

# Wings

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*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## Tend Your Garden

Marriages, like gardens, require a lot of hard work to keep them healthy and productive. The couple that reaps the fruit of that labor will be grateful they invested the effort.

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. . . . Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits” (Song of Solomon 4:12, 13, 15).

The Song of Solomon is written as a dialogue between two lovers (with occasional commentary thrown in from the “daughters of Jerusalem,” a sort of choral accompaniment). In this passage, the bridegroom addresses his bride as a garden, full of all manner of delightful fruits and spices. The bride responds with an invitation to her lover to “come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.”

If you want an erotic thrill, read 5:1 to see how this exchange turns out. Our concern here, however, is not with the conjugal nature of this couple’s relationship, but with the metaphor that is used

to describe that relationship, that of a garden full of fruits and spices.

That metaphor holds a lesson for couples today who are seeking to build a strong and stable marriage. Fruitful gardens do not grow on their own. They are the result of a lot of hard work. Tilling, fertilizing, weeding, pruning, pest control, watering — all of these activities must be attended to regularly in order for the garden to remain healthy and productive. Without this maintenance, a garden will degenerate into a weed patch and eventually die. The same thing will happen to a marriage if a couple does not work hard to prevent it.

Having made that point, however, I ask you to go back and read the opening text carefully. You will notice that the garden metaphor is specifically applied to the *bride*, not to the marriage in general. Husbands need to get a clue here. If a man desires to have a wife who is happy, supportive, and loving, then he must invest the time and effort to ensure that his “garden” is thriving. This interpretation is supported by Paul’s admonition to husbands to “nourish and cher-

ish” their wives (Eph. 5:29), language that reinforces the idea of tending and feeding a growing organism. (Think also of Adam’s role in the Garden of Eden to “tend and keep it” [Gen. 2:15]. So when Eve came along, he had *two* gardens to care for—lucky guy!)

This does not mean that a successful marriage is entirely the husband’s responsibility; nor does it imply that if the marriage fails, it is automatically the husband’s fault. The wife also has a duty to make her husband’s stewardship over the family as pleasant and easy as possible (Eph. 5:22-24; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). The garden must respond to the tender care it is being given.

Couples, especially husbands, would do well to keep this garden metaphor in front of them constantly. They must work hard to keep their romance alive, to root out the little weeds that frequently pop up and threaten to choke their love for each other. There is nothing glamorous about this work; it’s hard, messy, and sometimes frustrating. But a strong and happy marriage is worth every bit of that work.

– David King