

"I CHOOSE TO TRUST YOU"

DEVELOPING AND DEEPENING YOUR LOVER'S SECURITY

I love weddings. I love going to weddings! I love performing them even more. I love staring into the faces of the nervous couple as they quiver with excitement in a dreamlike moment they can hardly believe has come – where all of their wonders and imaginations of childhood and young adulthood have finally materialized. The most anticipated part is to watch their faces when I say, *"I now pronounce you man and wife."*

I love watching the face of the groom while everyone else is staring at the Bride, as she walks down the aisle. I love watching the strong and proud dad struggle to get the words out that he's so carefully rehearsed, "Her mother and I." I love having the best seat in the house to watch a man and a woman make a covenant promise, a vow to one another in the sight of God and witnesses of love, sacrifice, devotion, affection, protection, care, and forgiveness, *"in sickness and in health, in poverty or in riches, till death do us part."*

I love watching the couple drive away, whispering a silent prayer for them that they will put more work into their relationship than they did the ceremony. See, when the flowers have died, the candles are put away, the dress is vacuum sealed, the tuxes are returned, and the photo album is processed, the real work of marriage begins. My prayer for them is that all of the promises they made when they publicly confessed allegiance to one another will endure when that commitment is tested, by monthly bills, demands on their time, endless piles of laundry, relationships to in-laws, decisions about parenting, and even preferences about things like toothpaste tubes, and home decorations.

I stress to couples in premarital counseling that nothing about them changes when they walk down an aisle and say a few words and exchange jewelry, except the binding accountability of an agreement before a holy God of a commitment that promises to hold fast, even when the bells and whistles fade.

I have lived and served in ministry long enough now to see the difference between the couples who thrive and those who fall apart. Candidly, it all comes down to one thing. All relationships however, romantic or otherwise, require one essential component in order to be healthy and strong; without it, no relationship can go on with hope or joy—it is trust. Very simply, strong relationships are those that are developed and maintained by trust. Weak or dead relationships are those where trust has not been developed or maintained, or worse still has been broken and not repaired.

No wonder then, when we study the Song of Solomon, which is God's perfect design for men and women in righteous romantic relationships, we see the matter of trust as an essential component, developed and deepened early on. From **1:5-2:2**, these lovers

grapple with the stability and security of their relationship, so that when it is tested, they can endure. Trust is build over a lifetime and can be lost in moments.

- What is the importance of trust in a relationship, especially a romantic one?
- How does trust provide stability and security in a relationship?

To TRUST means you believe the **BEST** about someone and therefore you **PRESS** into that relationship with **HOPE, COMMITMENT, AND DISCERNMENT.**

- What does it mean to believe the best about someone? How is that an act of love according to 1 **Corinthians 13:7**? 1 **Corinthians 4:1-5**?
- How does trust give you hope as you press into the relationship?
- How does trust inspire you to greater commitment in the relationship?
- Why is discernment important in a relationship built on trust?
- What happens to hope, commitment, and discernment if trust is broken in the relationship? **No motivation, commitment is harder, discernment becomes suspicion.**

Realizing the importance of trust in any relationship, especially a romantic one, *this text models 4 ways that Christian couples can develop and deepen trust, making their relationships secure and stable, come what may.* By contrast, remove any one of them and the relationship is in serious danger.

1. **TOTAL HONESTY (1:5-6)!**

- A. In v. 5, what does the Shulamite say about herself and to whom is she speaking?
- B. What does this indicate about her view of her own worthiness before the king?

- C. Why is she telling them?
- D. What kinds of tents are **"the tents of Kedar"** and how is it an analogy of her looks?

- E. How do the **"tents of Kedar"** compare to **"the curtains of Solomon"**? How is that further explain the view she has of herself?

- F. What kinds of **"stares"** does she push against in v. 6 and why?

- G. What does **"swarthy"** mean and why is it so undesirable?

- H. What is the reason that she gives for unattractive personal appearance?

