the the context of the first two signs that "time for singing" is much more parallel than pruning the vines. (verse 12b)
- (4) "The voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land." (verse 12c) "This is a migratory bird that appears in Palestine the second week in April" (Cf. Jeremiah 8:7). (A. F. Harper)
- (5) "The fig tree has ripened its figs." The figs remained embalmed during the winter months and come to life or ripen in the early spring.
- (6) "And the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance." The fragrance of the grape vine blossom is very sweet, but very brief. The inhabitants of grape country

need no proofs or descriptions to appreciate this fact.
(Adapted from C. F. Cook)

We like the words of W. J. Cameron as found in the New Bible Commentary. "After the wintry months devoid of fresh life and growth, the stirring vigor of the Syrian spring follows of a sudden upon early rain. The earth rapidly assumes a mantle of bright green intermingled with the varied colors of innumerable flowers. The newly clad woodland comes alive with song amid which can be discerned the persistent mournful note of the turtledove. It is then that the voice of the beloved is heard." (quoted by Clarke)

"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!" (verse 13b) Verse fourteen continues in four lines an entreaty to the bride to come out of her seclusion. The modesty and shyness of the maiden are the points here. Her home must have been inaccessible—note the description; "O my dove, *in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your form (appearance), Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, and your form is lovely.*" "Some render the phrase 'the secret place of the ascent,' pointing to crevices in a cliff approachable only by a steep ascent. The wild dove chooses high and inaccessible rocks for its resting place. In poetic language the shepherd seems to intimate that the maiden is not easily accessible to him because the attitude of her brothers as shown in the next verse." (Clarke)

Marriage 2:8-14

"Oh that my wife would want me and love me as this maid did her shepherd." Such an expression could well be the lament of many a husband. No doubt there are some wives who think as fondly of their husbands as the Shulammitite did of the shepherd. Every wife (as well as husband) have known what it is to wait for the familiar sounds of the approach of their spouse but are they persuaded he (or she) is as eager to see them as the hero of our text? Such persuasion must be planned and cultivated long before he arrives. Actions in little areas

of need met time after time will convince anyone that no hill or mountain will separate us from meeting a need when it is present. The largest need is one of companionship. It would be easy for me to change places with the maiden and imagine my wife as the eager, shy, beautiful gazelle anxiously-curiously-alertly looking through the almost impenetrable windows of my heart to see if she could discover a meaningful movement. Please exchange places husband—you are to be just that eager to know what goes on in the heart of your wife—never mind that you cannot see or know, the important thing is that you are there and that you want to know.

There are a thousand times a thousand wives who weep today for a husband who would dream a dream like the one described in verses eight through thirteen. Let's take our wife on a picnic in the country—or to a lovely secluded spot by the seashore. The important part of this is not the picnic but her person. The spring is only lovely because she is the center attraction. Have we forgotten how to be romantic? Perhaps it is because the beauty of God's creation and our willingness to give ourselves to our wife has ceased to be a reality.

Communion 2:8-14

As the bride of our Lord we can soliloquize concerning His coming again—but I would rather relate this passage to His present interest in us. There is no barrier that can or will separate us —“not tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril, or sword” (Romans 8:35). In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. Behold! He stands at the door of our heart—He is beautiful in appearance—but He will not force entrance. He is more than curious—He wants very much to come in and share every activity of ours—He is standing behind our wall and looking in at the windows—see Him there as He glances through the lattice? He is calling me to leave the television set and meet Him for a walk together in seeking and

saving some poor lost person who lives but a few houses from me. One glad day He came and called me to put aside the winter of my backsliding and join Him in the springtime of my first love. There is so much beauty in holiness! The time of singing is come. The song of heaven's dove is with me. What was once only hard words I find to be delectable fruit. What fragrance I find in His presence! I seem to hear His voice again and again "Arise, O my companion, my fair one, and come away! Far too often I have been as inaccessible as the maiden in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the precipice—but no more—He shall hear my voice and see my face—I love Him.

