

Marriage is deeply honored throughout Scripture—both as a sacred covenant and as a reflection of God’s relationship with His people. Here are some of the **most well-known and widely quoted Bible verses about marriage**, each carrying profound spiritual meaning:

### **1. Genesis 2:24**

*“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Foundation of marriage in creation itself. One flesh speaks to union, intimacy, and purpose.*

### **2. Ephesians 5:25**

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” A call to sacrificial love—a mirror of Christ’s selfless devotion.*

### **3. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12**

*“Two are better than one... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up... A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” A poetic vision of partnership, support, and strength in unity—especially with God as the third strand.*

### **4. 1 Corinthians 13:4–7**

*“Love is patient, love is kind... It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” though often read at weddings, this describes all love, and perfectly suits the spirit of marriage.*

### **5. Proverbs 18:22**

*“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.” A gentle reminder that marriage is a gift and a blessing, not a burden.*

### **6. Mark 10:9**

*“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” A solemn reminder of the divine nature of the marriage bond.*

## **7. 1 Peter 4:8**

*“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” Essential wisdom for every marriage: grace, forgiveness, and unconditional love.*

**The Song of Solomon** (also called *Song of Songs*)—a poetic and deeply symbolic book of love, desire, and union. It's one of the most beautiful and mysterious books in Scripture. Here's a look at its **main characters**:

## **Main Characters in the Song of Solomon**

### **1. The Shulammitte Woman (The Beloved)**

- She is the **primary female voice** in the book.
- Described as beautiful, passionate, and deeply expressive in her longing and love.
- Possibly a humble country girl, she speaks with poetic boldness about desire, commitment, and even insecurity.
- She represents **bride, lover, and seeker**—and in allegorical readings, often symbolizes the *Church* or *the soul longing for God*.

### **2. The Lover (The Bridegroom/King)**

- Traditionally understood to be **King Solomon**, though the text never names him directly as her consistent lover.
- He praises the woman with rich metaphors and delights in her beauty and character.
- He represents the **male beloved**—the groom, the protector, and the one who initiates love.

- In spiritual interpretations, he symbolizes **God, Christ, or Divine Love**.

### 3. The Daughters of Jerusalem

- A **chorus of women** who observe and occasionally interact with the Shulammite woman.
- They serve as an audience, offering responses, questions, and commentary.
- They represent the **community**—sometimes encouraging, other times passive or confused observers.

#### **Allegorical and Spiritual Interpretations:**

While the Song of Solomon is a celebration of human love and longing, **many traditions** (especially Jewish and Christian mystics) have seen deeper meanings:

- **Jewish interpretation:** A poetic allegory of the love between **God and Israel**.
- **Christian interpretation:** A depiction of the love between **Christ and the Church**, or **Christ and the soul**.

Let us consider additional values that spiritual allegory may overlook. While **the Song of Solomon does not explicitly describe a formal marriage ceremony**, it **strongly evokes themes of marital love**, covenantal intimacy, and the longing that leads to union. Many scholars and spiritual readers interpret parts of the poem as reflecting **courtship, engagement, consummation, and even the ongoing renewal of love** within marriage.

#### **Implied Marriage Passages in the Song of Solomon**

##### **1. Song of Solomon 3:6–11 – The Wedding Procession**

*“Who is this coming up from the wilderness like a column of smoke...? Look! It is Solomon’s carriage... Come out, and look, daughters of Zion. Look on King Solomon wearing a crown, the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding...”*

—**Song 3:6–11**

This is the clearest reference to a **wedding day**, celebrating the **king’s marriage** with royal imagery, honor, and public celebration.

## **2. Song of Solomon 4:9–12 – The Groom’s Delight in His Bride**

*“You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride... Your love is more delightful than wine... You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride...”*

—**Song 4:9–12**

Here the **term "bride" is repeated**, and the language becomes more intimate, respectful, and exclusive. This marks the shift from desire to **sacred union**.

## **3. Song of Solomon 5:1 – The Consummation**

*“I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride... Eat, friends, and drink; drink your fill of love.”*

A powerful moment of **consummation**—physical and emotional. Some view this as the fulfillment of the marital bond and the invitation to celebrate.

