

Song of Songs Worthy

The Feast of St. Valentine

Very little is known about St. Valentine except he was a believer in the 3rd Century who was executed by Emperor Claudius II. Among the existing legends, he helped fellow Christians and was imprisoned for it. It is said that he healed the blindness of the jailer's daughter. In the end, when he was asked to deny Jesus under threat of death, he refused and was executed. So Valentine's day wasn't about romance, chocolates, flowers and champagne. It was about life and death and following Jesus to the very end. It is always in that arena that love and faithfulness reveals its truest colours. We remember St. Valentine because he was a faithful man who would rather die than turn from Jesus.



Chapter 1

Solomon's Song of Songs.

She

² *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—
for your love is more delightful than wine.*

³ *Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;
your name is like perfume poured out.*

No wonder the young women love you!

⁴ *Take me away with you—let us hurry!
Let the king bring me into his chambers.*

Friends

*We rejoice and delight in you^[b];
we will praise your love more than wine.*

She

How right they are to adore you!

⁵ *Dark am I, yet lovely,
daughters of Jerusalem,
dark like the tents of Kedar,*

like the tent curtains of Solomon.

⁶ *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 had to neglect.*

⁷ *Tell me, you whom I love,
where you graze your flock
and where you rest your sheep at midday.*

*Why should I be like a veiled woman
beside the flocks of your friends?*

Friends

⁸ *If you do not know, most beautiful of women,
follow the tracks of the sheep
and graze your young goats
by the tents of the shepherds.*

He

⁹ *I liken you, my darling, to a mare
among Pharaoh's chariot horses.*

¹⁰ *Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings,
your neck with strings of jewels.*

¹¹ *We will make you earrings of gold,
studded with silver.*

She

¹² *While the king was at his table,
my perfume spread its fragrance.*

¹³ *My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh
resting between my breasts.*

¹⁴ *My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms
from the vineyards of En Gedi.*

He

¹⁵ *How beautiful you are, my darling!
Oh, how beautiful!
Your eyes are doves.*

She

¹⁶ *How handsome you are, my beloved!
Oh, how charming!
And our bed is verdant.*

He

¹⁷ *The beams of our house are cedars;
our rafters are firs.*

Chapter 8

Friends

⁵ *Who is this coming up from the wilderness
leaning on her beloved?*

She

*Under the apple tree I roused you;
there your mother conceived you,
there she who was in labor gave you birth.*

⁶ *Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.*

*It burns like blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.*

⁷ *Many waters cannot quench love;
rivers cannot sweep it away.*

*If one were to give
all the wealth of one's house for love,
it^[c] would be utterly scorned.*

Friends

⁸ *We have a little sister,
and her breasts are not yet grown.*

*What shall we do for our sister
on the day she is spoken for?*

⁹ *If she is a wall,
we will build towers of silver on her.*

*If she is a door,
we will enclose her with panels of cedar.*

She

¹⁰ *I am a wall,
 and my breasts are like towers.
 Thus I have become in his eyes
 like one bringing contentment.*

¹¹ *Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon;
 he let out his vineyard to tenants.
 Each was to bring for its fruit
 a thousand shekels of silver.*

¹² *But my own vineyard is mine to give;
 the thousand shekels are for you, Solomon,
 and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.*

He

¹³ *You who dwell in the gardens
 with friends in attendance,
 let me hear your voice!*

She

¹⁴ *Come away, my beloved,
 and be like a gazelle
 or like a young stag
 on the spice-laden mountains.*

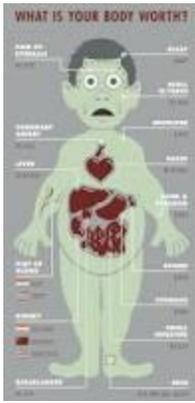
The Worth of a Person

What is the worth of a person?



The Human body, broken into it's component parts is worth anywhere from about \$18 -\$160 depending on % extraction.

[<http://www.pharmexec.com/46-million-man>]



A body in top physical condition on the black market with all organs, such as your kidneys, corneas, DNA and bone marrow harvested is worth up to \$46 million dollars
That's a new spin on feeling like a million bucks!



The average global price for a person sold as a slave in human trafficking is \$90 USD.
[<https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-human-trafficking>]

But aside from merely the Physical what is a person worth?
Our problem is one of self-worth.