FACT QUESTIONS 2:8-14

101. What does Moffat's translation add to our understanding?
102. The word "voice" in verse eight is not the best translation. What is?
103. The shepherd is eager but shy. Why?
104. In what way is he like a gazelle?
105. The maiden is also reticent. Why?
106. What is the context of the eight-line stanza of verses ten through thirteen?
107. What time of the year is indicated?
108. List and discuss the six signs of the season.
109. Discuss the context of verse fourteen?
110. Just where did the bride live?
111. What can husbands do to receive the welcome given by the Shulammite?
112. There is something very basic in the happy relationship of husband and wife. Is there an answer in this text? Discuss.
113. It isn't necessary to understand our wives or for the wives to understand all about their husbands—one thing is needful—what is that? Discuss.
114. Do you think we have overstated the case of our communion with our Lord? Discuss.

115. Offer some personal practical manner of application for the thought of returning to our first love.

TEXT 2:15-17

- b. Intervention of the Brothers 2:15-17
 Their behest, 15; Her avowal, 16;
 Her request to the shepherd, 17.

“15. Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom. 16. My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures his flock among the lilies. 17. Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 2:15-17

68. How do these verses relate to what has just preceded?
 69. When did this incident take place? At what location?
 70. Is verse sixteen an answer to verse fifteen? Discuss.
 71. What request is being made in verse 17?

PARAPHRASE 2:15-17

The Brothers:

15. Go, trap for us the foxes
 The little foxes that ruin our vineyards;
 For our vineyards are in bloom.

Shulammite to the Brothers:

16. My beloved is mine and I am his!
 He (who) pastures his flock where the anemones grow.

Shulammite to the Shepherd:

17. When the day cools and the shadows lengthen,
Return, my beloved, swift as a gazelle or a young deer.
Over the mountains of Bether.

COMMENT 2:15-17

Exegesis 2:15-17

Let's not forget that 2:8 to 3:5 is a narration given in the court of Solomon to the court ladies of an incident that occurred some time earlier in the experience of the Shulammite with the shepherd and her brothers. When the shepherd came to call he received something less than a welcome from the brothers. Perhaps their attitude would account for her unwillingness to appear at the door. The request of the shepherd was viewed as a total waste of time, if not a threat to the safety of their sister. She has a job to do. The traps must be set for the foxes. The vines are threatened by these rodents. There is no time for frolic—there is work to be done.

She will dress the vines and catch the foxes but this will not dissuade her from devotion to her lover. He is mine, and I am his. I know just where he pastures his flock, and when I am through with my work I will go to him.

Returning to her beloved she asks him to call again, when the day cools and the shadows lengthen—in the evening come again—come to me as swiftly as a gazelle or young deer. Perhaps they had both observed the fleet-footed deer on the mountains near their home and it is to this she refers in his swift return to her. "Bether" means separation or division. It was a definite locality near Bethbara (II Samuel 2:29, Bithron) and was separated from the rest of Israel by the river Jordan. The region was cut up by hills and valleys, rough, craggy, and difficult to cross, hence the allusion in a symbolic sense." (Clarke)

Marriage 2:15-17

Brother, sisters and mothers have all posed a threat to marriages. The demands by relatives are many times quite legitimate. This is what causes the rift. Such "little foxes" will cause all manner of havoc in married life. Yes, we must meet family responsibilities and catch a few foxes—but not to the extent of neglecting our love for the one to whom we have given our selves. "To despise little things in relationships of love is to show ourself utterly ignorant of important facts of life. It is little things that often account for happiness or for sorrow—a little remembrance, or a little forgetfulness." (A. F. Harper)

We could also observe that these verses also exemplify the attitude that keeps a marriage together and makes the two an inseparable "one." My beloved is mine and I am his. I know just where he (or she) is and what he (or she) is doing. My interest is his interest, where he goes there goes my heart. As soon as possible come to me as swiftly as at all possible. Such a constant mutual giving to each other insures happiness.

Communion 2:15-17

How often have we gone after the "little foxes" and lost our beloved? Just a little compromise with the world—just a little disobedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit through our conscience; just a little indulgence of the flesh; it is easy to rationalize and justify all such action. Or perhaps the demands have no question about them—they are "the affairs of this life" in which we can be entangled and because of them we fail to please Him. (Cf. II Timothy 2:6)

We have pledged ourselves to our Lord—He has never failed in his pledge to us. We know where we can find Him—He pastures His flock among the lilies—it is a pleasant beautiful place—let's go find Him and spend some time in His garden. When the rapid pace of the work-a-day world has

come to an end, let's find Him in the cool of the day. Or in the early morning before the shadows begin to form.

