

THE ADJUSTMENTS NECESSARY IN MARRIAGE: A PICTURE OF OVERCOMING SELFISHNESS, INDIFFERENCE, WITHDRAWAL AND SEPARATION SONG OF SOLOMON 06:01–07

Introduction

The word *honeymoon* is defined as the first month (moon) of marriage when everything is sweet. The word has acquired many applications beyond its original meaning. The early months of a new job or various relationships are often referred to by this term. It is even used of a pastor's first months in a new church. *Honeymoon* describes the fleeting time when life is ideal, everybody is blissfully happy, no problems exist, and everybody is at his or her best all the time. No one is noticing the flaws or imperfections of the other because everything is so new and fresh. Some honeymoons are extensive, while others are quite brief.

The best advice regarding a honeymoon is to enjoy it while it lasts because it will come to an end sooner or later. This is true in every situation, including marriage. The newness wears off, conflicts arise and reality sets in.

Between Song 5:1 and 5:2, reality set in for Solomon and his wife. In 5:1, they were basking in the afterglow of their wedding night. In 5:2, Solomon's wife rejected his sexual advances and refused to allow him to enter her bedroom. Bear in mind, though, that these nights were not in succession!

This is a common scene in marriages. Men and women have different sex drives and different sexual needs. Men usually desire sex more frequently than women do. Psychologist and marriage coach Willard F. Harley, Jr. lists the top five needs of men and women in his best selling book, *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-proof Marriage,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell Co., 2001, pp.182-184). The top five needs of men, in order of priority, are...

- sexual fulfilment
- recreational companionship
- physical attractiveness
- domestic support
- admiration

The top five needs of women are:

- affection
 - conversation
 - honesty and openness
 - financial support
 - family commitment
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Notice that sexual fulfilment is man's number one need, but it is not even on the list for women. Most men have a continuing appetite for sex. Though most women have a sexual appetite, it is usually not as strong. If a wife has a long, hard day, the last thing she feels like doing is having sex. If a man has a long, hard day, he may *need* to have sex to relive some tension! In this area and countless others, marriage partners must adjust to each other. Considering only one's own desires and needs makes these adjustments impossible, and leads to serious marital problems and often divorce. Attitudes other than selfishness are just as dangerous: indifference, emotional withdrawal, lack of consideration, failure to communicate, bitterness, impatience and so many more. These "little foxes" (2:15) can do great damage to marriages.

Every couple experiences problems in their marriage — even kings and queens! In fact, any time there is more than one person, problems will arise. Some people even have trouble living with themselves! The honeymoon is over when the problems start, and here in the present Scripture, we find Solomon and the Shulamite in the *post-honeymoon* of their marriage. This is, *The Adjustments Necessary in Marriage: A Picture of Overcoming Selfishness, Indifference, Withdrawal, and Separation*, Song of Songs 5:2-6:13.

- I. The wife's rejection of her husband: a picture of indifference and withdrawal (vv. 5:2-6:1).
- II. The wife's reunion with her husband: a picture of marital reconciliation (vv. 6:2-13).

I. *Song of Solomon 06:01 The Wife Convinced her Friends to Help Find her Husband*

The friends asked the Shulamite where she thought Solomon might be. They also sought to encourage her by again calling her the *fairest* or *most beautiful of women*. Her faithful love for her husband only added to her beauty. "Which way did your husband go?" they asked. They needed to know the direction he was headed when he left her. But, unfortunately, he was already gone and out of sight when she opened the door.

Knowing her husband as she did, the Shulamite suspected where he might be (v. 2). Solomon loved nature and loved his gardens (Eccl 2:5). His wife knew where he went when he was troubled, so she suggested that she and her friends search for him there.

Thought 1. There are some very important lessons in this passage for husbands and wives. Give special attention to these seven:

- (1) Every marriage has conflicts. Occasionally, an older couple will look back and say, "We have never had a fight." One pastor joked that they are either lying or are senile and just cannot remember! The truth is that time has a wonderful way of diminishing the bad times and enhancing the good. As we grow older, fond memories seem to erase unpleasant ones.

Problems and conflicts arise, especially in the early years of marriage as two people struggle to adjust to each other. Some differences are small and aggravating, while

others are major and very disturbing. Three basic steps are needed to resolve most of the conflicts that arise in marriage:

- (a) *Communication*: couples should discuss their differences and their preferences. An atmosphere of openness in talking about problems is one of the most valuable assets a marriage can have, but it is one of the most damaging liabilities if it is missing.

=> Spouses should communicate honestly with each other:

Eph 4:25 *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body.*

=> Spouses should communicate lovingly with each other:.

