



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## Song of Solomon

### Lesson 8: A Different Perspective

#### Before You Begin:

**Think about times in the past when you have had conflict with your husband. How do you each typically handle the situation?**

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**Do your typical reactions lead to a quick reconciliation, or do they lead to a longer period of blaming/frustration before the situation is able to be resolved?**

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When we last left Shulamith, she and Solomon had both made some mistakes that impacted their marriage. He had apparently been busy, and then gone to her in the dead of the night for sexual intimacy. This was very bad timing on his part, as well as very inconsiderate of her needs at the time. She, naturally, realized all of this, and ignored him when he came knocking on her door in the middle of the night. This in return left him feeling rejected and unimportant, so he left. And thus, we have a tremendous example of the cycle of dysfunction. A mistake by one spouse, leads to hurt in the other spouse, causing them to react out of hurt and send hurt back to the first spouse, and if we aren't careful it can go on and on.

As we will see, through the medium of the “chorus,” the Shulammite woman is given the opportunity to stop this dysfunctional pattern in its tracks. She’s given the opportunity to choose a different perspective, and a different approach to her heartache. A perspective which, as we will see, has the power to shift her entire focus and guide her towards reconciliation with her husband.

#### Read 5:9

With a gentle prompt, the chorus is able to shift Shulamith’s focus from her hurt and frustration, to all of the reasons she married Solomon in the first place. They simply ask, “What makes him so special?!” Despite her current fear and pain, Shulamith is able to immediately answer their question. This tells us that she regularly focuses on Solomon’s positive attributes. She doesn’t hesitate, she doesn’t have to stop and think, she can immediately tell them why she is the luckiest woman in the world.

#### Think About It:

**Where is your focus in regard to your husband? If you were asked what sets your husband apart, what makes you the luckiest woman in the world, how quickly could you respond?**

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**Do you focus on those things, or do you tend to focus more on when he leaves the toilet seat up or his dirty socks in the floor? Many times in relationships we see what we look for. What do you look for in your husband?**

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## Read 5:10-16

This entire pericope is the Shulammitte praising her husband. She praises his physical attractiveness, but as we will note she goes beyond that, she praises the way he treats her and the beauty of the relationship they have with each other.

### Think About It:

Imagine Solomon's reaction when he hears how his wife lovingly describes him. It makes me think of Proverbs 31:23, he is known because of her good deeds and kindness. He is respected because of his wife and her behavior towards him.

**Is this how your husband would feel if he heard how you talk about him to others?**

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In our society a lot of focus is placed on women's insecurities, particularly in regards to their physical appearance. It's important to remember, however, that many men struggle with their self-image as well (even if they won't say so because it isn't "manly").

**How often do you praise your husband's physical appearance? Do you tell him that he looks handsome before he leaves for work? Do you verbally admire his body when you are being intimate?**

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Just as Solomon did for Shulammithe in chapter 4, the Shulammitte begins with Solomon's head and works her way down his body, describing him and his attractiveness in detail. It appears that Solomon has inherited his father's looks, because Shulammithe describes him as "ruddy," which is how David was described in 1 Samuel 16:12. She says that he is "radiant," this could be a reference to his physical appearance, but it could also be a reference to his overall demeanor: he is confident and joyful. She describes him as being outstanding among 10,000 men.

### Think About It:

**Many women are good about complimenting their husbands, yet they also do not think twice about commenting on the attractiveness of actors in movies, etc. Can a husband view himself as, "1 in 10,000" when his wife is also commenting on the attractiveness of other men, even if that other man is one she will never meet in person?**

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In verse 11 she lovingly describes his curly, dark hair. There are multiple ways of understanding, “His head is the finest gold.” Some believe that this is a reference to Solomon having golden, tanned skin. However, it is also possible that she is describing his worth to her, his head, who he is as a person, is worth as much as the finest gold (Petrillo 2016).

When we reach verse 12, she describes his eyes in the same way he described hers, by comparing them to doves. She goes a step further then, and describes them as being beside a stream of water bathed in milk. She is saying that his eyes are pure and clear (Petrillo 2016). He only has eyes for her, and she knows it. He cares for himself, so his eyes are clear and not bloodshot from stress or a lack of rest.

Verse 13 describes his cheeks; however, she is likely actually referencing his beard. In this day, it was common for men to use herbs and spices to create a pleasant fragrance in their beard (Petrillo 2016). She also describes his lips like lilies dripping liquid myrrh. When she compares his lips to the lilies, she appears to be complimenting their appearance, they are lovely and well-shaped (Petrillo 2016). However, when she says that they are dripping myrrh, this is a reference to the fact that he does not have bad breath. It was customary at the time to chew sweet herbs, or mix them with water and use them as a mouthwash (Petrillo 2016).

