



Series: Song of Solomon

Passage: 1.1-2.15

Title: The Godly Woman

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Intro

We are in a series of sermons walking through the Song of Solomon. This book is a series of love songs written by King Solomon expressing the love between a shepherd and the Shulamite woman. They don't have names, because their purpose is not where they are in the history books. Their purpose is to instruct us on human love. And in doing so it points us to the power of divine love.

I told you the call on our lives throughout this series

God is love, God made love, and God gives love. So, I will pursue his way of love in my life

It's all his. And every week what we are doing is showing his way so we can walk forward in it.

¹ Yeah, Joby Martin gets credit for this joke & explanation. That dude is red-neck funny.

Last week we walked through chapter 1 and the first few verses of chapter 2, and I tried my best to show you what a godly man looks like. And this week we are talking about what a godly woman looks like. My hope is by spending these first two weeks highlighting the man & the woman is that we will understand who WE ARE as individuals. Who GOD made us to be. Because when we get that right we will be able to navigate dating & marriage in a godly way that leads to our flourishing. But a huge problem in relationships is people getting into them without knowing who THEY, as an individual, ARE. They have no identity & no direction and so they rely on a relationship to define who they are and that leads to all kinds of disfunction. But when you know who God made you to be and you are walking in that...well then you can approach a spouse or potential spouse as the fellow sinner they are & not as your savior.

Ok so today we are talking about a godly woman. And you might think – what right do you have to speak about womanhood there pastor? Well, I want to acknowledge that I am, in fact, not a woman. So, I recognize this is a bit like a catholic priest doing marriage counseling.¹ By that I mean I don't know experientially what you are going through. But that's ok. Listen one of the best talks I ever heard on manhood was given by Karen Loritts, an African American woman in her 70s. Experientially she and I are different. But she stood before a group of pastors earlier this year and offered empathy & a needed word based in God's word and in her

experience as a woman, particularly how important we men lead our churches with courage but also gentleness. That we choose our families before our ministry.

So, I am going to do my best to speak truth from God's word. That's what I can do. And hopefully you can give me a little grace on where I miss the mark experientially. As I told you last week, we have several women involved in our weekly sermon planning process to help ensure I preach truth with compassion & awareness. And then after that I've run this sermon by my wife Courtney, and she had veto power over all of it. I've known her since I was 15 years old. What a gift to be an observer of God's transforming power in her life. I was there the day God saved her. I've watched her follow Jesus into womanhood. I've watched her build friendships, become a mom, become a spiritual mother to many, and I could go on and on. Emmy speeches ain't got nothing on what I could tell you about Courtney Shelton. She's a godly woman. And this sermon is better because of her presence in my life over the years.

But as your pastor I do love you and it seems like it is a very challenging time to be a woman right now. The world around us is so confused about what it wants to believe about womanhood. Some in the world will tell you womanhood is just a state of mind, so anybody can be a woman. Then others will say no, being a woman is all about using your body to get what you want. And then others will tell you that women should do exactly what men do but more gracefully and with perfect make-up. And as all these worldviews fight amongst

themselves, what an opportunity for the church to declare a better, more hope filled way.

Some of you grew up in churches with confusing messages on womanhood. some that have this idea where women gotta stay in the house, on the prairie, and never speak & can't do anything but make biscuits & babies. But then others go so extreme to the opposite they make no substantive difference between the man and woman God made. it's just different plumbing for procreation.

And honestly ya'll I ache over this. Because God's design is beautiful and it's my job to show it to you. And I told you God's word offers clarity & hope about who he made you to be. So, we are going to look at that.

We'll follow a similar pattern as we did last week. We'll walk through the passage and as we do, I'm going to observe for you 6 (maybe 7) characteristics of a Godly woman. Like I said last week about men – this *ISN'T EVERYTHING* the bible has to say about womanhood ok. That would take a lot more than one sermon. So, what we say about womanhood will be guided by our text which means a lot of it will connect to how she relates to her man just like last week's sermon on manhood was weighted toward how he relates to his woman.

BUT I want to Start with Prov 31.30. WHY? Same guy who wrote this wrote Prov 31. And The kind of woman he is depicting here in this romantic dialogue is the same kind of woman as prov 31. It's just in SoS we are zoomed in on the love between her and her man. And just like we started with character last week, I want to start with character this week.

30 Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised.

-- Proverbs 31:30

Solomon recognizes God has given women both charm and beauty. These are good gifts. But they are not who you are. Pretty words and pretty looks don't last. They might mask who you are for a while, but they don't last & they aren't the real you.

God says your value is NOT in your ability to impress others. No, your value is determined by God & what brings you honor is your relationship to him. A woman who *fears the Lord* will be praised.