SISTER? To modern ears, “sister” can sound awkward or even unsettling. But in **ancient Near Eastern language and custom**, this phrase was a **poetic term of deep affection**, not literal kinship.

**Symbol of Intimacy and Equality** - Calling her “*my sister*” emphasizes **closeness, friendship, and familial trust**.

In that time, **sibling bonds were considered sacred and lifelong**—often more dependable than romantic passion. So the phrase elevates the relationship, saying:

*“You are not only my bride (lover), you are also my companion, my equal, my forever one.”*

It expresses **relational wholeness**: not just eros (passion), but philia (friendship), and storgē (familial love)—a full-spectrum devotion.

**Purity of Love, Not Just Passion** - The phrase softens the intensity of erotic language by weaving in *respect and dignity*. In a book filled with sensuality, this phrase says:

*“My desire for you is not only bodily—it’s sacred, familial, eternal.”*

He is not just taking her into his bed; he’s **welcoming her into his life**, his blood, his house. This is the language of **covenant**, not just seduction.

### **Spiritual Allegory – The Bride of Christ**

In Christian theology, the Church is both:

- The **Bride of Christ** (Revelation 21:2)
- And also **Children of God**, and **co-heirs with Christ** (Romans 8:17)

So spiritually speaking: The soul is the **sister (kin)** of Christ by adoption... And also the **bride**, in union and love.

The phrase *“my sister, my bride”* becomes a prophetic whisper of that mysterious double identity: **Family and Lover. Equal and Beloved. Joined by blood and by choice.**

### **4. Song of Solomon 8:6–7 – The Nature of True Love (Marital and Divine)**

*“Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death... Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.”*

These are some of the most quoted lines in wedding ceremonies—speaking of love that is **binding, eternal, and unyielding**, like a covenant.

The Song of Solomon doesn’t narrate a marriage with the customs you’d

find in Genesis or Ephesians, but it **captures the essence of marital love**—exclusive, passionate, faithful, and sacred.

## The Striking aspects in the Song of Solomon

### 1. The Raw, Unashamed Language of Love

What strikes me most is how **unapologetically sensual and intimate** this book is—and yet, it's **sacred Scripture**. The Song doesn't veil passion behind stiff metaphors—it sings of longing, desire, beauty, and physical union with **bold joy** and **tender awe**. It tells us that **true love is not merely spiritual or intellectual—it is embodied**, and God does not shy away from that. It's expressed as holy.

### 2. Mutual Desire and Equal Voice

The **Shulammitte woman speaks more than the man**. Her voice is passionate, assertive, vulnerable, and wise. She seeks, she longs, she praises. She is not passive—**she initiates** love, grieves absence, and delights in her lover without shame. This mutuality—this balance of voices—is striking. It's a song of lovers who **choose** each other freely. In a world often filled with imbalances in relationships, *this book shows love as a dance of equals*.

## The overlooked aspects in the Song of Solomon

### 1. The Spiritual Allegory Hidden in Desire

People often either reduce the book to **purely erotic poetry** or over-spiritualize it as an allegory for Christ and the Church—**but it's both**. The Song is a **bridging text**—between heaven and earth, body and spirit, sacred and sensual. When read deeply, it teaches that **true love—whether in marriage or in divine relationship—is not just about union, but pursuit, mystery, and presence**.

### 2. The Theme of Longing and Absence

There are repeated moments where the lovers are **separated**, searching, calling out in the night, dreaming, even mistaken and wounded by the world. This longing—the ache of not being with the beloved—is often overlooked, yet it mirrors the **soul's yearning for God**, and even the **ebbs**

**and flows of real marital intimacy.**

It's not just a book of romantic highs—it's about **staying in love**, even in the silences and separations.

### **3. “Mistaken and Wounded by the World” – A Deeper Exploration**

Among the tender whispers of love and union, the **Song also carries shadows**—moments of **separation, misunderstanding, and even suffering**. These moments reveal the *fragility of love in a broken world* and the *pain that often accompanies longing and pursuit*.

