

# Relational Investment

*Just as a couple must invest in their relationship, believers must also invest in their relationship with God.*

Song of Songs 5:6-16



## **How might a person's investments reveal their stage in life? What might a person's investments reveal about their priorities?**

When we're young, we tend to invest in diplomas, careers, and cars. If we have enough resources, we might make investments in fitness center memberships or golf clubs. As we get older, we make different kinds of investments. We're inclined to invest in mutual funds or retirement plans. Our needs change across time and so do our perspectives on what matters most. Whether we're young or old, however, we're wise when we see the value of investing in relationships, beginning with our relationship with God.

## **UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

Chapters 5–8 of the Song of Songs bring to mind God's directive about marriage, in which He declared that the two—husband and wife—would become one (Gen. 2:24). The man and the woman in the poem got married, and now they're learning how to live as one as they grow in their relationship. Some readers of Song of Songs might ask why Solomon was so expressive about God's gift of sexual intimacy. Solomon reclaimed the truth about sex. Sexual expression and intimacy between a husband and wife is a gift from God. Rather than something to be discarded as a creation of a sinful world, Solomon wanted God's people to know that sexual intimacy was God's gift to humanity from the very beginning of time.

God's people also need to know that the ultimate goal of sexual intimacy is not the sexual expression itself. Rather, the ultimate goal is to build a true and lasting relationship that brings glory to God and leads to family and human flourishing. When the gift of sexual intimacy is properly enjoyed and protected, everyone benefits: husbands and wives benefit as their relationship with each other deepens; children benefit as their moms and dads are secure, happy, and fulfilled in their marriage; the church and society benefit from homes that are stable. God desires for us to invest in building strong marriage relationships.

# SONG OF SONGS 5:6-16

**6** I opened to my love,  
but my love had turned and gone away.  
My heart sank because he had left.  
I sought him, but did not find him.  
I called him, but he did not answer.

**7** The guards who go about the city found me.  
They **beat and wounded me** **A**;  
they took my cloak from me—  
the guardians of the walls.

**8** Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you,  
if you find my love,  
tell him that I am lovesick.

**9** What makes the one you love better than another,  
most beautiful of women?  
What makes him better than another,  
that you would give us this charge?

**10** My love is fit and strong,  
notable among **ten thousand** **B**.

**11** His head is purest gold.  
His hair is wavy and black as a raven.

**12** His eyes are like doves beside flowing streams,  
washed in milk and set like jewels.

**13** His cheeks are like beds of spice,  
mounds of perfume.  
His lips are lilies,  
dripping with flowing myrrh.

**14** His arms are **rods of gold set with beryl** **C**.  
His body is an ivory panel  
covered with lapis lazuli.

**15** His legs are alabaster pillars  
set on pedestals of pure gold.  
His presence is like **Lebanon** **D**,  
as majestic as the cedars.

**16** His mouth is sweetness.  
He is absolutely desirable.  
This is my love, and this is my **friend** **E**,  
young women of Jerusalem.

## Passage Outline

The Cry for Companionship  
(Song of Sg. 5:6-8)

The Call for Remembering  
(Song of Sg. 5:9)

The Crux for Celebrating  
(Song of Sg. 5:10-16)

## Keywords

- A. Literally, the watchmen might have thought the wife was a prostitute since she was wandering alone in the night. Figuratively, the words reflect the woman's own sense of failure and guilt for not responding quickly to her husband's knock (5:2).
- B. A number used in Hebrew poetry to make comparisons; refers to an indefinite, large number of people (Gen. 24:60; Ps. 91:7); implies no other man could compare to the husband
- C. A metaphor describing how the wife values her husband's touch.
- D. The cedars of Lebanon symbolize beauty and majesty.
- E. The relationship between the wife and her husband isn't merely physical. It includes commitment and trust, as well as delight in each other.

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

The bride arose to open the door for her husband to enter, only to find he was not there.

## **How might the failure of a spouse to meet the emotional needs of the other lead to greater issues?**

What happened when the new bride could not find her husband? Unmet needs and desires in a marriage can end in tragedy. The bride, seeking her husband, was met with abuse.

**KEY DOCTRINE: The Christian and Social Order** In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

So desperate was this young bride for the companionship of her husband that she sent out a “missing person’s report” across the city.

## **How might the spouse’s search for companionship be compared to a person’s search for God and meaning?**

The young women’s response to the bride challenged her to remember why she was attracted to her husband in the first place. Why did she choose her husband over all the other men in town? What made him stand out? What caused her to love him above all others? These kinds of questions led her to charge the women of the city to inform her absentee husband that she was still lovesick over him.

## **What is the value of retelling stories when it comes to building and maintaining relationships?**

The bride recounted the admirable characteristics of her husband. In so doing, she is seen as reaffirming her love for him. Love between a husband and wife will take the form of encouragement.

## **What are some appropriate ways for husbands and wives to express their admiration for each other?**

**BIBLE SKILL: Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.**

Reflect on Genesis 2:24 and God’s intention for marriages to be characterized by lasting devotion. Jot down impressions about investment in marriage that come to mind from this verse. Look at occasions when Genesis 2:24 was quoted, including Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. Be sure to read the passages around these verses. What insights do you gain about marriage and the purposes of marriage from these passages? How do these verses give you insight into Song of Songs 5?

