

Finding God-Glorifying Purpose in Valentine's Day

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The test that the Bible-believer uses for whether he or she should participate in or celebrate any holiday is whether or not God might be glorified in it. **“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it”** (Romans 14:5-6). Christmas provides an opportunity to focus on God becoming Man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Good Friday and Easter provide an opportunity to focus on the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Halloween provides nothing of the sort in my opinion. Some have tried church sponsored trunk or treat, but it's hard to see what the celebration is for the glory of God in that. Valentine's Day is, like many other holidays, connected to certain ancient mythology and/or false religion, but I believe it passes the test insofar as it is a fact that our **“God is love”** (1 John 4:16), and He endorses love within the context of marriage, which the Lord defines as the covenant union of one man and one woman. **“And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.””**(Matthew 19:4-6).

One of the classic instructive New Testament teachings on the subject of love, both marital and spiritual, was written by the Apostle Paul. **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own**

bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:22-23).

It is within the framework of this New Testament revelation that we can understand the Old Testament Book of the Song of Solomon. We know that all of Scripture points to Jesus, for the Savior Himself said it. “**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me**” (John 5:39). The Song of Solomon sets forth a beautiful divinely inspired expression of the romantic love that ought to exist in courtship, and then, between a man and his wife throughout the length of their marriage, which ought to last a lifetime. This special actual love story between Solomon and his Shulamite bride is an exceptional example from which we may learn, notwithstanding Solomon’s sinful indulgence in polygamy and unfaithfulness in other times (Song of Solomon 1:1-4; 1 Kings 11:1-3). All of this, in turn, finds its spiritual counterpart in the way in which Christ loves His bride, the church. This is the second and greater application, and the reason to which we are indebted to the Lord concerning the giving of this song as part of Scripture by God. With this understanding, and to these ends, let us look at some selected verses in the Song of Solomon.

“**Rightly do they love you**” (Song of Solomon 1:4). Solomon was known to be a ‘catch’ by the ladies of Jerusalem. He was of good report, and so the man of God ought to have a good report. The Shulamite was not going to miss her chance because of misplaced humility or low self-esteem. Rather, she sent Solomon signals that she was both available and interested. The spiritual application of this text is concerned with Jesus Christ, the subject of all of Scripture. “**Rightly do they love you.**” We love Jesus because we desire and are pleased to be in right relationship with God. “**‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment**” (Matthew 22:37-38). We love Jesus because He has taken the initiative

necessary to save our souls, thus ensuring that it is possible to be in and remain in right relationship with God. **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). In short, **“We love Him because He first loved us”** (1 John 4:19). **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). We love Jesus because He is the greatest friend we could ever know, and perfectly faithful. Our earthly friends may let us down, **“But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”** (Proverbs 18:24). Of Jesus it may well be said, **“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity”** (Proverbs 17:17). Of the faithful Christian who responds in prayer, praise, and adoration, it is well said, **“Rightly do they love you.”** Let’s face it. There have been times when the world has let you down. There have been times in your life when you have been betrayed. There have been times in your life when you felt misunderstood and rejected by people that you thought truly cared. Don’t hold that to their account, knowing that you too have done the same. Jesus has taken all their faults, and yours and mine which are many more, upon Himself at the cross. By the simple act of trust, receive Christ’s love, repenting of your sins, and find the ever elusive lasting forgiveness. Therefore say to Jesus that these things are finished, as far as you are concerned. We rejoice with the faithful believers today, and add our names to the number of those of whom it is well said, **“Rightly do they love you.”**

“He brought me to the banqueting house, And his banner over me was love” (Song of Solomon 2:4). Solomon was pleased to spend time with his Shulamite bride. A lot is made of quality time, but not enough is made of quantity time. At the banqueting house, one would enjoy the company of another for a long period of time, often for a period of days. During this time, the Shulamite attests, Solomon was protective of her, and lovingly lavished her with love. I don’t think it a stretch to suppose that he was very complimentary toward her in the company of the guests. Gentlemen, learn that whether in courtship or marriage, you ought to be protective and loving towards your lady, that she may feel that your banner over her is love. Be careful not to be overbearing, lest she resent you, and that was not the case here, judging by her response. In this, you

will be imitating the love of Christ, who is constant in His love towards all His children.

