**Song of Songs 8:8-14**

**Brothers of Bride**

**8** We have a little sister and she has no breasts.

 What shall we do for our sister for the day on which

 she is spoken for?

**9**  If she is a wall,

 we shall build on her a battlement of silver,

 But if she is a door,

 we shall enclose her with planks of cedar.

**Bride (to all)**

**10** I was a wall and my breasts were like towers.

 Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.

**11** A vineyard belonged to Solomon at Baal Hamon.

 He gave the vineyard to caretakers; each one was to bring

 a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit.

**12** My own vineyard belongs to me.

**Bride to King**

 The thousand re for you, O Solomon, and two hundred for the caretakers of the fruit.

**King to Bride**

**13** O you who dwell in the gardens, (my) companions are listening for your

 voice. Let me hear it.

**Bride to King**

**14** Hurry, my beloved, and be gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

 At least we know what the characteristics of true love are from Song of Songs 8:5-7. Where can we find a better blueprint for an ideal Christian marriage in this Song? Thus, we would like to know how this couple found themselves in the most meaningful relationship of their lives. How did they prepare themselves for it? And how did they meet? By finding answers to such questions, we will gain some insights to ponder and to utilize practically for our own Christian marriage preparations.

**A Family That Cared For Shulamite**

 1. It’s great when someone loves us enough to really encourage us when we are doing something right. When no one else would care at all what we do, they are congratulating us when we do a few things right. Usually, that’s what our parents are all about, and sometimes, older brothers and sisters too. Indeed, they are trying the best they can to keep us running the right course.

2. When Shulamite was a young girl, she had a family that cared enough about her to discipline her and encourage her in the right direction. In her family, the older half-brothers took charge of encouraging and disciplining her, most likely due to the loss of her father at an early age. In 8:8-9, we see her older brothers had a strategic session when she was a young girl. They recognized that they had a responsibility for their little sister who was still in childhood not reaching her teens yet, “We have a little sister and she has no breasts.” (8:8a) They devised a simple but effective formula for her successful up-bringing (8:8b): If she is virtuous and firm against boys’ advances, they will reward her, trying to improve and cultivate more on the beauty of her character (8:9a); yet if she is as open as a door to such advances of boys, they would have to be stricter with her to prevent her from hurting herself for a possible marriage (8:9b). Shulamite was raised up in this combined environment of encouragement and discipline.

3. Now we can see how carefully her older brothers took time and energy to care for her future marriage. But how did she about herself for her own marriage preparation? Shulamite did her part as well. She wanted to be the right kind of person for her future husband when it came time for marriage. We see all this in her one brief proclamation: “I was a wall and my breasts were like towers.” (8:10a) Her brothers did not have to plank up a door in her life, rather she herself had chosen to be a wall to prevent herself from any boy’s advances. And finally, she grew up mentally and physically. As an impressive and awesome looking tower over the enemies, Shulamite’s breasts were impressive in the same way. Men looked at her, a good-looking woman with acknowledged respect, admiration, and awe. Her respect for herself pushed her hard to become a woman of a noble character that eventually brought the same respect and admiration from others. (Proverbs 31:10 & 28-31)

**A Woman of Noble Character Attracted Solomon**

1. Right after telling us that she has reached the age and maturity for marriage, Shulamite tells us, “Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.” (8:10b) To the eyes of Solomon (Shulamo: peace), Shulamite (Shulammi: peace) finds peace (Shalom)! It is like a righteous and God-fearing person Noah finds grace/favor in God’s eyes (Genesis 6:8)! For king Solomon, it was a first sight love for Shulamite. For Shulamite, she found her romance and the peace and wellbeing that comes from a perfectly blessed marriage relationship. And it sets the stage for the next verses to reveal when she found romance with Solomon.