FACT QUESTIONS 2:15-17

116. What response did the Shepherd receive from the brothers?
117. Did the maiden catch the foxes? How did she plan on expressing her love.
118. Interpret in your own words verse 17.
119. What are "the little foxes" of marriage?
120. There is in this section the attitude that will hold a marriage together. What is it?
121. In our communion with our Lord how can we go after the little foxes and lose our beloved?
122. Where can we find our Lord? Is this a practical application of this text?

TEXT 3:1-5

- c. Relation of a Dream, 3:1-4
- d. Adjuration to Court Ladies, 3:5 (second)

- "1. On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him but did not find him.
2. I must arise now and go about the city;
In the streets and in the squares.
I must seek him whom my soul loves.
I sought him but did not find him.
3. The watchmen who makes the rounds in the city found me,
And I said, 'Have you seen him whom my soul loves?'
4. Scarcely had I left them
When I found him whom my soul loves;
I held on to him and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him to my mother's house,

And into the room of her who conceived me.”

5. “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
That you will not arouse or awaken my love,
Until she pleases.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 3:1-5

72. Is there anything in the previous verses that might suggest the cause of this dream? (What about a promise unfulfilled?)
73. Why the oft-repeated phrase “whom my soul loves”?
74. In what city was her search?
75. What were the duties of the city watchmen?
76. Do you think the watchmen helped her in her search?
77. Why bring her beloved to her mother’s house?
78. What reason is there in mentioning her conception?
79. Who or what is not to be awakened until the proper time?
80. What is the meaning of this verse?

PARAPHRASE 3:1-5

Shulammitte to Court Ladies:

1. By night on my bed I kept dreaming
(That) I sought him whom I dearly love;
I sought him but I found him not.
2. (Thought I) I will get up and go about the city,
Into the streets and open spaces.
I will seek him whom I love dearly.
I sought him but I found him not.
3. The watchmen who patrol the city found me;
(I asked), “Have you seen him whom I love dearly?”
4. Hardly had I passed on from them,
When I found him whom I love dearly,
I clung to him and would not let him go

- Until I had brought him to my mother's house,
Into the apartment of her that bore me.
5. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
That ye arouse not nor stir up love
Until itself is pleased to awaken.

COMMENT 3:1-5

Exegesis 3:1-5

The women of Solomon's harem are here told of a reoccurring dream. Perhaps it is occasioned by what is not shared with them—that her lover failed to return as promised (2:17). It is of some passing interest to observe that the term "bed" or "couch" of 1:16 is a "day couch." Repetition in dreams is a common occurrence—In a time of anxiety frustration in dreams would reflect such a state of mind.

We are not told the name of the city but it would be natural to assume it was Shunem—it could have been Jerusalem. She is to make a thorough, if not frantic search. Up and down the streets and into the larger areas of the intersections and city gates she searches hither and thither. Anywhere where persons congregate she will go looking between and among all she meets. She will look at each one for the familiar dear form of her beloved. The night watchmen appear—surely they will know—they can help me—I will ask them—She describes her beloved to them (or perhaps they know him by name if it is in the town of Shunem) "Have you seen him?" We are not told of their response—we would assume they did not know from what follows. She had no sooner left them than she suddenly sees him and in an instant she is in his arms. She clings to him with the tenacity and joy of "the lost is found"!

Why did she bring him to her mother's house? Perhaps this represented the place of security—safety and permanence. The mention of her mother's house would seem to confirm the thought that her mother was a widow.

This might also support the thought of the concern of her brothers for her safety. Some commentators suggest that this is a description of the consummation of the marriage. We see no need for such a conclusion.

We ask the reader to please refer to our comments on 2:7 for the meaning of 3:5. This verse is again repeated in 8:4. In our day of the billion dollar sale of pornography we need to read and understand this verse more than thrice.

Marriage 3:1-5

Does my wife dream of me? If she does what is the nature of such dreams? If her dreams are filled with anxiety it could be because we do not dream more often of her. We want our comments to be as practical as at all possible. We have found the following expression so very much to the point.