“The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes Leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills” (Song of Solomon 2:8). One of the things that makes each of us distinct is our voice. When we are in love, we love that romantic voice, and the way our beloved speaks. We also get excited when we are getting together to see one another again, after a time apart, whether in courtship between dates or in marriage after a long day or night at work. These folks couldn't wait to see one another. Spiritually speaking, we can apply this to prayer. God cannot wait to hear your voice, and (I hope) you cannot wait to hear His, and enjoy His presence. We look forward to coming to church on Sunday for the same reason. We get to hear His voice through the preaching of the Word of God, and look forward to partaking at His table.

“The little foxes that spoil the vines” (Song of Solomon 2:15). This verse is a statement of fact about nature, and is here applied to the young maidens of Shulem, but it is also illustrative of a broader principle. It is not the great lion or the fierce bear that spoil the vines. Rather, it is **“the little foxes.”** The brothers of the Shulamite bride affirm that the foxes must be caught in order to preserve the grapes on **“the vines.”** Let us apply. It is the little things in life that can nag at us and rob us of our peace. We can get irritated at small things, insignificant things, and pet peeves. This can spoil our mood and negatively impact our relationships. Especially our marriages. Generally, those we live with will bear the brunt of our spoiled vines. And how can we pray in a peaceful close communion with God while **“the little foxes”** are allowed to nag at our vines? Let us resolve today to **“catch us the foxes”** before we continue on with our day. May the **“little foxes”** of life be handled if they have to be, but without profitless dwelling upon them and the resulting loss of peace. May our vines be vines of joy throughout the day, and may our countenance, homes, and everywhere we go be characterized by **“the fruit of the spirit”**, **“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”** (Galatians 5:22-23). **“Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes”** (Song of Solomon 2:15).

“**My beloved is mine, and I am his**” (Song of Solomon 2:16). These words were spoken by Solomon’s Shulamite bride. This is a beautiful statement of what the attitude of husband and wife in marriage ought to be. We read elsewhere in Scripture, “**The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does**” (1 Corinthians 7:4). And again, “**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord**” (Ephesians 5:22). And, “**let each one of you in particular love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband**” (Ephesians 5:33). Sadly, this attitude of mutual ownership and oneness is absent in many marriages, and the marriages suffer on account of this. As long as men are asserting their total authority, and women are rebelling against the biblical concept of submission, there will be problems. There is further clear application of our text relating to Christ. Our text can be applied to the relationship that exists between Christ and His bride, which is His church (**Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8**). We make Christ our own through faith in Him unto salvation. And at that time, we are also made His in a special sense. We submit to His divine ownership. One may take umbrage at this statement of being owned by another. But when we consider that we are either owned by God our Creator who gives us what is in our best interest, or by sin which gives us tragedy and leads to the destruction of our souls, we see it more clearly. The individual at peace with God is able to say with joy and confidence, “**My beloved is mine, and I am his.**”

“**You are all fair, my love, And there is no spot in you**” (Song of Solomon 4:7). Here is a beautiful text which speaks of romance. There is no shortage of such texts in the Song of Solomon, the story of Solomon and his Shulamite bride. Consider how Solomon praises his bride. “**You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you.**” Now his bride was surely not perfect, but love overlooks flaws. It focuses on the beauty of the one loved, in an exclusive sense. We all know the players, men who charm women with a motive to satisfy self. And the gold-diggers, women who seek a man with money or earning power, but absent genuine love. Solomon was something of a player, for he had many wives and concubines. But this one excelled them all in gaining his romantic affections, and the inspired Word of God records this to be so. Do you

tend to see and magnify the flaws of your spouse, or do you rightly dwell on the beauty of your spouse inside and out? If you do the latter, you will be on your way to a happy and lasting marriage. Let us now consider the spiritual application. How can it be said that the church believers are “all fair” with “no spot?” Does not the Lord say in Isaiah, “But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6)? In our natural sinful state, there is nothing desirable about us, nor do we desire the Savior in our default condition of sin and enmity against God. But God through Christ has clothed us with His righteousness. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our Beloved has clothed us with garments of His perfect righteousness. He now sees those who believe, even you, as the special object of His affection. Your flaws, your sins, have been paid for in full at Calvary. As you go through this world, you will still sin, but you can confess that sin and daily seek restored relationship with God through Christ who made the reconciliation by His spotless blood. But your position with God will never change. Your sins shall be forgiven and forgotten, and even now your Savior sees you now through the eyes of love. “You are all fair, my love, And there is no spot in you.”