- I. Notice the following word plays in the original Hebrew and how they further accent her concerns:
 - 1) **"Do not stare at me...for the sun has burned me."**
 - 2) **"...the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me."**
 - 3) **"They made me caretakers of the vineyard, but I have not taken care of my own vineyard."**

- J. What words would you use to describe her feelings about herself?

- K. What is the importance of disclosing these vulnerabilities to Solomon?

- L. What does she hope to gain from these women and eventually Solomon by sharing these details?

- M. How much should a couple share with each other as they head towards marriage in their relationship and why?

- N. How important is total honesty to trust?

- O. Why is it important to maintain this commitment in marriage?
- P. What insight does this passage give to a man in particular about the woman in his life?

- Q. What are small, subtle ways that trust can erode a relationship in this matter of honesty?

- R. What does this say about the fragile nature of trust?

- S. How would this principle apply to a marriage partner that refuses to hear certain vulnerabilities because of something past or present by saying, "I don't want to know..."

2. OPEN ACCOUNTABILITY (1:7A)

- A. According to v. 7, what work will Solomon be doing? What does this tell us about him at this time of his life?

- B. What are the first two questions the Shulamite asks her man? What, in effect, does she want to know?

- C. Given the fact that she does not know the answer to these questions, what does this imply about their relationship?

- D. What do shepherds do at "noon" and why is she interested in knowing?

- E. How does she address Solomon in v. 7 so that he does not misunderstand her intentions for asking this?

- F. What is the difference between a desire for accountability and suspicion?

- G. Why is accountability so vitally tied to trust?

- H. What kind of accountability works best and what is not helpful?

- I. What do the following verses teach about Biblical accountability?
 - 1) **Genesis 3:7-13**
 - 2) **Job 24:15**
 - 3) **Proverbs 7:6-9**
 - 4) **Hebrews 3:13**
 - 5) **Hebrews 10:24-25**

- J. What are some practical ways that a couple can hold one another accountable in their relationship?

- K. Are there ever any circumstances in which a couple should not have total open accountability with each other?

3. **RADICAL PURITY (1:7B)**

- A. Connected to following Solomon while he is away, the Shulamite clarifies something for her groom about what kind of woman she is and what her intentions are (or are not) – what is she trying to say?

- B. What kind of woman **"veils herself"** and lingers beside hard working men who are away from home and in need of rest (**Genesis 38:14-18**)?

- C. How much have times changed since then?

- D. What is this saying about her desire to protect Solomon?

- E. How is it related to her feelings of inadequacy and inferiority expressed back in **1:5-6**?

- F. What is this saying about how far she will and will NOT go in order to be close to him? How is this a statement about purity? *She wants him to be satisfied only in her, have eyes only for her, especially knowing that he could have anyone he wanted, and that there'd be more*

than enough women throwing themselves at him, but she is not willing to be impure with him in order to achieve that!

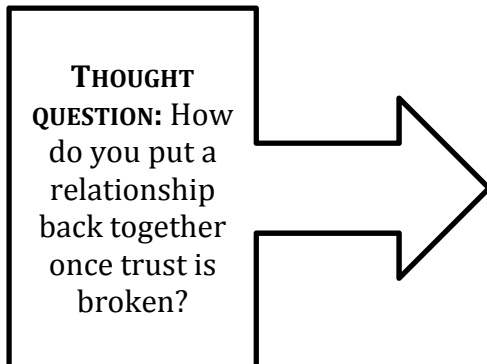
- G. What is the word play in the Hebrew that is playful, flirty, but pure in this following statement? **“For why should I be like one who veils herself?”**
- H. How does impurity *between* a couple injure their trust *before* marriage?
- I. How does impurity involving someone *outside* the marriage devastate trust *within* a marriage?
- J. How hard is it to rebuild trust after purity has been compromised in a romantic relationship?