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Godly marriages should be characterized by mutual moral and emotional support.
- Godly marriages are founded on a commitment to remain faithful to each other throughout life.
- Godly marriages include mutual affirmation of one's spouse.

**Discuss as a group ways of responding to abuse. How can the group provide support to people experiencing abuse or who have experienced abuse?**

**List reasons for being involved in a relationship. What role does God play in the reasons you listed? What adjustments do you need to make to this list in light of today's study?**

**If you are married, determine one action you will take this week to affirm your husband or wife. If you are single, determine one way of affirming others in their marriage relationships.**

## Prayer Requests

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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: Spouses must seek to meet each other's needs.

*Read Song of Songs 5:6, noting the wife's distress.*

This tragic scene pictures a bride seeking her husband, and he was nowhere to be found. It describes the longing of a woman for the partnership and companionship of her husband. Solomon used vivid terms to address the hurt and harm this bride experienced by her husband's absence. He had *turned and gone away*. Her *heart sank ... he did not answer*. How tragic it is when a husband neglects the call to meet the needs of his wife. How equally sad is it when a wife fails to meet the needs of her husband.

**How might the failure of a spouse to meet the emotional needs of the other lead to greater issues?**

## Day 2: Unmet needs in marriage can end in tragedy.

*Read Song of Songs 5:7, considering the tragedy she faced.*

What happened when the new bride could not find her husband? Unmet needs and desires in a marriage can end in tragedy. The bride, seeking her husband, was met with abuse. Song of Songs 5:7 has been viewed by some as a reference to abuse—maybe even rape—as the city guards *beat and wounded* her and took her *cloak* from her. There is never any excuse for any form of physical or sexual abuse, and any form of other kinds of abuse must never be overlooked or ignored.

That being said, the episode described in these verses could quite possibly reflect a dream. Earlier, the woman talked about a dream in which she searched for the man, the love of her life (3:1-5). Now she recalled another dream in which she looked for her love, who now was her husband. In fact, the description of what happened to the woman in verse 7 strongly gives the impression that she was dreaming. In reality, she married Solomon, the king of Israel. For that reason, she likely would not have been mistreated by the guards. In her dream, however, they wounded her and then disgraced her.

**How can miscommunication lead to conflict in marriage?**

### Day 3: The garden of marriage must be tended every day.

*Read Song of Songs 5:8, underlining the word lovesick.*

Six times in this chapter the woman referred to her husband as her love. He was the centerpiece of her life, and nothing or nobody could compare to him. She had given herself completely to him, and her deep affection for him would not disintegrate. She was *lovesick*, and she would only be cured by the return of her husband.

The lonely cry of the woman sheds light on the need for married couples to work at their relationship by being present for each other. Marriages get into trouble when spouses are distant emotionally even though they're present physically. Emotional distance stunts the growth of the marital relationship. However, being intentional about being there for each other makes a marriage stronger. To use a Solomon-like metaphor, the garden of marriage must be tended every day.

**How might the spouse's search for companionship be compared to a person's search for God and meaning? How does her search help you understand your need for companionship?**

### Day 4: Remember the reasons that led you to marriage.

*Read Song of Songs 5:9, identifying the purpose of the questions.*

Relational amnesia can impact a marriage. The numerous reasons a wife or a husband had for entering into a marriage covenant can be forgotten over time. People change, our minds develop in different ways, and our bodies age as the years pass. Unless there is a diligence to remember and guard all the reasons that led a person into a marriage in the first place, the possibilities of the demise of that relationship only increase. By choosing to continually retell their story, a husband and wife can continue to build a successful and long-term marriage.

Love must not be assumed but continually developed and expressed. Remembering why you got into a relationship in the first place can actually help keep you in that relationship.

**How has retelling stories help build and maintain your relationships?**

## Day 5: Spiritual depth is crucial in marriage.

**Read Song of Songs 5:10-16, listing the husband's positive attributes.**

First, the bride complimented her husband's physical attributes. She complimented his strength (v. 10), hair (v. 11), eyes (v. 12), face and lips (v. 13), arms and body (v. 14), physique and even his physical presence (v. 15), and the sweetness of his kisses (v. 16).

Second, the bride identified her husband as *my friend* (v. 16). This is remarkable. For as much emphasis as the Song of Songs puts on the importance of sexual intimacy between a husband and wife, it is vital for God's people to understand there is more to a successful marriage than sexual intimacy. Friendship, partnership, and companionship are equally important.

Third, the bride's effusive support of her husband and her desire for a true partnership with him speaks of an emotional and spiritual depth that is crucial in a successful marriage. A successful marriage encompasses intimacy, fidelity, and emotional connection.

**What are some appropriate ways for husbands and wives to express their admiration for each other?**

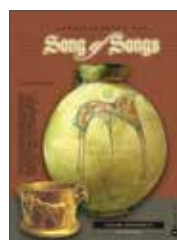
## TALK IT OUT

**Reflect on the truths found in Song of Songs 5, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.**

What types of support do husbands and wives need in marriage?  
How can selfishness impact the relationship?

How can we remind each other of God's faithfulness in the past in order to stay committed to God in the present?

Why is it important for spouses to verbalize their feelings?



For additional context, read "Understanding the Song of Songs," an archived *Biblical Illustrator* article provided via digital download in the Summer 2020 *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*.