So, I want to start with what I think is the most important thing about a godly woman.

A godly woman is surrendered to the Lord and being changed by his grace in Christ.

when we read "fears the Lord" we on this side of the cross know that the Lord has come to us in the form of Jesus Christ. And to fear the Lord means to surrender ourselves to him and find our identity in what he says about us. If you are in Christ, he calls you daughter. And he says you are his daughter for evermore. Now as a daughter of your first mother eve you will be tempted to run from what God says about you and what God calls you to. That is how sin works.

So, before we get any further, I need to call you to faith in Jesus. What you need to thrive as a woman in this world...it

comes ONLY through abiding in his love for you. He loves you! I'll talk a lot today about how valuable you are to God because the world determines your value by your utility and its garbage. But its garbage that you could easily consume if you are starving for security & love.

Ladies the rest of what I have to say today builds on that foundation. Through Christ God has reconciled you to himself and offers you peace in him. He calls you his own. We are here to equip you to walk in that identity! Q4 plan. OK, now let's get into SOS1.

[Woman]

2 Oh, that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For your caresses are more delightful than wine.

3 The fragrance of your perfume is intoxicating; your name is perfume poured out.

No wonder young women adore you. 4 Take me with you — let's hurry.

Oh, that the king would bring me to his chambers.

So, the woman speaks first. And look at how she speaks...she encourages his advances. She doesn't just grab him and kiss him. Now *later* in the intimacy and security of their marriage she does do some romantic initiating. chapter 7 she invites him on a picnic that gets real spicy. And surprise spicy picnics are good and healthy in a marriage.

But here at the start a pattern is established where she encourages his leadership in the relationship. And it happens several times early on. And this is massive. Women you may

not realize it, but we men are very insecure creatures. That is the effect of sin on us. And God has, according to Ephesians 5, tasked us to lead in our marriages. And what this woman does is set an encouraging tone towards his leadership of her right out of the gate.

Last week I told you that a godly man uses his words to build up. I said it later in the sermon because well, he doesn't speak til verse 8. **A godly woman uses her words to encourage.**

Look at the way she talks ABOUT her man and talks TO her man. This guy isn't perfect. No one is. But She encourages him. She doesn't do it for him, but she encourages him & celebrates his reputation. He IS good enough for her. In fact, she's excited to be *his* queen. Chapter 2 is going to say- She is delighted to be under the shade of his tree and under his banner in his banquet hall. And she TELLS HIM as much. In this book she's going to call him a stag, a Mighty Cedar, and a King among men. And not just any king...her king. I'm telling you there is NOTHING more confidence building to a husband than a wife showering him with praise. Husbands are being told by Hollywood that they are big dumb idiots. Every movie...don't ask dad he's sitting there being clumsy & dumb. Don't reinforce that garbage. Your encouragement in his true role will help call him off the couch and into action. Let's expect more!

In chapter 5 she is going to praise him to her friends even when they just had a fight. She is gonna say things like his arms are rods of Gold & his body is an ivory panel. And when

he hears her talking about him like that...the fight ends real quick. Spicy picnic time.

My point is women your words are incredibly powerful for building up OR for tearing down. And God has some STRONG words to say about your words, particularly you wives, when you use your words to tear your husband down.

- 15 An endless dripping on a rainy day and a nagging wife are alike; -- Proverbs 27:15
- 9 Better to live on the corner of a roof than to share a house with a nagging wife. -- Proverbs 21:9

Your words are incredibly powerful. And wife if all you do is tell him what he's doing wrong & what he needs to do better...drip drip drip.² That's torture. And over time men become a shell of who they could be. They either fight back or eventually just shut down all together. NOBODY likes being nagged. I know you don't want to nag. But what you think is helping – correcting him constantly – is not helping. Encourage him in his leadership. He's not Jesus. we know that. Therefore, *you* need Jesus. your man is going to keep on disappointing you. Stop trying to make him into Jesus & then getting frustrated that he aint Jesus and instead spend more time WITH Jesus so you can love him like Jesus and then encourage him in the man he is trying to be in Jesus.

Through the holy spirit I promise you that your words (*not empty words but words from the heart of a woman who fears*

² Also borrowed this "drip drip drip" expression from Joby martin, same sermon.

the lord) will help him become the man God has called him to be.

Now let me go beyond dating & marriage for a second. Women we need your words in the church. I grew up with brothers, so I never experienced this in my nuclear family. But as a part of the church family, I've had several times where sisters in Christ have seen me – been so perceptive – and spoken encouraging words to me in my calling and it is life giving. YESTERDAY – Bonnie Shrum checking in on our marriage. Was awesome.

I told you we humans are such insecure creatures that we can be torn down so easily by a few words. SO why not build one another up?

