

## Storybook Sex

### The Smell of Attraction

There are two books in the Bible that really confuse people. The first is the last one...the book of Revelation. I do know that the name of the book is Revelation and not Revelations, but that's the extent of my knowledge on the subject. I remember hearing sermons growing up about the mark of the beast and the dragon. Apparently, the country of Russia was involved.

The other book that confuses people is the Song of Solomon. At first glance, it seems a little out of place. Most of the Bible is about God, Jesus and the church...this particular book seems to be about sex.

Song of Solomon, or Song of Songs as it's sometimes called, is downright steamy at times. So throughout history, people haven't really known how to respond. Young Jewish boys were not allowed to read the Song of Solomon until they got older.

And there is a group of theologians that interpret the entire book as an allegory of Christ's love for the church. That's seems like a good idea (after all the church is called the bride of Christ), but the metaphor breaks down when the book starts discussing breasts and positions.

The Song of Solomon is a love story. It's the story of a couple who meets, dates, gets married, has sex, has a fight and lives as a married couple. The book is going to present sex as a good thing.

It's back and forth poetry (a song!). The woman will speak first, then the man. Sometimes, a group of random people will chime in...they are kind of like the background music or soundtrack.

Verse one is the title of the book. The action begins in verse two when the woman speaks up. I think it's interesting that the woman speaks first, and as you read the book, she's going to speak more often. Not a lot has changed over the centuries...women still speak more than men!

Here's what she says.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth— for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you! Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. - Song of Solomon 1:2-4

Notice what she is attracted too right off the bat. His name is like perfume, and her friends see it too.

His name stood for who he was. It was a symbol of his character, and his name conjured up good thoughts.

Our system of marriage is based on physical attraction. We are attracted to people, we start dating them, and we hope that they turn out to be a good person. And while physical attraction is permissible and even good, there should be much more involved. What about character attraction? What if we valued:

- A person's life over their looks.
- A person's maturity over their muscles
- Their character, not just their body
- The way they lived their life and not just how they were in bed

This woman was attracted to this guy's character right off the bat. She said his name was like perfume.

In our culture, I think most of us are more interested in our reputation than our character. We go to great lengths to defend and protect our reputation. We make sure we tell our side of the story. We try to hide or blur the questionable moments in our life.

Think about the last famous person you read about who was doing something awful behind the scenes. You thought they were a good person. The media will even tell you that they are a good person, they just made a bad decision. The truth is that they were a bad person pretending to be a good person. Their reputation caught up to their character.

Your reputation is what other people think. Your character is who you really are.

When there are no people in the room, no co-workers in the office, and no public to impress...that's when the real you comes out.

Throughout the Bible, God will teach us that character counts. We will not be perfect, but who we really are when no one is looking is important. Instead of spending so much time doing reputation management, let's take some time to do some character development.

I read about this Bosnian couple who met in a chat room, pouring their hearts out over marriage troubles. He was at work; she was in an Internet café. Both of them were wishing for better situations, feeling devalued at home.

Eventually, they decided to meet up. They were shocked when they saw their spouse. Check out what the lady said: "When I saw my husband there with the rose and it dawned on me what had happened I was shattered. I felt so betrayed. I was so angry."

She felt betrayed! The woman showing up to meet another man felt betrayed! Talk about poor character.

Here's what the guy said.

"I was so happy to have found a woman who finally understood me. Then it turned out that I hadn't found anyone new at all. To be honest I still find it hard to believe that the person who wrote such wonderful things to me on the Internet, is actually the same woman I married and who has not said a nice word to me for years."

Here were two people who had serious character issues.

Here's one reason why character matters. The guy who wrote the Song of Solomon was...you guessed it...Solomon. He also wrote another book (or most of it) called Proverbs. The last chapter of the book of Proverbs talks about a godly woman, and here's what Solomon says.

**Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.  
– Proverbs 31:30**

I know Solomon is right about that beauty thing because I have never been walking down the street and seen a really sexy grandma. Neither have you. You've never thought to yourself, "Man...that 80 year old person is HOT!"

Beauty fades away, but character lasts.

Did you notice where she called him "King." He's going to go on to call her "darling." They are using mutually respectful language to compliment each other. That word darling literally means companion. It's the idea of being a lover and a friend.

They are respectful of each other, and this is honestly something that we need to reclaim in our society. I think we need to teach our children to be respectful of adults (yes ma'am and yes sir is a good place to start). But we've got to model that. We need to be respectful in the way that we talk to each other.

If you're married, use respectful and kind words when talking to your spouse. If you're single, use respectful language when you talk to people.

Back to the Song of Solomon. She's going to talk again.

**Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. How right they are to adore you! Dark am I, yet lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Kedar, like the tent curtains of Solomon. Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me, and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected. - Song of Solomon 1:4-6**

In today's culture, we've come up with the perfect picture of a beautiful woman. Scan the covers of magazines, and you'll see what we think is pretty. Never mind that most of these models are Photoshopped into perfection.

But back in Bible times, they had a different definition of the word pretty. Pretty women in Solomon's time were fair-skinned, much like the pictures you've seen of Victorian women. See, pretty women stayed inside, so their skin would stay milky white. And the women that would have run in Solomon's courts would have been highly pampered and somewhat dainty.