2. At Baal-Hamon, Solomon has leased out his abundant vineyards to several caretakers. One of his vineyards was leased to Shulamite’s family. But her older brothers for some unknown reason to us made her work at Solomon’s vineyard instead! So there she was in a miserable situation. Yet she worked at the vineyard that belonged to king Solomon. While she was working one day under the hot scorching sun, king Solomon paid a visit to the very vineyard where Shulamite was working hard. King Solomon took notice of a particular, well cared for his leased vineyard, then of this young hard-working woman in there. Right at that moment, king Solomon was attracted to this dark-skinned, hard-working country girl! Indeed, Shulamite finds king Solomon’s peace in his first sight love for her.

3. In her thought, Shulamite would not even imagine finding a suitor for her while she alone worked hard under the scorching hot sun! Where in the world in this remote countryside, she could find her suitable husband! Her circumstances certainly did not make it likely. Yet even in these circumstances, her Creator-God who ultimately guides the paths of all His children would cause their paths to cross! Not only she and her mother, and older brothers did care about her future, but also her Creator-Father cared, too long before she and her family, or Solomon for that matter ever thought to care for her (1 Peter 5:7).

4. Caretaker’s normal practice was to labor on another’s land, promising to give the majority of the fruits to the owner with a percentage for himself. In this particular instance, the caretaker was responsible to render a thousand shekels to king Solomon in return for the wage of two hundred shekels. (8:11 & 12b) Then suddenly, she tells Solomon, “My own vineyard belongs to me.” (8:12a) In the previous scenes in 1:6 and 2:15, her own ‘vineyard’ means her own person. Here she once again emphasizes that she is under her totally free direction to do with herself as she pleases. Now what she is saying to king Solomon is, “I am your vineyard, my darling, and I am more than willing to render the entire thousand shekels of my worth to you as my owner; I give myself completely without any hesitations or reservations, withholding nothing of my trust, my thoughts, my care, and my love.” But she adds to her statement, “and two hundred for the caretakers of the fruit.” (8:12b) By saying so, she is asking king Solomon a favor that her keepers, that is, her older brothers deserve renters’ share of two hundred shekels of silver because they cared for his vineyard, that is, her person for king Solomon with discipline and encouragement! After her departure a while ago from her own family, she still wants their best interest provided by her husband, king Solomon. Still, she wants king Solomon to recognize her older brothers’ diligent efforts to help prepare her and protect her over many years for the king!

5. Although her older brothers may have unfairly placed her in the vineyard to work hard, she does not bear a grudge against them. Rather she willingly submitted her to their unfair authority over her. She persevered while submitting herself to their authority. It was an almost unbelievable scene to see her submission to the eyes of the 21st century men and women. Yet her Creator-Father rewarded her greatly for her willing submission. Here she found king’s peace in his sight in her miserable circumstances from their mistreatment. When she prospered under the wings of king Solomon, in trusting in the purpose of God-Father, she was free from the bitter anxiety of vengeance and free to love her older brothers in sincerity and gratitude.

6. Such a request from his loving wife makes king Solomon’s heart sing for excitement, “O you who dwell in the gardens, (my) companions are listening for your voice. Let me hear it.” (8:13) In 2:14, king Solomon already expressed his strong desire to get to know for his fiancée, his lover, wished to hear the gentle voice of the dove hidden from him, to learn of the hidden person of her heart. Now after more than two years of their romantic relationship, king Solomon still longs with the same intensity of courtship to grow in the knowledge of his fascinating wife.

7. Now we have come to her last words, “Hurry, my beloved, and be a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices” (8:14). Shortly before they were married, Shulamite had whispered the delicate request for king Solomon to take her as his bride and enjoy her perfumed breasts (2:17). Now even at the end of this Song in the maturity of their marriage, she longs with the intensity of courtship to make love to her beloved husband Solomon. Their joy with one another was continually overflowing and fulfilling the design of their Creator. King Solomon practiced so well as he instructed us in Proverbs 5:18-19, “Rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love.” So even after their second honeymoon in the countryside, here their last words remind us that the fresh romance of their courtship had continued in the fresh romance of their marriage relationship.

**Questions to Ponder with Prayers**

1.    What could be my track record regarding faithfulness and friendship in my life of other relationships?

2.    How can I prepare myself foremost for my future relationship and marriage?

3. If we want to start a Christian character build-up for my marriage preparation, what is the first thing I want to do?