4. EXCLUSIVE INTIMACY!

- A. How is Solomon’s reply (v. 8) both playful (to match her playful desires), and yet reassuring (to quell her fears)? He tells her that she is welcome to follow him down the path where it is easy to find him; he’s being a bit playful and flirty, almost a “hide and seek, I’ll be waiting for you and only you” game – not evasive; inviting. She is free to drop in on him at any time, but when she does, she’d better be prepared for some exclusive romance.
- B. What are the **“tents of the shepherds”** and who will be there at **“noon”** when she plans to meet him?
- C. What is the comparison that he makes in v. 9 in describing the effect she has on him, to remove any question of his loyal affection and desire for her only?
- D. What is a **“mare”** and what does it do to stallions, which pull the chariots of Pharaoh?
- E. What, according to v. 10 is captivating about her to him, and why does he choose these features to adore? He’s *staying above the neck... wise choice!*
- F. How to the daughters of Jerusalem in v. 11 chime in and what does their statement affirm about the Shulamite and the way they view her?

- G. How does that allay her fears from v. 5 and how is it consistent with Solomon's praise of her?
- H. Now no longer distracted by those fears, in v. 12 the Shulamite references an encounter with Solomon, perhaps a date night—what experience is she beginning to enjoy, now that trust is in place?
- I. What is the role of women's perfume, in the ancient world and today? How is different than fragrances for men (despite what AXE commercials try to say)? *It is meant to cover and invite—smell it, drawn to it...*
- J. According to v. 13, where is her perfume located? What would she rather have resting there all night instead?
- K. What language does she use to describe Solomon in v. 14 and how is it different than his descriptions?
- L. Where is "Engedi" and how is it like her man?
- M. What is his response in v. 15 and to what does he liken her "eyes"?
- N. In response, according to v. 16-17, how does she counter and what is the word play off of his affection?
- O. What scene does she envision in v. 17 and how does she hope it materializes?
- P. How important is private time in a relationship and how does it inspire and build trust?
- Q. What does their playful, sincere, affectionate interchange say about the level of their intimacy?

- R. What does it say about the amount of time they spend together which in turn builds trust? Relationships are the key to trust! If you don't understand the situation, you KNOW the person!
- S. How is intimacy a demonstration and builder of trust? You know me at the deepest level!
- T. How does a lack of intimacy weaken trust? Why wont you give yourself to me fully?
- U. How is her statement in 2:1 a total turn-around from her fear-laden, self-doubting concerns of chapter 1? What has happened to those fears of inadequacy and why?
- V. Is this pride or vanity? Why or why not?
- W. In 2:2 how does Solomon reiterate her understanding and what does this say about the ongoing need for affirmation in a relationship? How does that reinforce trust?



TAKING IT HOME AND MAKING IT REAL:

Trust is a choice – it’s a daily commitment to believe the best about your partner and press into that relationship with hope, commitment, and discernment. Given the fact that the health of your marriage depends directly on the depth of your trust, how are you doing?

- A. If you are married, rate yourself; then ask your spouse to rate your trust levels in terms of quality and frequency and then sit together to discuss a plan for change:

IN HONESTY									
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
No Secrets				Guarded Secrets					Dishonest
IN ACCOUNTABILITY									
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Self-accountable				Accountable when asked					Evasive
IN PURITY									
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Radically Pure				Unguarded					Impure
IN INTIMACY									
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Passionately giving				Indifferent					Withholding affection

- B. Discussion question: what is wrong with the following excuses not to trust and how does what you learned in Song of Solomon answer them?
 - 1) *“I can never trust again because I have been hurt to badly!”*
 - 2) *“It’s not until you _____ that I will be able to trust you!”*
 - 3) *“Trusting is impossible for me. I cannot be hurt anymore!”*
 - 4) *“I’m not sure how to trust you – I have had my trust broken one too many times!”*
- C. If you are not married, it’s important to realize that you don’t have to be married or dating in order to be trustworthy and to trust. What are some ways that you can build secure relationships in a non-romantic context? How can you use trust and trustworthiness as a gauge in anyone that you might consider as a mate?
- D. Start a regular date night with your partner, if you do not already have one in place. Use that time to discuss this lesson and in particular, where you both could grow. Use this time to share anything that you have not, upon which the

strength of your relationship depends. In some cases, you might have something rather serious and hard to share and hear – if so, it might be wise to seek out one of our pastors or Elders for counsel.