

Song of Songs 8: 7 NIV

"How tough love is".

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned."

In a suburb of Portland, OR, 69 years and one week ago today, Norma and I exchanged wedding vows.

My sister Marge and her husband Carl offered their home as the setting.

As you know, I got a really good deal.

A preacher named Claude Guild helped us tie the knot.

I likely paid him \$20; it could have been \$15.

I didn't keep expense records in those days.

Had Norma known what I paid the minister, she'd probably given him three times as much.

She's never liked to go cheap.

After the ceremony and reception, we attempted to drive away in our (Norma had just acquired half ownership) 1946 black Chevy coupe.

I say "attempted" because someone put Scotch tape over nearly everything inside that car (door handles, window cranks, etc.) including the ignition. My difficulties weren't over.

When we got to our motel room in Tillamook, OR, I discovered that my suitcase was sabotaged.

I think my dad was the chief culprit.

I nearly forgot to tell about the assortment of tin cans and other noisemakers tied to the back bumper.

For another reason, I say "attempted" to leave.

I'd been having trouble the car's starter, so the men pushed us down the small hill to get the Chevy going.

Because Norma and I just celebrated the anniversary of that occasion, it seemed fitting to talk about love with you lovely people.

Perhaps you know the perspective of marital love and faithfulness in the *Old Testament Song of Songs*. It would have made England's Queen Victoria blush.

Had England's Henry, the 8th, read *Song of Songs*, the wives he beheaded might have lived longer.

The King likely would have married only once.

You might have heard this report about King Henry's fifth wife, Catherine Howard.

Catherine still loved her former fiancé, Thomas Culpepper.



When King Henry discovered Catherine's love for Culpepper, she met the same fate as some of her predecessors—the chopping block. Henry's Wives Henry the VIII discovered the truth stated in *Song of Songs* 8:6: "Love is stronger than death."

Just before her beheading, Catherine reportedly said, "I die a queen. But I would rather die the wife of Thomas Culpepper."

**As *Song of Songs* emphasizes,
"Many waters cannot quench love.
Neither can floods drown it."**

For millennia, people have wondered why the *Song of Songs* is in the Bible.

The Song isn't one of those Scriptures one likes to read in public.

It gets embarrassingly descriptive and sensuous.

Why is a book like that in the Bible?

Here's why.

The Song of Songs colorfully glorifies love between a husband and wife in all its intimacy.

God's word dignifies marriage, marital love, and faithfulness.

If I had stated this opinion in public a few hundred years ago, it might have cost me my life.

A scholar named Luis de Leon faced the Inquisition in 1567 for declaring that *Song of Songs* was about human love, not a spiritual metaphor of Christ and his church.

Not everyone should get married.



Yet marriage is the most vital human relationship.

Just after he created Eve, the Lord stated "A man leaves his father and his mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh,"

Genesis 2:24 NIV.

Jesus emphasized that truth during his ministry.

In marriage, a man and woman become one flesh.

What does "one flesh" mean?

No one wants to give up a limb—an arm, a leg. Sometimes because of injury or infection, it's necessary to sever a limb to preserve the body.

But we'd amputate only in dire circumstances.

Marriages should be dissolved with that same reluctance that we'd amputate a limb.

Yet, he saying of married vows is not the only way "one flesh" relationships are created.

Sexual union creates one flesh.

The Lord taught that if a man has sex with a prostitute, he makes himself one flesh with her.

"Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.'"¹

The Lord intended that our bodies be temples of the Holy Spirit.

¹ I Corinthians 6:16 NIV

God intended sex for husbands and wives in marriage.

In the beginning, God established that in marriage a man and woman become one flesh.

Jesus reaffirmed that truth.

Humans try to change that principle.

They don't like the Lord's will, so they distort it.

But when societies don't obey God, they unravel.

Human "experts" constantly claim to know how to correct society's ills.

One says: "more guns"—Another, "fewer guns."

"More money for welfare,"

"Less money for welfare."

"More for education."

Experts hail solutions, but they always fail.



Politicians, educators, social engineers, and even preachers offer all kinds of treatments.

They cure no one because they treat only symptoms.

You possibly know firsthand the ugly, painful symptoms of some disease.

Symptoms of a severe epidemic surround us.

The abortion debate is a glaring example.