Not with empty words – with Jesus words. Search the scriptures and speak God's word over people. When you take the word of life...and speak it over your friend in application to what they are going through or to who you see God making them into...that is like laying a brick into the foundation of the house God is building in them. It's so powerful.

Soul Work for wives – Identify something specific you love about his character AND something you love about his physical appearance and tell him about it!

Soul Work for all of us – Identify something specific and Christlike about someone's character and tell them about it!

I hope you will allow the Lord to use you to build up others...
Leads me right to the next verses

**Young Women We will rejoice and be glad in you;
we will celebrate your caresses more than wine.**

I jokingly told you last week this is her bride tribe. But what's important is that these women are her friends. They see the relationship, they know the guy, and they celebrate what God is doing here. And this is so powerful.

A godly woman surrounds herself with godly friendships

I can't stress *godly* enough. I'm talking about having some women in your life who LOVE Jesus. When I said point one – Prov 31.10 – You see them fearing God and being changed by his grace. Not their Instagram faith but their ACTUAL walk with Jesus inspires you. Scripture says *walk* by faith not *post* by faith. A godly woman surrounds herself with godly women who will point you to Jesus.

In my experience, far too many Christian women have Christian women friends who don't point one another to Jesus. You are NICE to each other. Listen the Lord has used Courtney and many of you women to help me learn the power of being gentle with words & actions. That is God's image on you coming out and blessing your brothers. ***But Godly friends aren't NICE. godly friends are kind. A nice friend will tell you what you want to hear. A kind friend will tell you what you need to hear.***³

³ No doubt indebted to my friend Sharon H Miller for her book *Nice* that talked through this whole contrast. Very helpful.

Satan would love nothing more than for you to have the illusion of Christian friendships because you are nice to each other in a mean world. But all the while you are still TOTALLY isolated from the POWER God pours out in your life through true friendship.

A true friend will tell you what you need to hear. She will do it in love and gentleness, but She will confront you when needed. She will encourage you; she will say I SEE Jesus in you here, she will confront sin in you with assertive kindness. These friends are TREASURES.

And here's what I've seen. I've seen it in both genders but especially in women. When a friend confronts poor judgment or sin in your life. A moment where she is lovingly trying to call you towards Christ...there is a temptation to pull away. And I've seen it happen. That could be a breakthrough moment and instead you pull away and put up defense walls. You start figuring out more excuses to not hang out or you stop returning texts. Sometimes you even drift back to your non-Christian friend group because hey they won't say hard things to you. Of course, they won't. They are nice. They will say what you want to hear.

What is happening there is you care more about approval of others than your own godliness. Proverbs says better are the wounds of a friend than the kisses of an enemy, but you think the opposite. I'd rather have Satan stroke my ego than a friend correct me in righteousness. If that's you, you need to go to Jesus FAST! You need the security he gives you. You

need to experience his love and I encourage you to take stock of your life and ask – 2 questions:

1. do I have any friends who have said godly things to me that were hard to hear?
2. Did I receive that in thanksgiving or did I draw back?

I LOVE these women in Courtney's life. I was out of town a couple nights this week and asked her if she wanted to go out Thursday since she had been with the kids and she said she was going out to Olive Garden with Meredith & Mandy. Cause olive garden is Meredith's favorite restaurant. and I was like OH GREAT! GO! Because I know those women will lift her up & she will lift them up & my wife will flourish. She's got these kinds of women in our community group & in our church and it's a gift.

BTW married couples - make room in the calendar & in the budget for these friendships. They are important to her health & to YOUR marriage. This is your pastor saying husband - shepherd your wife by encouraging her to have some godly sisterhood. And when you stay home with the kids you aren't babysitting. You are being a dad. That's another sermon though.

Woman

5 Daughters of Jerusalem, I am dark like the tents of Kedar, yet lovely like the curtains of Solomon. 6 Do not stare at me because I am dark, for the sun has gazed on me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me take care of the vineyards. I have not taken care of my own vineyard.

A Godly woman is humble & hard-working

I put these two together because of how verses 5 & 6 flows. Listen in this book what you see several times is that this woman does not think highly of herself. She calls herself a lily of the valley. She's not overly impressed with herself. She is humble. She calls herself dark because she's been out in the sun and her skin has darkened as a result. But this is not self-loathing. There is a difference. As Tim Keller says in his book on the freedom of self-forgetfulness - Humility is not thinking less of yourself, its thinking of yourself less. She has a job. Maybe two. She just doesn't have time to sit around & pamper herself. **Listen to me guys the opposite of this is a woman who is idle & entitled.** She's done nothing hard in her life and had everything handed to her. If that's been her life, she will bring that into your marriage and yikes. The reason this guy is attracted to her is because he sees beauty not JUST in her looks. This isn't Hollywood. She's not going to take off her glasses and all the sudden it's revealed she was a supermodel all along! No. He also sees what a hard life has done to her. Her humility & work ethic impresses her. AND he finds her very attractive.