#### **Song of Solomon 5:6–7**

*“I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had left; he was gone. My heart sank at his departure. I looked for him but did not find him. I called him but he did not answer. The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. They beat me, they bruised me; they took away my cloak, those watchmen of the walls!”*

#### **What's Happening Here?**

This is one of the most mysterious and painful passages in the Song. The woman is searching for her beloved—she longs for him, dreams of him, rises to meet him—and **she is too late**. He is gone. In her pursuit, she enters the city at night—a metaphor for the world, for isolation, for spiritual darkness—and she encounters the **watchmen**, the supposed guardians of the city. But instead of helping her, they **misunderstand her, strip her of dignity, and harm her**.

#### **Symbolism and Significance - to relationships as well**

##### **1. Longing Misunderstood**

Her **vulnerability** is mistaken for something else—perhaps shame, sin, or impropriety. She is **misread by society**. This mirrors what many experience in life and faith: when deep longing for love, purpose, or God is **dismissed, mocked, or even punished**.

##### **2. The Wounds of the World**

The woman's **love is pure**, but the world around her is **not safe**. Her pursuit leads her through danger. This reveals a deeper truth: even love

that is good, right, and holy can be **wounded by misunderstanding, oppression, or violence**—especially in a world that doesn't know how to see it rightly.

### **3. Spiritual Reflection**

This passage has often been read as an allegory of the **soul's search for God** or the **Church's longing for Christ**. There are seasons when God feels absent, and the world wounds those who seek Him. But the longing doesn't die—it **intensifies**, and ultimately, love is found again.

### **What This Teaches Us**

**True love will be tested**, not only by separation but by the brokenness of the world around it.

Even the **purest pursuit** may bring suffering—because this world does not always recognize holiness in longing.

And yet... **love endures**. The Song ends not with wounding, but with **devotion, mutual desire, and unquenchable love**.

*“Many waters cannot quench love, rivers cannot wash it away...”* – Song 8:7

*In **the Song of Solomon**, the **male character (the lover or bridegroom)** does not undergo the same kind of wounding by the world as the Shulammitte woman. His expressions of longing and desire are **real, passionate, and even urgent**—but they do **not carry the same vulnerability or suffering** seen in her night searches.*

### **The Male Character: Longing, But Not Wounded**

**His Perspective:** The male speaks with confidence, admiration, and celebration of his beloved. He also initiates love, praises her beauty, and desires closeness.

For example, in **Song 4**, he declares:

*“You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you... You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride...”*

His words are full of **invitation**, not injury.

### **What He Experiences:**

- He **searches** for his beloved (e.g., *“I went down to the grove of nut trees... Before I realized it, my desire set me among the royal chariots...”* – Song 6:11–12),
- He **describes absence** (*“Where has your beloved gone...?”*),
- He **waits** and sometimes calls for her to come away.

But he is **not beaten, stripped, or misunderstood** by external forces. His path to union is marked more by **adoration and pursuit**, not **danger or shame**.

### **Why the Contrast?**

This contrast is deliberate and profound:

#### **1. The Woman Carries the Burden of Exposure**

She is the one who:

- Risks herself in the night
- Faces the city’s suspicion
- Endures physical and emotional assault

Her suffering echoes the **vulnerability of love** and perhaps even **the suffering of the soul or the Church** in a fallen world.

#### **2. The Man Represents Divine Invitation**

In traditional allegory:

- The **woman** symbolizes the *human soul, Israel, or the Church*
- The **man** symbolizes *God or Christ*

And just as in the Gospel, **it is the bride who must leave her home, face the world, and seek her beloved**—often at great cost.

## A Sacred Echo

In a spiritual sense, we might say:

- The **bridegroom waits and calls**
- The **bride seeks and suffers**
- And in the end, **they find each other, and love is sealed**

This mirrors the Christian mystery of Christ and the Church, or the soul and God:

The **Bridegroom loves with perfect strength**, But the **Bride loves through wounds**—and that makes her love *ever more radiant*.

In the **Song of Solomon**, the male character—the *beloved or bridegroom*—**does not appear to intervene directly** when the woman is mistreated by the world (as in the watchmen beating her in Song 5:7). There is **no scene of rescue, protection, or defense** as we might expect from a traditional heroic figure or as seen in other biblical narratives.

However, **that absence is not without meaning**. It invites deeper reflection—both literary and spiritual.