Eph 4:15a *Instead, speaking the truth in love.*

=> Spouses should communicate constructively with each other:

Eph 4:29 *“Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word, nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth.”*

- (b) *Consideration*: spouses must overcome selfishness and indifference and be considerate of each other’s feelings and desires. Notice what the Scripture says regarding this:

Rom 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*

1 Cor 13:5 *It [Love] is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.*

Eph 5:21 *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

1 Pet 3:5-7 *For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

- (c) *Compromise*: husbands and wives must yield to each other and work out solutions to their difference. There must be an element of *give and take* in any marriage in order for a couple to live happily and peace fully. Scripture admonishes us to do what is necessary to live peacefully:

Rom 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Rom 14:19 *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*

1 Pet 3:8-11 *Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

- (2) The sexual relationship often becomes an area of conflict in marriage. Sometimes conflicts arise because of different schedules or fatigue, as discussed in the commentary. (See Introduction to 5:2-6:13; also see 5:2-4a.) Sometimes sex is strained because of other problems in the marriage, as was probably true in Solomon's case. In addition, a wife should never use sex as a weapon or as a source of manipulation.

The most common source of sexual conflict is the different sexual appetites of men and women. Author and marriage conference speaker Daniel Akin writes, "It is tragic that in many marriages the bedroom becomes a war zone and a battlefield because wives are convinced their husbands always want sex and husbands are convinced their wives like to say no as often as possible." (Daniel Akin. *God on Sex: The Creator's Ideas About Love, Intimacy and Marriage*, p. 173.) Generally speaking, this is a physiological difference between men and women. Women do not understand how men can want sex all the time, and men do not understand how women cannot! Just as other problems affect the sexual aspect of marriage, sexual problems also affect the other areas of marriage. Husbands feel frustrated and rejected. Wives feel unloved and used.

How can spouses reach a mutually-satisfying solution to this problem? It is a conflict not easily resolved. Communication, consideration and compromise are the necessary tools in this area as well.

Many couples never talk about the subject of sex, which can be a huge mistake. Husbands and wives must communicate about their sexual needs and desires. There are many ways to let a spouse know that you desire to make love. Many wives devise special means of telling their husbands they are *in the mood*. This is a sensitive area for both men and women, and playful ways of talking about it are usually more comfortable than blunt discussions. Sometimes, however, the problem reaches a very serious level, and it must be approached in a serious way.

Husbands and wives should also communicate about their sexual likes and dislikes. They should tell one another what they enjoy, and let one another know when something is pleasurable or satisfying. This is appreciated by loving spouses who desire to please each other.

A wife who loves her husband will be considerate of his sexual needs. At the same time, a husband who loves his wife will be considerate of her, and will not be demanding. This is the mutual submission Paul speaks of in Eph 5:21. Scripture addresses the issue directly in 1 Cor 7 (this was a problem in Paul's day as well):

1 Cor 7:3-5 *The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Eph 5:21 *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

"Do not deprive each other" is the command of Scripture. Unfortunately, Scripture is not specific about what is considered deprivation. This is why, as in many marriage areas, compromise is necessary by each partner. As couples grow in their marriage, they will grow in their knowledge and understanding of each other. They will — if they are truly placing each other first — settle into a sexual lifestyle that is mutually satisfying. The key is mutual submission and consideration, not one partner making all of the adjustments. The marriage relationship is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride — the church:

Eph 5:31-32 *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

Now grasp this very important principle:

1 John 4:19 *We love because he first loved us.*

Why do Christians serve and submit to Christ? Because He "loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). Christ demonstrated His love for His bride by loving her *first*, by sacrificing Himself for her and serving her. He met her greatest needs. A husband who follows Christ's example by serving his wife and meeting her needs first, will have a wife who is willing and delighted to meet his reasonable sexual needs.

- (3) Sexual rejection deeply damages a marriage, sometimes irreparably. Wives must understand the fragile ego of their husbands in this area. The man craves, above all else, respect and admiration. This is how God designed him, just as He programmed the woman to crave affection. Rejecting a man sexually is the greatest blow possible to his ego. Just as women need to be reassured by their husbands that they are beautiful, so men need to be reassured that they satisfy their wives and that their wives desire them sexually.

