

A recipe for a healthy marriage
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It's common knowledge that Summer is a very popular time for weddings. In my church, July ranks as the top anniversary month with August not far behind. This Summer it's likely that you will either get married, attend someone else's wedding or at least send an anniversary card. Since the topic of marriage is popular right now, I thought it fitting to see what the Bible teaches us about what makes for a healthy marriage. While there are various places to turn to answer that question, I share with you what we find in the Old Testament book of Song of Songs.

Song of Songs chronicles the romantic journey of a man and woman from their courtship to their wedding day and into their married lives. What I found most profound is the continuous passion between the couple in all three stages. While they are dating, as seen in chapter one, listen to the words of the woman. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for your love is more delightful than wine* And hear the man *Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels*. Then on their wedding day, the passion continues as seen in chapter three. She says *Come out, you daughters of Zion, and look at King Solomon wearing the crown, the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day his heart rejoiced*. And he replies by saying: *All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you*. But as we follow the story we see how they keep up their passion even as they get married. She says to her husband in chapter seven: *Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded*. She wants to go out on a date with her husband and knowing him, he will certainly oblige. Their continued passion and even dating is a powerful lesson married couples can learn from.

Often when people are dating they speak passionately to one another, gaze lovingly at each other and enjoy frequent outings together. However, when a couple becomes married, sometimes those things lessen. Why is that? Perhaps during courtship we work hard to win each other over and now having been won over we put in less effort. Maybe the excitement that comes with something being new, naturally fades as it is no longer new. Whatever the reason may be, I say we learn from the continuous passion of this husband and wife. As married folks, we need to keep writing love letters and keep going out on dates; it's an ingredient for a healthy marriage. It's not the only ingredient; you also need love, respect, commitment and to keep God at the center of your relationship. But when we combine a continued passion for God with a continued passion for each other, we find a recipe for a healthy marriage.