## Does He Protect Her? Not With Action, But With Words and Presence

He doesn't ride out to stop the watchmen. He doesn't chastise the city. He doesn't physically shelter her.

Instead, his form of "protection" is primarily expressed through:

### 1. Words of Love and Assurance

After her wounding, the very next passage (Song 6:4–10) has the man speaking to her:

*“You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, as lovely as Jerusalem... Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me.”*

These are **words of restoration**. He lifts her from shame and fear, reaffirming her beauty, strength, and uniqueness. He calls her **“my perfect one”**, signaling *not rejection* in her vulnerability, but *deep, unwavering acceptance*. This is a form of protection that affirms identity after suffering.

## **2. Unshaken Desire and Loyalty**

Even after she has been wounded and searched in the night, he **does not see her differently**. He continues to Praise her form, Delight in her presence, Celebrate her voice and fragrance

He doesn't recoil from her bruises—he draws near.

## **3. Spiritual Allegory: The Hidden Protector**

If we read the Song allegorically—where the man symbolizes **God or Christ**, and the woman the **soul or the Church**—then his "protection" may be **trusting her to find her way back**, letting love refine her in the night. He is not absent out of neglect—but perhaps to let **her love become her own**, freely chosen, costly, and strong.

As with Job or Mary Magdalene or even Christ in Gethsemane, **God does not always intervene to stop the pain**—but **He meets us after it**, in full love and open arms.

### **A Quiet Kind of Protection**

Not in the worldly sense—not with sword or shield.

But with love that **does not falter**.

With words that **heal shame**.

With presence that **draws near to the wounded**.

With longing that **waits for her joy to be restored**.

## Offerings of one another

While the book never describes a formal altar or ritualistic “offering,” the lovers **do make offerings**—but they are the kind that **speak the language of the soul**, of **intimacy**, **delight**, and **self-giving**.

### 1. They Offer Themselves

Above all, they offer **themselves**—freely, vulnerably, and joyfully.

The woman says:

*“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.”* — Song 6:3

And again:

*“I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me.”* — Song 7:10

These are not just romantic sentiments; they are a kind of **covenant surrender**, an offering of *identity*, *desire*, and *freedom*.

This mutual giving of personhood is the purest kind of offering: **“Here I am —entirely yours.”**

### 2. They Offer Gardens and Perfumes (Symbolic Gifts)

Over and over, both lovers describe themselves and each other using images of: Gardens, Spices, Wine, Honey, Fruits

The woman says:

*“Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.”* — Song 4:16

He replies:

*“I have come into my garden... I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.”* — Song 5:1

These are poetic, sensual **gifts of presence**, but also symbolic of **delight freely given**. They each *become the offering*, not just bearers of it.

### 3. They Offer Desire Without Shame

In a world often filled with fear, shame, or suppression of desire, the lovers in this Song offer each other **desire without condemnation**.

- The man praises her **every feature**: her hair, her teeth, her breasts, her scent.
- The woman longs for him openly and **does not hide her yearning**.

In that mutual offering of desire, **nothing is stolen, coerced, or cheapened**. It is **voluntary, holy, and reciprocal**—echoing Eden before the fall.

### 4. HUman offering Mirroring Spiritual

- The **bride** offers **her devotion, searching, and longing** and The **bridegroom** offers **his love, affirmation, and presence**

There is no need for burnt sacrifices here. The *Song* offers something deeper: “Set me as a seal upon your heart...” (Song 8:6)

That is **love as offering**. Love as **fire**, as **seal**, as **deathless flame**.

Toffer many things. But most beautifully, they offer:

- Their **selves**, unguarded
- Their **delight**, unashamed
- Their **love**, unbargained
- And their **presence**, unending

All these are **offerings without altar**, but received with reverence.

The **Song of Solomon** shows us a love both tender and bold, set against the sometimes harsh world around them. When it comes to protection

from the world, their story is surprisingly subtle—and beautiful in its own way.

## **Protection in the Song of Solomon: A Mutual Shelter**

The lovers don't wield swords or walls to keep dangers out. Instead, their **protection comes from their relationship itself**—a sanctuary built on trust, love, and mutual commitment.