- (4) Sometimes it is best to say nothing and walk away. When Solomon sensed the irritation in his wife's voice, he did not escalate the situation by arguing with her. He quietly walked away. Whatever his reasons for coming may have been, he did the right thing by not responding in the wrong way. When a situation is tense and becoming more heated, the best thing couples can do is to put some distance between themselves, calm their emotions, and let the Holy Spirit do His work. They must not allow themselves to sin by saying hurtful, destructive words in anger (Eph 4:26a). How long should they stay away from each other? Never past bedtime (Eph 4:26b). This is the scriptural deadline for resolving conflicts.
- (5) When a husband or wife is hurt or angry at his or her spouse, it is wise to make a list of all the things you love about him/her. This is what the Shulamite did verbally, and it was very effective.
- (6) When a husband or wife is wrong, he or she must admit it, ask forgiveness and seek reconciliation.
- (7) When a husband or wife asks forgiveness, the spouse should grant it freely and fully. This means that the spouse does not hold the offense against him or her and forfeits the right to ever bring it up again.

Mark 3:25 *"If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand."*

Eph 4:25-32 *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word, nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Col 3:12-14 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Heb 12:25 *See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?*

Thought 2. Several valuable lessons for the bride of Christ may also be found in this passage:

- (1) just as Solomon desired intimacy with his wife, so the LORD Jesus desires an intimate relationship with His bride (5:2). A strikingly similar scene is found in Rev 3:20:

Rev 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

We often apply this verse evangelistically, as if Jesus is standing at the door of the unsaved sinner's heart, desiring to enter. While this is an effective application, it is not the true interpretation of the verse. Jesus was speaking to the church at Laodicea that had become lukewarm in their service to Him:

Rev 3:14-16 *To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation" I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

Their lukewarm service was the fruit of their lukewarm hearts toward Jesus:

Rev 3:17 *You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*

They had forgotten what they truly were, what their spiritual condition was without Jesus. They were blind to the truth. The Shulamite enjoyed a life of wealth only because she was the wife of the king. Without him, she would still have been labouring in the sun-scorched vineyards. As true believers, we are spiritually rich only because of our relationship with Jesus. Without Him, we would still be perishing from the wages or debt of sin.

The LORD desired fellowship with the Laodiceans, but they would not open the door of their hearts and grant Him entrance into their lives. Likewise, many believers deny the LORD and reject the intimate fellowship He desires with them. He stands at the door of their lives, and like the Shulamite and the Laodiceans, they do not let Him come in.

- (2) Just as the Shulamite made excuses, too often we make excuses for not abiding in Christ (5:3). The young woman's excuses were feeble ones: she had already taken off her robe and washed her feet. Sadly, many of our excuses for rejecting intimate fellowship with Jesus are no better: we are either too busy or too tired to make time for Him.
- (3) Just as Solomon walked away when rejected by his wife, so the LORD will quietly leave us to our desires (5:4-6). The LORD will not beg for our attention. He will not demand or force entrance into our lives. He will silently thrust His myrrh-anointed hand through the hole of our hearts, and then walk away. Remember that myrrh is a symbol of suffering and death. Our LORD's precious hand is scarred with the reminder of His suffering at Calvary and the great price that He paid in order to have

a relationship with us. He leaves at the door of our hearts a fragrant reminder that He loves us, and that He suffered, bled and died for us.

- (4) Just as the Shulamite placed herself in danger when she left the king's palace, so we place ourselves in danger when we are out of fellowship with Christ (v. 7). The safest place we can be is in the centre of God's will. Our security is found in submissive, obedient fellowship with the LORD. When the young woman selfishly rejected her husband, she placed herself in harm's way.

Notice what the Saviour said to the Laodiceans who would not open the door to Him:

Rev 3:19 *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*

When our hearts become lukewarm toward the Saviour and we break fellowship with Him, the LORD will correct us. Sometimes the Father disciplines us by allowing us to suffer the consequences of our actions. This is what happened to the young woman. When she left the palace — her place of safety — and ran into the streets, she suffered the consequences of her actions. How much better she would have been had she only opened the door and remained in fellowship with her husband.

- (5) Just as the Shulamite repented, so we should repent when we reject fellowship with the LORD (vv. 4-8). Notice the counsel of Jesus to the church at Laodicea:

Rev 3:18-19b *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see....I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*

When Solomon's wife opened her eyes, she saw what was truly important in her life. She earnestly repented and sought to be reconciled to her husband. When the Holy Spirit pricks our hearts and convicts us of breaking fellowship with the LORD, we should repent and seek to be reconciled to Him.

Thought 3. In the Shulamite's description of her beloved (5:10-16), a beautiful picture of the LORD emerges:

- (1) He is radiant: glowing and bright (v. 10a). Think of what Peter, James and John witnessed on the Mount of Transfiguration and John's description of the glorified LORD:

Mat 17:2 *There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.*

Rev 1:14-16 *The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

- (2) He is the fairest of 10,000 (v. 10b).