Even among the most successful, their greatest fear is that they would be found to be a fraud.

We constantly think that if we were only better, stronger, richer, smarter,
more famous, more athletic, more skilled we would have higher value.
On the outside some tend to inflate themselves - this often comes across as arrogance
when in fact, it can be bluster that hides anxiety even from the self.
The problem is that our merit based society perpetuates this practice.
We are rewarded according to our abilities.
This is rather understandable.

You don't want a bad teacher to teach you.

You don't want an ignorant plumber fixing your pipes.

You don't want an incompetent doctor performing surgery on your heart.

You don't want a negligent accountant doing your books.

You don't want a foolish pastor giving you advice.

Competency, effectiveness, knowledge, wisdom and passion are vital and lauded even in Scripture.
Apathy, complacency, immorality, sloth and folly are to be eschewed and rejected.

The question that the Song of Songs poses is what am I worth?
Or even more importantly, "Am I worth Loving?"



What is happening here in the Song of Songs is the erotic, sensual and realistic
portrayal of what we today call romantic love.

One other aspect of note is this.

This book is also known as the Song of Solomon and traditionally attributed to him.

Solomon had a harem of over a thousand wives and concubines.

How jaded do you think he was?

And yet, under his name emerges this one poem about love between one woman, one man.

Did Solomon, despite all the women and sex and power in his heart of hearts long for really just one
true love?

Did he long for someone who would love him for him and not all his power and riches?

Despite all his success and worth, he longed for something no money or power could bring him?

A perhaps this poem is a reprimand, a warning to him or from him of a broken heart?

Just questions worth asking.

A lot of people think Christians are prudes, wearing black robes and looking as ugly as possible.

Some other Christians swing the other direction and try to portray "sexy" faith.

The reality is that the Bible sees sexuality as a divine gift, but like all divine gifts warns about it's rampant
abuse.

In other words, sex is good in the right context and sex is hellish in an unhealthy one.

Song of Songs is for both the married and the unmarried.
It is for those who long to be loved.
You can be unmarried yet loved and sadly you can be married but unloved.

Who not What



Herein is the wisdom.
Our value is derived from who we love and who we are loved by.
Our value comes from who we are devoted to and who motivates us.
Notice that the key here is about WHO we love, not WHAT we love.
You see, loving a thing or even an idea is a disaster.
To have an inordinate love of money, fame, sex, sports, work, play, video games, booze, drugs, power, influence, gambling, entertainment and so on leads to unhealthy passions and addictions.
Not all of these things are inherently bad unless they become a primary passion and past-time.
The problem with our use of language is that we use love and hate pretty off the cuff.
We use the phrase, "I love chimichangas" alongside with "I love my spouse" alongside with "I love God."
The word "Love" becomes a cheap throwaway term.
I find it easy to talk about what I like but not so much about who I love.
This is because it becomes way more intimate.

The man and woman in the Song of Songs are in love with a person.
There is passion, there is desire, there is longing.
The "object" of their devotion and desire is a person with a mind, with a past, with a history, with a soul.
They are absolutely unique.

There are three types of perversions to the gift of love & sexuality.

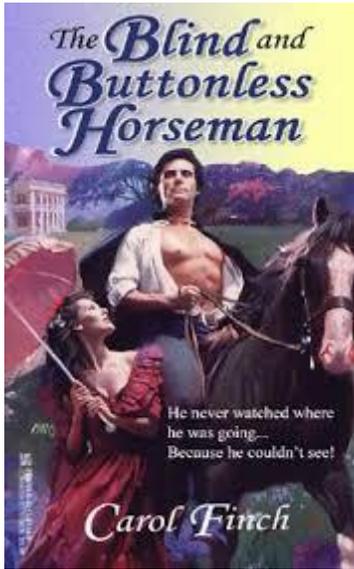
1. Objectification



(Human Dilations - Roger Weiss)

This is a corruption of pornography and sex trafficking.
It is the objectification of a human person into a commodity for selfish sexual use.
In advertising, in porn, in prostitution no one cares about that person's soul, mind, story or life.
They have become a commodity not a person.