### **1. The Power of Mutual Belonging**

They repeatedly affirm:

*“I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.”* (Song 6:3)

This mutual belonging is their fortress. When they are joined, the world's threats—whether gossip, judgment, or harm—lose power over them. Together, they find: Security, Identity, Strength. This bond is their refuge.

### **2. Love as a Shield**

Song 8:6–7 speaks of love as a fierce, enduring force:

*“Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire... Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away.”*

This love itself **guards their hearts** against despair and isolation, against the world's “many waters.” It is a spiritual and emotional shield.

### **3. Their Private Garden**

The imagery of the garden or enclosed space appears often:

*“You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride...”* (Song 4:12)

*“Let my beloved come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.”* (Song 4:16)

The garden symbolizes a **private, sacred place** free from intrusion. Their love creates a **sanctuary where they can be safe and fully known**, even if outside forces seek to harm or shame.

#### 4. Their Words as Protection

Words of praise, reassurance, and longing form a protective atmosphere:

- He calls her **“my perfect one”** despite her wounds.
- She calls him her **“strongest”** and **“fairest.”**

This mutual honoring **repels shame and fear**, building each other up in the face of adversity.

#### 5. A World That Can't Truly Separate Them

Despite physical absence, misunderstanding, or even hostility, they continue to seek and long for one another. Their love's bond transcends external threats: “Set me as a seal upon your heart...” (Song 8:6)

This sealing is a spiritual protection—an eternal covenant that no force can undo.

The lovers' protection from the world is:

- **Relational:** their mutual belonging shields them
- **Spiritual:** love's flame guards their hearts
- **Symbolic:** the garden is their sanctuary
- **Emotional:** words build a fortress of honor
- **Eternal:** a covenant unbreakable by external forces

#### What Do the Two Lovers Mostly Put Their Trust In?

## 1. They Trust in Each Other's Love

Above all, the man and woman place their trust deeply in the **faithfulness and constancy of their mutual love**.

- The woman trusts that her beloved desires her, even through difficulties and misunderstandings.
- The man trusts in her beauty, her worth, and her devotion.

They **believe that their love is real, lasting, and precious**, despite the world's challenges.

## 2. They Trust in the Power of Intimacy and Vulnerability

They entrust their **whole selves**—body, soul, emotions—to one another.

- The woman opens herself without shame, even when hurt.
- The man praises and delights in her, embracing her fully.

This **radical vulnerability** is a profound act of trust.

## 3. They Trust in the Symbolism of the Garden and Covenant

The garden, the sealed heart, the intimate language are all signs they trust in a **sacred, covenantal love that transcends time and circumstance**.

This shows they trust in something **eternal and unbreakable** beyond fleeting feelings.

## 4. They Trust in the Language of Desire and Beauty

Their trust is also expressed in how they celebrate each other's physical and spiritual beauty with confidence. They trust that this celebration **builds a strong foundation** for their union.

## 5. They Trust in Their Own Longing and Seeking

When apart, they still seek and yearn for each other, trusting that **their love will draw them back together**. In essence, They trust love itself—not just as feeling, but as a sacred bond, a covenant, a living reality that sustains them.

**Why the long journey between man and woman? Because we ask, is God a part of the book?**

### **1. Direct Mentions? No.**

- The text itself does **not name God**, nor include direct prayers or theological statements.
- There's no direct dialogue about God or divine commandments.

### **2. God's Presence in the Background (Theological Interpretation)**

Despite the lack of explicit mention, **Jewish and Christian traditions have long seen the book as deeply connected to God's presence:**

- **Jewish tradition** often reads it allegorically, interpreting the lovers as **God and Israel**, showing the covenantal love God has for His people.
- **Christian tradition** interprets the book as a metaphor for the love between **Christ and the Church** (the soul of believers).

So, while God isn't named, many see Him **woven through the themes of covenant, love, faithfulness, and intimacy.**

### **3. God as the Ground of Love**

From a spiritual perspective:

- The deep, mutual love portrayed **reflects God's design for human relationships.**

- The sacredness and beauty of love in the book can be seen as a **glimpse into God’s original intent for marriage and union.**
- The trust, commitment, and joy between the lovers echo **God’s faithful love** (Hebrew *chesed*).