I know Courtney isn't perfect, but her being raised in a single wide trailer while living on a beef cattle farm...that is a gift to me as her husband. Anyone who knows us will tell you that if there's a diva in our marriage...it's me not her. And that humility she has, that tireless effort to serve others...man I see Jesus in her. She inspires me.

7 Tell me, you whom I love: Where do you pasture your sheep?

Where do you let them rest at noon? Why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

Ok last week I told you she's wanting to visit him at work. Still true. But there is something in this veiling. One who veils herself beside the flocks. – that's what prostitutes did. And she is making sure this guy knows that she has sexual standards. She will not compromise her holiness to get a man.

A godly woman does not compromise her holiness in romance

This is for both single and married women. She is interested in this guy. She is making that known. But she is also letting him know what kind of woman she is. She is a woman who fears the Lord. She does not fear what a guy thinks about her. And she will not compromise her identity in Christ for a guy to like her. And ladies listen If he doesn't respect you now before marriage...what makes you think he will respect you in marriage. That kind of guy is a boy who still needs to grow up. I'm not saying she doesn't have sexual desires. Look at what she says in chapter 2

4 He brought me to the banquet hall, and he looked on me with love.

5 Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apricots, for I am lovesick.

6 May his left hand be under my head, and his right arm embrace me. – SS 2.4-6

Left hand *under* my head & right arm embrace me...That is a desire to be with him in bed. And this book celebrates that desire. And she realizes holiness and sexual desire are not in competition with one another. Because if God created us to be holy & he created us as sexual beings...those don't contradict one another. They only compete when sin creates the lie that says you cannot be a holy person and a sexual person. But from a biblical perspective - That's ridiculous. In fact, if God created you – then not only is there such a thing as holy sex, but holy sex is the highest and greatest form of sex. More about that when we talk about sex. And she's saying she's not *compromising* God's gift of holy sex. She's *waiting* on it.

7 Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and the wild does of the field,
do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time.
SS 2.7

You are going to see in a couple of chapters...the appropriate time comes and its deeply fulfilling. And if any guy is trying to get his hands on you before he commits his whole life to you in marriage...drop him. Right now. This is the only real charge in the book and its repeated 3 times by the woman to her single friends. BTW boys if you can't keep your hands off her. Please remember that until she's your wife...she's your sister in Christ. And you shouldn't be doing that to your sister. More importantly she's God's daughter. And go back to last week for the value that God speaks over her.

Married women this idea of holiness in romance– I want to implore you to pursue it. I mean especially as you are married for a few years - do not give yourself to anything less than God's best. Don't settle for fantasies of men like 50 shades of Grey or whatever current version there is. Culture is propping up fantasy people that are fake. You can scroll through 1000 of them in an hour on your phone. But they are just fantasy. Took them hours to craft those 15 seconds & they are trying to get paid to do it. They don't know you & don't care about you. And when we ingest these fantasies, they subtly distort our reality in all kinds of toxic ways. You think why would I work hard to fan the flame in this marriage with this guy? So, you settle for cheap substitutes like the bachelorette or a rom com to satisfy your right and good desire for romance. And all the while your fantasies are creating a bitterness towards the husband God gave you. Cause he doesn't measure up. Leads me right to last thing.

Woman

12 While the king is on his couch, my perfume releases its fragrance.

13 The one I love is a sachet of myrrh to me, spending the night between my breasts.

14 The one I love is a cluster of henna blossoms to me, in the vineyards of En-gedi.

She longs for him. En-gedi...that's an oasis in the desert. And she's saying in the desert of the hard things in this world he is en-gedi.

A godly woman delights in the man God gives her

I said this same thing to the men last week and its true here. He is En-gedi to her. He is an oasis. And both his presence and his affection are delightful to her. She treasures this man & the provision he provides.

Woman

16 How handsome you are, my love. How *delightful*! Our bed is verdant; 17 the beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are cypresses. SS 1.16-17

Woman

3 Like an apricot tree among the trees of the forest, so is my love among the young men.
I *delight* to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste.
SS 2.3

Now husbands, I told you last week you provide that security for her, and she will flourish. And what's happening is that as she delights in the en-gedi he creates for her, she becomes en-gedi to him. An oasis of love in the desert of this world. But you can't *expect* her to delight in you when you don't treasure her as God's gift to you. But wives do you delight in your husband? Or are you bitter towards him? Frustrated by him? He is a gift from God to you.

CLOSE WITH TREASURING CHRIST – A godly woman knows her value something like that.