Consider illegitimate birthrates, money spent on attorneys, psychiatrists, welfare agencies, street crime, and gang warfare.

Societies spend massive amounts of time and money debating and trying to fix the abortion issue.

Are conditions getting better or worse?

Experts try to correct symptoms while they themselves often spread the disease.

Suppose you suffer nausea, your muscles ache, you can barely see, and hardly walk.

You get to the doctor's office, the doctor examines you, and begins to treat your symptoms.

Think of your frustration if you found out:

- 1. The doctor has a cure right there in the office but the doc doesn't give it to you; similar to a doc treating lung cancer with cough drops.**
2. Your doctor suffers the same symptoms as you and has infected you with a worse form of it.

That's exactly what's happening with many society ills.

Most of them can be cured.

Yet, what the so-called experts "sell" makes things worse.

In the 60s, many political and social experts promised to build a Great Society.

They vowed they'd eliminate poverty and racism.

They spent trillions and want to spend more.

A few years ago, I found the following on the website: www.yourblackworld.net:

"According to a report released by the Urban Institute, the state of the African American family is worse today than it was in the 1960s . . .

"In 1950, 17 percent of African American children lived in a home with their mother, but not their father.

"In 1965, only eight percent of childbirths in the Black community occurred out of wedlock. **In 2010, that figure was 41 percent; and today, the out of wedlock childbirth in the Black community sits at an astonishing 72 percent.** The number of African American women living with their spouse was recorded as **53 percent in 1950.**" Fifty some years ago, about 2/3s (66%) of black families in this country had both husband and wife living together and raising the family." "Today, 37% of black children are living in a home headed by their own two biological parents, 48% live in a home headed by a single parent, and 4% live in a stepfamily with one biological parent and one non-biological parent."²

The same things occur among white families.

Ratios aren't quite as bad, but they're not good.

These outcomes take place when we treat symptoms, but not the actual disease

Want another example?



On virtually every social, economic, and family issue, folks widely disagree.

Hostility reigns.

Anger and bitterness signify a disease that grips us.

Nothing works because folks reject God's will.

Folks do gross things with and to their bodies.

They do not regard or respect the bodies of others.

Instead of seeing that their bodies are meant to be temples of God's Spirit, they insist:

"I have a right to do what I want with my body."

Christians who claim that seem unaware of what God's Word says: "You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Glorify God therefore with your bodies."

Too many Christians let the world distort their views of love and marriage.

Many folks follow Hollywood and pop culture in practicing musical chairs adultery.

They make no lifetime commitment.

² March 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS).

Wives don't submit to their husbands as God's word says in **Ephesians 5:22** and **Colossians 3:18**:

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the LORD." Husbands don't love and respect their wives as they should: "Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies," **Ephesians 5:28**.

Some time ago Robert and Mary Baily wrote a book called, *Coping with Stress*.

They listed many popular ideas that symptomize unhealthy love.

Here's a sample.

"If you love me, you will always know what I want and give it to me without asking."

Sounds romantic and some couples start marriages with that expectation.

It seems reasonable to them because that's how a parent spoiled them.

**But it's really boneheaded, isn't it?
How could Norma always know what I want?**

Sometimes I don't even know what I want.

But this I know.

God wants us to make lifetime commitments to love and honor each other.

We're one flesh.

Sometimes despite our best efforts, mates break those vows.

We let them go as we would endure an amputation.

Otherwise, we look to God, and we patiently love our spouses.

Years after Norma and I were married, I was playing in a church softball game. Walking off the field, when the game ended, I remembered:

"This is July 21, our wedding anniversary date. I haven't done anything for Norma."

That wasn't my only error.

The whole team was coming to our place for refreshments. I gave a friend some money asking him if he'd pick up a cake for me at the grocery store so we could all celebrate.

Norma long ago forgave me (I think) for not only forgetting our important day, but also inviting a bunch of smelly ballplayers to our home afterward.

Marriages and friendships take lots of patience and forgiving love.

A friend recently asked us:

"To what do you attribute your 69 years of marriage?"

It's unequivocal, we attribute that longevity to the Lord. No government program or any human source can fulfill our deepest needs.

"Christ in you is the hope of glory!" Colossians 1:27.

We must always love, obey, and honor God.

Bob Blair

PO Box 176

Cleghorn, IA 51014

www.robertblairbooks.com