2. The Fantasy Ideal of Love



Everyone needs to be valued and wanted.
In the longing for this in a world that tends to objectify, it is hard to be known as full person.
So some become enamoured with the idea of love - the fantasy of being wanted.
What happens here is that relationships are started with some form of expectation and excitement.
People "Fall in Love" as if it were an accident and hit it off with good chemistry and infatuation.
How long do you think the fantasy can last?
"Everyone is normal until you get to know them."
And so when the shine fades from the relationship, when our fantasies and expectations are not met,
the relationship decays.
We are left with broken hearts, broken marriages, shame, guilt, a hardened heart,
philandering, broken families, blended families, promiscuity, jadedness.

In a relatively recent movement, people have been learning about the detrimental effects of porn. The fantasy is solitary, alienating, self-absorbed and empty - like the act of masturbation.

Yes, there is momentary pleasure, but you are still alone.

It is an incomplete act.

They create such a fantasy that no one in reality can match up to it.

It literally becomes impossible to have a relationship with a real person.

This is because the biggest and most important sexual organ in your body is not below the belt.

I is above the neck. (Your brain!)

Guard your thought life.

You are meant to love a person, not a fantasy or an ideal.

A person is not to be treated like a disposable cup.

Real love, true love, not chimichanga love, is tenacious and lasts beyond the novelty.

It is grounded in reality.

3. The Fear of Intimacy



Given the mess, some of us become so damaged, fearful, ashamed and guilt-ridden we give up.

We cannot risk giving ourselves away and we do not want to risk letting someone in.

Love is always dangerous.

But how does the saying go?

"It is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all."

As any widow or widower who truly loved their spouse.

Despite the pain of loss, that love, that intimacy outshines and outlasts it.

And so the Song of Songs is about real people.

It is about real feelings, yes, there is infatuation and romance but it is grounded in hard realities.

It is also fearless, which makes it so beautiful and exhilarating.

Who you Love



One of the main struggles in this story is that the woman is a commoner and the man is a noble.

Some scholars refer to her as the Shulamite Maid.

Her skin is dark and ruddy because she works in the fields.

We aren't talking Charles and Diana here or Will & Kate because they are all rich.

We are talking the Prince and the Pauper.

Now, it may no seem like a big deal for our culture where there is upwards mobility and Cinderella

But you have to understand that even a hundred years ago, crossing class lines was not only scandalous but unheard of.

(Downton Abbey fans should know this)

We are talking 3000 years ago in the Ancient Near East.

The rich did not marry the poor.

Marriage wasn't all about love and feelings, it was about economics, politics and social norms.

But with democracy and egalitarianism of all sorts,

our society has now, at least on the surface, embraced cross class relationships.

Or has it?

You see, the nobleman could have seen her as a sexual commodity but he does not.

He takes the time and energy to woo her.

He ignores her class and desires her.

In the same way, the woman does not see the man as a way to step up.

She desires him for who he is, not what he has.

In fact she scorns the offer of money for love.

But what about our current prejudices?



CEOs, politicians	\$200,000	
	\$100,000	
Professionals	\$72,500	Graduate Degree
	\$50,000	Bachelor's degree
Professional Support & Sales	\$32,000	
	\$25,000	Some college
Clerical, Service & Blue collar	\$20,000	
	\$15,000	
Part time & unemployed	\$7,000	High School

Sources: Thompson & Hickey, Society in Focus, 2005; US Census Bureau, Personal income & education of individuals 20+ years, 2005

Race? Class? Education?

We like to pretend we have stamped these things out.

We like to think ourselves enlightened.

Would you allow your child to marry someone of a different class, race or educational standard?

How about yourself?

Worthy



Remember the definition of worth?

Worth is attributed, not claimed.

It is who you love and who you are loved by.

In Song of Songs, the man and woman attribute worth to one another mutually.

Worth because of who they are and not what they have.

It is not selfish or afraid.

Song of Songs has also been rightly understood as a pointer towards God's love.

I doubt we will ever feel worthy of love and forgiveness.

But that is the point of the gospel.

God loves the unworthy.

In doing so, he attributes worth - in other words, they become worthy.

He lifts up the humble but brings down the proud.

We come to accept his definition of worth.

We are worthy because of his actions, his words, not ours.

We respond not with complacency or apathy or arrogance.

We respond with worship, devotion, obedience and love.

We love him because he first loved us.

And we are now able to learn to love as graciously as he does.

We see worth in others as he does.

This affects our relationships with our families, our friends, our boyfriend/girlfriend and our spouse.

God's love is the centre of all our loves.