- (3) His head is purest gold (v. 11). He is King of kings, and LORD of lords:

Rev 19:12, 16 *His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself....On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

- (4) His eyes are gentle and peaceful (v. 12):

Mat 11:28-29 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

Mat 12:19-20 *"He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory."*

Isa 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

- (5) His beard gave off the fragrance of love when it was plucked at Calvary (v. 13):

Iss. 50:6 *"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting."*

- (6) His hands are strong and powerful (v. 14):

Mat 9:18 *While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live."*

Mat 14:31 *Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*

John 10:28 *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."*

- (7) He is strong and majestic (v. 16).

- (8) His words are sweet (v. 16a):

Luke 4:22 *All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

John 6:68 *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

Psa 115:1-3 *Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.*

- (9) He is altogether lovely (v. 16a).

- (10) He is our friend (v. 16c):

Mat 11:9 *"Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet."*

John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:15 “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

II. Song of Solomon 06:02–07 The Wife’s Reunion with her Husband: A Picture of Marital Reconciliation

What a beautiful picture Scripture paints for us in verse three! No longer is the Shulamite estranged from her beloved. No longer is she fearful of the consequences of rejecting him. No longer is she plagued by guilt and shame because of what she had done. She had reconciled with her husband and was again secure in their love.

1. The wife found her husband (vv. 2-3).

Scripture does not tell us exactly how Solomon and the Shulamite reconciled, but simply reveals that they are united again (v. 3). As in 2:15-16, Solomon is discreet in his writing, not divulging the details of their problems, only that they resolved them. Between verses two and three, the couple worked everything out.

Solomon’s wife expressed her deep devotion to her husband as well as her renewed security in his love (v. 3). This is exactly what she had said years before (note, 2:16). She was declaring that what was all right between her and her beloved.

2. The husband assured his wife of his continued love by praising her beauty (w.4-7).

Solomon compared his wife to two great cities of his kingdom: Tirzah and Jerusalem (v. 4). Tirzah was a Canaanite city in Samaria:

⇒ Joshua conquered and claimed it for Israel (Josh 12:24).

⇒ It served as the capital of the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam and his successors until Omri moved the capital to Samaria (1 Kng 16:23-24).

⇒ It was a rural, agricultural city situated in the hills of Galilee. Keep in mind that the Shulamite was a country girl. Solomon’s reference to Tirzah may have been intended to transport his wife back to her youth, the time when they first met and fell in love.

The name *Tirzah* comes from a Hebrew word meaning *pleasing*. Solomon could have been using a play on words, expressing to his wife that he was well-pleased with her.

Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish world and the urban centre of all affairs.

Solomon was saying that his queen was beautiful and stately in her current role in the city. The Jews adored the beauty and grandeur of their beloved capital, Jerusalem.

David had praised it in the *Psalms*:

Psa 48:2 *Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.*

Psa 87:3 *Glorious things are said of you, city of God.*

After Jerusalem's capture by Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah recalled its beauty:

Lam 2:15 *All who pass your way clap their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at Daughter Jerusalem: "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?"*

The two settings, Tirzah and Jerusalem, and what they represent — the past and the present, the country and the city, the natural and the sophisticated — are a testimony that the Shulamite was still as beautiful as she was when she dwelled in the country and worked in the vineyard. Her beauty had not faded with the passing of years.

The word *army* is not in the Hebrew text but was added by translators for clarity, as "clearly banners are associated with a marching army." (Paige Patterson. *Song of Solomon*, p. 96.) What did Solomon mean by saying his wife was as "terrible as an army with banners"? Perhaps he was saying that her beauty was so striking and awe-inspiring that her appearance actually intimidated people. When linked with the statement immediately following (v. 5), the king was obviously talking about his wife's power over him: she was so beautiful that she intimidated him, like a marching army carrying its banners into war. He even asked her to turn her eyes away from him (v. 5a). Yet he was not speaking of their beauty but of their power. He said that they overcame (overpowered) him. Perhaps he also saw the hurt in her eyes from his taking other wives, or her sorrow for rejecting him, and it was more than he could bear.

Solomon continued to offer the same praise he used to describe her on their wedding night (v. 5b-7). Her hair reminded him of a flock of black goats grazing on a hillside. Her teeth were as perfect and white as a flock of freshly-bathed sheep. Her cheeks were like pomegranate halves (see outline and note, 4:1-3). She was still as beautiful to Solomon as she was on the day they wed. His feelings for her had obviously not changed. ■