This woman says, "I'm not pretty like all the other women. I'm not light-skinned like that." This doesn't have anything to do with race. She was dark-skinned because her brothers sent

her out in the field to do work. She wasn't pampered and dainty because she had a real job. She says she didn't have time to take care of her own vineyard (her body), because she was working out in the real vineyard.

She says she is dark but lovely, but deep down, you know she had a complex about the way she looked. She didn't fit the mold of beauty in the day, just like 99% of today's women don't fit into the size two mold.

Solomon hears her words, so he speaks up to encourage her. He wants to cheer her up. So he calls her a horse.

Seriously. Here's what he says.

**I liken you, my darling, to a mare harnessed to one of the chariots of Pharaoh. Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels. - Song of Solomon 1:9-10.**

Now I don't know about you, but calling a woman a horse doesn't seem like a great strategy. But dive a little deeper and you'll see what he was saying. In that day, horses were brown and black. They were used to pull the wagons. There were lots of common, everyday horses.

Solomon says "Baby" (I imagine Solomon to have a voice like Barry White, which may or may not be accurate). "I know that you don't think you are beautiful. But you are a horse. And not just a regular, run-of-the-mill, every day horse...No baby, you are a special horse."

Solomon says she is like one of Pharaoh's horses. These were not brown or black horses...these were white horses. They were heavily decorated and were probably treated better than a lot of human beings. The woman says she is dark. Solomon says she is a white horse in a field of brown horses. To Solomon, this woman is one in a million.

Smooth.

So now she's going to respond to this compliment. Check this out.

**While the king was at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance. My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts. My lover is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi. - Song of Solomon 1:12-14.**

The woman compares Solomon to a little bag or perfume resting between her breasts. Now I don't know if Solomon really cared much for the comparison, but I can guarantee you that he thought this pouch or perfume was in a good location. Solomon has got to like where this is going.

So since the Bible is talking about boobs, let's talk about boobs.

Guys...here's one thing that you need to know about boobs. Women like it when you look them in the eyes, not stare at their boobs. I know it's difficult to understand, but she's got a face. In verse 15, Solomon is going to actually compliment her eyes, saying that they are like doves. That's very impressive considering she's the one that brought up this whole myrrh and breast thing.

Ladies, you often don't make it very easy for guys to notice that you have a face. When you're out in public wearing low cut shirts, you should not be surprised that a guy won't look you in the eye.

The other day, I was grocery shopping at Publix. The lady in front of me was...um....well... she was regular sized in some places and larger in other places.

She had on a very low cut and revealing shirt and she's bending down to reach the items in her cart. Seriously, this woman was moving around knocking Tic-Tacs and Doritos off of the shelves with these things.

This woman was dressed in such a way that she wanted me to notice. I don't know if she was married (she wasn't wearing a ring), but I just kept thinking that this woman doesn't respect herself. I guarantee you that no guy was going to notice her face.

Ladies, if you want guys to treat you with respect, then you have to treat yourself with respect. If you want a guy to look at your face and not your boobs then you have to stop dressing like a prostitute.

Here it is a little stronger: If you are not for sale, stop advertising.

In chapter one of the Song of Solomon, this guy and this girl aren't married yet. They are going to get married a little later, but right now, they are just dreaming about each other. Cultures are a little different today, but the following question is always worth asking.

When are you ready to date?

As a youth pastor for a dozen years, I got this question a lot. The Bible doesn't really say, but I think a couple of guiding principles are helpful.

#1 - You are ready to date when you have a solid relationship with God.

The other night, I was flipping channels and stopped on the very end of the movie *Jerry Maguire*. I don't know if you've seen that movie or not, but I absolutely hate it. I seriously hate that movie. So naturally, I watched it.

It was the end of the movie when Tom Cruise came back home after being separated from Rene Zellwigherheizger. He walks into the house and sees his wife and launched into his speech.

*We live in a cynical world. A cynical world.*

I have no idea what that means or what it has to do with anything. But he continues...

*You....complete me.*

Remember that line? If you were a female and saw that movie, you went “Awwwww” and thought it was the most romantic thing ever. Not until *The Notebook* would there be a more romantic moment in a movie.

The she interrupts and says “you had me at hello”

Yuck.

Aggh.

Please.

Here’s the problem with that crappy *you complete me* line. It’s going to be a little controversial the first time you read it. But hang in there.

You were never designed by God to be completed by another human being. If you are looking for another person to complete you, then you are going to be disappointed. There are parts of your soul that will never be completed by a guy or a girl...you were hard wired with a need for God. You have a need that only God can fill.

If you are married, God did not wire your spouse to meet every one of your needs. Yes, he or she is your companion, but that does not mean that every single need you have will be fulfilled by that other person. There are guys on planet earth that realized this the hard way when they tried to take their wives hunting.

#2 – *You are ready to date* when you are willing to be single over marrying the wrong person.

There are far worse things than being single. Being married to the wrong person has got to be up there on the list.

One thing that single people spend far too much time doing is looking for a guy or looking for a girl. Instead of concentrating on *looking* for this person, what if we concentrated on *being* the right person for someone. It all comes back to character, doesn’t it?

Let’s wrap this up.

As I read through the first chapter of this controversial and confusing book in the Bible, I came away with one word of application.

Respect.

She calls him King. He calls her darling. They respect each other. They compliment each other.

If you’re married, respect your spouse.

If you’re single, stop treating people like a commodity to be used and start respecting them.

And respect yourself