### **Think About It:**

Throughout this study we have repeatedly seen the efforts that both Solomon and Shulammith have gone to in order to be desirable to each other. They have both consistently

perfumed themselves, worn nice clothes and jewelry, Shulammith went to the trouble of applying cosmetics for him, and here we see him ensuring that he does not have bad breath. Personal hygiene is of vital importance in our marriages. Who wants to be intimate with someone who has bad breath and hasn't showered? Also ladies, we need to make sure our husbands know they are worth some effort! Not all men like their wives to wear makeup, but we can at least put forth the effort to put on real clothes, make sure we smell nice, and fix our hair. Especially when we have little ones at home constantly grabbing at us, spitting up on us, etc., it can be very difficult to feel attractive. It can also be difficult to put out one iota more effort because we already feel so drained! But it's important to remember, our husband will be around long after our children have flown the nest. If we don't make sure he feels worthy of our time and effort now, he won't be interested in our “leftovers” then!

### **Take Action:**

Sometime this week surprise your husband by putting out extra effort. Take pains with your physical appearance, wear a perfume that he likes, and let him know it's just because he's worth it.

### **Read 5:14-15**

We now come to a more intimate description of Solomon's physical characteristics. His arms are rods of gold, they are strong and precious to her. His body is polished ivory bedecked with sapphires, it's smooth and strong, and the sapphires are likely a reference to jewelry he is wearing. His legs are compared to alabaster columns set on bases of gold. The word



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“columns” here is the same word used for the two great columns of the King’s palace in 1 Kings 7:15-22, as well as the word for the cedars used in the littler which bore Solomon to her on their wedding day (Petrillo 2016). His overall appearance reminds her of Lebanon, her home. A place of strength, safety and comfort.

Verse 16 is truly beautiful, “His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” Scholars agree that the reference to his mouth here is not a reference to his kisses, but rather to the words that come forth from his mouth. He makes her feel special, he praises her, he tells her that she is cherished and adored, and she acknowledges how special that is. He is “altogether desirable,” he is an amazing man inside and out, there is nothing about him she would change, and he is all hers! He is her beloved, and he is her friend.

### Think About It:

Ladies, as we progress throughout our marriage, are we putting forth the effort to maintain our friendship with our husbands? The word for friendship here means companionship, loyalty, commitment and trust (Petrillo 2016).

**Do we have companionship with our husbands? Do we make time to play with each other and simply enjoy each other’s company?**

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**Are we loyal to him in every way? In how we speak, in our thoughts, certainly in our hearts? Are we fully committed to our marriage in every way, and do we make sure everyone around us knows it?**

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Shulammith concludes by saying, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” She is saying you asked, well here you go. Teens today would likely say, “boom!” or “drop the mic!” She’s saying that’s it, there is no more. He is wonderful, he is glorious, he is mine in every way, so take that!

Notice the amazing transformation of perception that the Shulammite has gone through in this passage: in the beginning she was hurt and frustrated, likely feeling both used and rejected. But now, now she is in awe of her husband, she feels blessed and privileged that he is hers, and she is his! What changed? Not the circumstance. Certainly not the man. All that changed was her perception of the situation. She chose to focus on how blessed she is, and what a wonderful man she was given by God. She switched her focus from herself, to her husband.

Please don’t misunderstand me, there are times when we have serious struggles in our marriages that need to be dealt and addressed with. There are times when we need to swallow our pride and seek outside help from a trusted older couple or a professional counselor. That being said, there are also times when we are simply selfish. When we are focused on what we want, what we need, how we feel, and we lose sight of the fact that there is another human in



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this relationship who also has needs, struggles and feelings. These are the times that little things can easily become blown out of proportion and wreak havoc on our relationship. This is when it would behoove us, and our marriage, to take a breath and take a step back. To intentionally switch our perception from our hurts and frustrations, to the blessings we have in our husband.

### **Take Action:**

Take time to sit down this week, and focus on all of the things your husband does right. Make a list of the ways he shows you he cares for you, and the ways he serves your family. For instance, just this morning I received a text from a dear friend. It simply said, “This means ‘I love you,’” and it was a text from her husband where he had changed the oil in her vehicle for her before she traveled. Due to the fact that they are not women, our husbands will not always communicate their love to us the way we would, or the way we want them to, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t communicating. Look for the ways he is showing you, and be thankful.

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Petrillo, D. Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Truth for Today Commentary, Searcy, AR. 2016.