"Bill Lawrence is 38 years old. He has a pretty wife, two beautiful children, and is considered one of the outstanding preachers in his city. Bill and June were married while Bill was still in seminary. Their first child was born during his senior year. June never completed her college education but took a job to help Bill through seminary. Bill is an effective preacher and is greatly respected by both his assistant and the congregation. He works hard on his sermons. His church is growing.

Bill's wife will leave him next week.

Bob Ramsom is the executive director of Christian Commitment Abroad which he founded 22 years ago. He has traveled all over the world and is a much sought-after speaker. After a shaky start, CCA began to grow rapidly about ten years ago. Much of its growth is due to Bob's high level of commitment and his willingness to give himself unstintingly to the work of Christ.

Bob doesn't know it, but he left his wife eight years ago.
WHERE ARE YOU?

Where are *you* as a Christian leader? Where does your

commitment lie? Could it be that you, too, are one of those, perhaps without even knowing it, who has left his wife?

How do you sort it all out? Where do your Christian priorities lie? How does one find a balance between commitment to the task and commitment to one's family?

THREE PRIORITIES

In one of our earliest *Christian Leadership Letters*, (March 1973), we laid out what we consider to be three levels of Christian commitments, three levels of priority. Simply stated they are:

- First: Commitment to God and Christ
- Second: Commitment to the Body of Christ
- Third: Commitment to the work of Christ

We picture these as foundation stones, one built upon another. We begin with the initial commitment to God through His Son. But the visible evidence of this vertical relationship with God is found in this second priority of horizontal relationships with the sons and daughters of God. The Bible calls us away from a Western individualism back to a biblical corporate unity. It is on this foundation and within the framework of this body-like relationship that the work of Christ is to be carried out. "It was he who 'gave gifts to mankind' . . . He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12, TEV).

These priorities cannot be exclusive of one another. All three are needed. One of the *conditions* for effectively carrying out the *work* of Christ is the relationship that exists within the body. "If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are My disciples" (John 13:35, TEV).

WHERE IS YOUR WIFE?

We are addressing ourselves here as Christian leaders, and especially as married men. Where does your wife fit in these priorities? Certainly of all the relationships described in the Bible the highest and most mystical is the relationship found in marriage. Paul could only compare it to the relationship of

Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:21-33). The disruption of this relationship can have tremendous spiritual consequences. Peter tells us that interruption of the relationship can even interfere with our prayers (I Peter 3:7).

Is your ministry as a Christian Leader built upon a foundation of a strong marriage relationship, or does it move forward in spite of that relationship." (*Christian Leadership Letter*, March 1977).

Before our wife wakes up and finds her nightmare is true, let's change the cause.

Communion 3:1-5

Communing with God on our bed is no new unusual thought. Daniel was given a vision upon his bed. Cf. Dan. 2:28, 29; 4:5, 10; 7:1. The Psalmist says, "Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds." Psalms 149:5. As we close our eyes for rest it should be a time when we take His yoke upon us that we might find rest for our souls as well as our bodies. A total yielding to the presence and interest of our wonderful Lord should precede our slumber. There are times of concern when sleep flees from us. It is at such times we need Him most of all. We are glad to affirm that He has not left us. Any feeling of desertion or separateness is not because He has left. There is no need to seek Him in the streets—nor to make inquiry of others as to His whereabouts. He is right where we left Him. Return to your place of disobedience and confess your sin and be cleansed. He will be found again just on the other side of genuine repentance.

FACT QUESTIONS 3:1-5

123. To whom are these words addressed? Why?
124. Why this troubled dream?
125. There are two types of beds described in this book. What

are they? (Cf. 1:16 and 3:1)

126. In which city does she see her lover in her dream?
 127. What was the task of the watchmen? Why ask them?
 128. Why take him to her mother's house
 129. What dreams could our wives have of us? Discuss.
 130. Discuss the article *When Did You Leave Your Wife?*
 131. Show how these verses can relate to our communing with our Lord upon our bed. Discuss.

TEXT 3:6-11

SECOND SCENE—The Royal Procession

REMARKS OF THE SPECTATORS

First Speaker: v. 6

“6. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?”

Second Speaker: v. 7, 8

“7. Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; three score mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel.

8. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war;

Every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.

Third Speaker: v. 9, 10

9. King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon.

10. He made the pillars thereof of silver, and the bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, from the daughters of Jerusalem.

Fourth Speaker: v. 11

11. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King