#### 4. Silent but Present

You could say God is like the **silent witness** to the love story—a presence that undergirds the entire poem without a single word because God is not explicitly mentioned in the text.

#### The Bible’s Foundation: Trusting God Alone

Throughout Scripture—from Genesis to Revelation—there is a clear and consistent message:

**Our ultimate trust, faith, and hope belong to God alone.**

- “Trust in the LORD with all your heart...” (Proverbs 3:5)
- “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11:6)

This absolute trust forms the foundation for all aspects of life, including relationships.

#### 2. Song of Solomon’s Emphasis on Human Love

The *Song of Solomon* focuses almost exclusively on the **human experience of intimate love**—the joy, desire, longing, and vulnerability between two people.

- It celebrates **the beauty and sanctity of love** created by God, expressed through human connection.
- Yet, it does so **without explicitly mentioning God**, which can feel like a variance at first glance.

### 3. Is There a Variance?

- The *Song* **does not contradict** the Bible's overall call to trust God; rather, it **highlights the gift and mystery of human love** as part of God's good creation.
- The absence of direct references to God in the *Song* **does not mean God is absent from the experience of love.**
- Instead, the *Song* invites us to **see intimate love as a sacred space where trust is exercised between two people—reflecting, in a limited way, the ultimate trust we place in God.**

### 4. Human Love as a Reflection and a Testimony of Divine Love

- Human intimate love, when pure and covenantal, **mirrors God's love**—faithful, committed, unending.
- The trust between lovers is a **reflection of the trust we are called to place in God.**
- So, even if the lovers place trust primarily in one another, **their relationship ideally points beyond itself to God as the ultimate foundation.**

### 5. The Balance

- In daily life, we do **trust and rely on people**—spouses, friends, family. That is natural and God-given.
- But **ultimate hope, security, and faith rest in God alone which is reflected most clearly on earth in our intimate love with another.**
- The *Song of Solomon* invites us to delight in human love **without losing sight of the divine source** that makes love possible and holy.

**The Bible's perspective on this is primarily about:**

- **Mutual consent**
- **Love and respect**
- **Faithfulness within marriage**

**Here's how Scripture supports that idea:**

### **1. Enjoying Each Other**

Song of Solomon is an entire poetic celebration of romantic and physical love between two lovers who delight in each other's presence and bodies.

- The tone is one of **joy, freedom, and mutual pleasure**.
- While the specifics aren't spelled out in terms of rules, the **celebration of love and desire** suggests a freedom within the bounds of marriage to enjoy each other intimately.

### **2. Avoiding Exploitation or Coercion**

The Bible doesn't give a detailed "rulebook" for exactly what couples may or may not do, but it makes it clear that:

- Intimacy should be **voluntary and loving** (1 Corinthians 7:5 warns against depriving one another except by mutual consent for a time).
- Sexual acts that **harm, exploit, or degrade** one another would be against the biblical spirit of love and respect.

### **3. Freedom Within God's Design**

- Within marriage, the couple has **freedom to express intimacy in ways that honor and delight both partners**, as long as it is loving, consensual, and faithful.

- The Bible calls marriage a **safe, joyful, and sacred space** for sexual expression.

#### 4. Mutual Consent and Authority Over Each Other's Bodies

*“The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.”*

— 1 Corinthians 7:4 (NIV)

This passage emphasizes **mutual control and giving** over each other's bodies, implying: Both spouses have equal say in the sexual relationship. That Mutual agreement and respect are key. And There is a freedom to share intimacy according to what both agree on.

Quick review of authority over the marriage bed: Because it is often misrepresented.

- In the original Greek, the word often translated as “**authority**” is “**ἐξουσία**” (**exousia**), which means **power, right, authority, or control**. (Does NOT exist outside of marriage)
- This mutual authority means **both spouses have the right and freedom to intimate relations** within marriage. (Only protected as a right WITHIN Marriage)
- So, Paul is saying the husband and wife **each have authority or control over the other's body** in the context of marital intimacy. (BECAUSE THIS DOES NOT EXIST OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE)
- It's a **mutual giving and receiving**, not domination, but shared authority. BECAUSE it is an expression of what has changed from before marriage. Before marriage we maintained OUR OWN authority over ourselves.
- This mutual “authority” is a unique covenant gift and responsibility God gives to married couples. WHY? Because of the correlation to His eternal love and promise and covenant with us which cannot be examined except for the WHOLE image of love which only marriage can provide.

