



## 10 Marks of a Healthy Relationship

Scripture: Song of Solomon 1:9-2:7

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You don't have to destroy a relationship to lose it... sometimes it's slowly lost through neglect. While this couple appears to be dating, these principles still serve as a gracious mirror for marriage (and some, not all, even for healthy friendships), inviting us to notice where love may have drifted and to return to intentional care. And where we've fallen short, the gospel reminds us that Jesus meets us with grace, restores what's been neglected, and empowers us to love again with patience and faithfulness.

### 10 Marks of a Healthy Relationship

#### #1 You're attracted to them

Song of Solomon 1:9, He says: "I liken you, my darling, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariot horses."

- Stallions, not mares were used to pull chariots in antiquity.
- He is saying: she was as beautiful and sought after as if she were the only woman in a world full of men.

#### #2 You're putting in real effort

Song of Solomon 1:10-13, He says: "Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels. We will make you earrings of gold, studded with silver." He says: "While the king was at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance. My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts."

- Effort was shown in putting on some jewelry & perfume.
- A scent bag of Myrrh, hung with a thread, was a common practice. She was saying: He was constantly in her thoughts like this scent.
- A Date = nothing but an event between two mature people for encouragement and observation. There are no expectations. There are no escalations (don't touch, hold hands, kiss, or romantic talk).
  - Dating (While Single) = When you see the same person week after week. There are expectations and appropriate escalations, but now also likely also temptations to enjoy marital love prematurely.
  - Dating (While Married) = Intentionally pursuing your spouse with the same effort, attention, and affection you gave before marriage—now with covenant commitment and freedom to fully enjoy it.

#### #3 You're refreshed by them

Song of Solomon 1:14, She says: "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi."

- All other men, compared with him, were like the desert. He was an oasis to her.
- Do you feel built up, recharged, by the other, or drained by them?

#### #4 You're consistently affirmed

Song of Solomon 1:15-16a, He says: "How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves." She says: "How handsome you are, my beloved! Oh, how charming!..."

- He compliments not just her eyes but also her character. In these times doves were noted for their gentleness, tranquility, innocence (Matthew. 10:16).
- She returns the compliments to Him (charming is the same Hebrew word for sweet used about David in 2 Sam. 23:1).

#### #5 You're enjoying a shared life together

Song of Solomon 1:16b-17, She says: "...And our bed is verdant." He says: "The beams of our house are cedars; our rafters are firs."

- Not a literal bed or building, but figuratively it describes a walk in the country (a date), and poetically it describes their love.
- The setting isn't the point: the relationship is...they turn ordinary moments into meaningful ones.
- Are your dates just entertainment... or opportunities to truly connect?
- It's not just about spending time together. It's about building something while you do.

#### #6 You're chosen above everyone else

Song of Solomon 2:1-3a, She says: "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys." He says: "Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the young women." She says: "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my beloved among the young men..."

- She describes herself as common flowers, unworthy of a royal garden.
- He responds, if that's the case, all other women are thorns.
- The feeling is mutual as she describes him as an apple tree (which would be a rare surprise in a forest).
- There is trust. They are not "playing the field" - they are committed.

#### #7 You're feeling safe and secure

Song of Solomon 2:3b, She says: "I delight to sit in his shade..."

- Shade was a metaphor for protection in the Bible (Judges 9:15; Psalm 17:8).
- A man should innately protect a woman, rather than take advantage of her.

#### #8 You're honored privately & publicly

Song of Solomon 2:3c-4, She says: "and his fruit is sweet to my taste. Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love..."

- Privately, her experience of their relationship together is like sweet fruit.
- Publicly, as a military banner was easily seen by the troops, so Solomon's love for his girl was easily seen by anyone.

#### #9 You're passionate about each other

Song of Solomon 2:5-6, She says: "Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me."

- A bit lovesick over him, she needed food.
- Since she is faint she expresses her desire for him to embrace her (or this actually happens and they are laying down in a field together), dangerously close for a couple waiting for marriage for intimacy.
- What will they do?

#### #10 You're practicing restraint & purity

Song of Solomon 2:7, She says: "Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."

- They stop - because deep love is stronger than passion.
- They seem to refocus on boundaries and she encourages the Daughters of Jerusalem about encourages restraint, and to wait for passionate love until marriage.
- Don't awaken love too soon, and don't neglect it once you have it.
- The only way to love like that (patiently, purely, & faithfully) is to stay close to the One who loves you perfectly. Jesus doesn't just show us love...He empowers us to live it.

Choose a stage below for practical ways to live this out this week.

Singles

Dating

Married Recently

Married for a Long Time