**If both spouses are in agreement, the Bible supports their freedom to explore intimacy together**, as long as it is done lovingly, consensually, and with respect.

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WHAT is Marriage and what is not?

I am in direct agreement with the bible concerning Marriage. Because it has been my **direct** experience that in all sexual and intimate relationships outside of “marriage”, a person can either give their body, or their mind, or their emotional heart, or their spirit, or their conditional love or their conditional trust to another, but never all six. We can love a person deeply and passionately. But **Passion** is not a measure of ones eternal or full connection to another and theirs to us. Passion is a sensation of the depth of ones OWN longing. It CAN be mutually acknowledged. It is not a shared spirit, but a relative experience based on the self of each person. Being singular, passion alone usually becomes obsession and fear driven need for control and security, (because we judge OUR passion against the level of the OTHER persons passion and call this “Commitment”) and when not secured mutually and spiritually as well, leads to jealousy and paranoia.

It is ONLY when BOTH people make the full decision within themselves to devote ALL 6 of the fullness of their “authority” to another of, Body, Mind, Heart, Spirit, faithful Trust and unconditional Love - offering that to one another FREELY as their gift to the other that the other also FREELY offers to them... that a couple can be considered “Married”. Because we cannot look upon any particular tradition, law, ritual, custom or rule as to who is married and who is not, as revealed by the intimate expressions in the Song of Solomon and the absence of God or religion in the choice between the two. It is a sacred vow given between two people who even in SECRET is made covenant, and when expressed before others, (such as a ceremony announcement of their mutual decision and love, becomes then ON earth as it is in Heaven which allows the 7th factor of God to offer His portion to the “marriage” which is the AND. Such as Ryan AND Colleen. Until such time, God gives ALL authority and Choice and Rights to US for not one of us can be coerced to give those 6 sacred personal rights to another. We can only choose to do so ourselves. And when two make the choice to give all six to each other, then God “blesses” the

marriage with the HOLY SPIRIT as well, now as ONE spirit within TWO people, instead of dwelling within each exclusively to their own life.

**Fornication** cannot offer all six of the requirements for fulfillment of the SPIRIT of the union. Just like missing ingredients in a meal, thus souring the meal. Likewise, **Adultery** cannot offer all six of the requirements either. Therefore the needed eternal element of God's Holy Spirit can never dwell within the two. Two can be "officially and legally" married on the earth, and still not be married before the throne of God because of the lack of one or more missing elements found within one or both of the partners. THUS, if you lust after another in your heart, you have committed adultery because your heart is no longer given to your mate. (Likewise lust after money, security, fame, pride, respect - remember the Song of Solomon)

SO, outside of the obvious two aforementioned derivatives of fornication and adultery, who can say who is married and who is NOT except the two for whom the authority is given by God to determine between themselves? Therefore, let us NOT judge any couple we see on this earth, in any manner or fashion. For their bond has authority given by God to determine between themselves, and it is God alone who chooses to also enter into their bond or not. We do not have authority over another's "Marriage" but have authority ONLY over our own. And that authority is bound still to the element of God's spirit of Love, as the originator of love, needed and sought after also to maintain the marriage longevity. THAT is the divine nature of the marriage bond - the authority of our freely given choices to one another and God's acknowledgement to sanctify that choice with grace.

And JUST as we daily deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Christ - SO TO do we **daily** devote ourselves and the authority of our selfs to the other person in our Marriage. It is wise always to inventory ourselves if we have stopped offering any of the 6 elements of marriage to our spouses, and seek quickly to heal whatever may be currently blocking us from doing so. All that is required to maintain security in the marriage during those troubled times is acknowledgement of the lack, and commitment to seek healing to restore it. Anyone who ALSO loves the other partner will desire and seek to be a part of that healing and restoration as well. Because with God's Holy Spirit, understanding and wisdom and acceptance of one another are still accessible even during darker times so long as we can be honest about our difficulty before God.