

Relational Foundations  
August 23, 2020  
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Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) 2:15-3:5

The book Song of Solomon (also known as Song of Songs) is often both avoided and misunderstood. It's a book that *"contains beautiful and sensuous poetry expressing romantic love between a young man (a shepherd, 1:7) and a young woman (a shepherdess, 1:8) in ancient Israel."* It's the story of their courtship, marriage, and intimate relationship.

One commentator notes: *"This unusual Bible book makes no theological statement. It unveils no fresh revelations. It makes no mention of the divine Law, or the Lawgiver. And it seems to have little or nothing to say about our personal relationship with the Lord."*<sup>i</sup>

What gets the most attention from those who start reading this book are the explicit metaphors describing anatomy and intimacy. Things like, *"...the scent of your breath like apples, and your mouth like the best wine."* [Not so racy] *"Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies."*<sup>ii</sup> [Okay, that's a little strange] Then we get to descriptions like, *"Your stature is like a palm tree...I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit."*<sup>iii</sup> [By the way, all that comes AFTER the wedding!]

David Platt: *"There are things in this book we don't normally talk about in sermons or even in public company...navels, and bellies, and breasts, oh my! THIS is in the Bible?"* Yes, it IS in our Bible. How are we to look at it?

Here is how I have chosen to approach this lesson. We will look at the verses we've been assigned. But I also want to answer some "big picture" questions:

- Why would God put this sensuous love poetry in scripture?
- Is this an allegory for God's love for us or simply love poetry describing passionate, romantic, and yes, sexual love between a husband and wife?

- Why all the “racy” language in the Bible? What should we take away?
- The real question: What is God saying to His people through this book?
- I’m going to give you my answer to that one right now in the big idea.

Big Idea: God gave romance, passion, and sex as a gift to be enjoyed in a monogamous marriage. Those things are crucial to the “two becoming one.” The Song of Solomon makes it clear it’s not ungodly or unseemly for husbands and wives to enjoy that gift in the privacy of their bedroom between the two of them.

- Let’s begin by looking at this morning’s text beginning in chapter two, verse sixteen [we will circle back to verse fifteen shortly.]

<sup>16</sup>My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

<sup>17</sup>Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains.

- The context of these verses is right before the wedding. The young woman is dreaming and desiring the day when she and her beloved will become one in every sense of the term.
- Verse sixteen is a clear picture of one man and one woman exclusive to each other in intimate relationship. He “is mine, and I am his.”
- Verse seventeen – **“he pastures his flock among the lilies [is] Most likely a euphemism. Elsewhere, lips are compared to lilies (5:13) and the woman herself is called a lily (2:1–2). The image here probably indicates physical intimacy...”<sup>iv</sup>** She is looking forward to the honeymoon!
- Tommy Nelson teaching on Song of Solomon says this about the couple and their wedding night: *“...whenever I marry a couple, and I say, “I give you Mr. and Mrs. Whatever, what God has joined together let no man set asunder.” Actually, that is not a completely correct statement, because you are not one until you have sex. You have a spiritual commitment, an emotional commitment, a financial commitment, a domestic commitment,*

*and then you mesh your bodies, you mesh your emotions, you take your DNA, you wrap it around her DNA, you create a being in the image of the God that looks like the both of you. That is oneness. And so marriage and sex is the means by which oneness occurs.”*

- It is clearly God’s plan for a husband and wife to enjoy romantic, passionate, physical intimacy. In fact, the Apostle Paul tackled this topic very openly in 1 Corinthians 7:3 and 5:

<sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>v</sup>

- Some of you ladies may be thinking, “THAT was written by a man!”
- That same man (Paul) advocated for singleness and celibacy, that was his situation. However, he was realistic about the fact that God gave us these desires and most people are not wired to be single and celibate. He wrote in verse nine of 1 Corinthians 7, <sup>9</sup> *But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*  
<sup>vi</sup>
- The reality is that God created marriage in the Garden of Eden. Before sin came into the world Adam and Eve lived in perfect oneness. The beauty of the marriage relationship is really a look backward to Eden before the fall.
- In chapter three it appears our bride is recounting a dream she had about searching for her “beloved” and betrothed.

<sup>1</sup>On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. <sup>2</sup>I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. <sup>3</sup>The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” <sup>4</sup>Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. <sup>5</sup>I adjure you, O

daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

- I'll admit, I find verse four's reference about taking her beloved to her mother's bedroom a little weird. Some scholars say this is actually an indication of restraint in going to Mama's room and not her own bedroom.
- Verse five confirms that though this young "shepherdess" is passionately longing for her betrothed, she waiting until after the wedding. She said to her young women friends, "*not to awaken love until the time is right.*"<sup>vii</sup>
- The waiting was almost over. The wedding is covered in the next verses.
- Now, let's get back to those "big picture" questions we talked about.
- **Why would God put this book of love poetry in His Word?** Why wouldn't He? God gave us the gift of sexual love to be properly expressed in a monogamous marriage, why would He ignore the topic in His word.
- My take: sometimes Christ-followers are too uptight about things like sex. I believe God put this in the "wisdom literature" of scripture to teach us to not be so uptight about intimacy between a husband and wife alone.
- **Is this an allegory for God's love for us, or love poetry describing passionate, romantic, and sexual love between a husband and wife?**
- For centuries it was seen as an allegory, not so much in the past century.
- The Jews believed it was an allegorical story about God's love for Israel.
- Christians for centuries believed it was about Jesus love for the church. Certainly, in Ephesians 5:25, Paul told husbands to love our wives "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."<sup>viii</sup>
- Most scholars today see Song of Solomon for what it appears to be, a picture of what romance and sex look like between a husband and wife.

- I believe it DOES communicate how God loves us by giving us this beautiful intimacy as a gift to be enjoyed in the proper relationship.
- **Why all the “racy” language in the Bible?** Relative to the rest of scripture, it is a bit “racy.” Relative to our world since the sexual revolution, it’s downright quaint. I believe the point of these explicit metaphors is to convey that we shouldn’t be ashamed or uptight about sex but we also shouldn’t be “smutty” in how we think and talk about it.
- Jay Harvey writes, *“So much of the culture’s presentation of sexuality is crass, lacking the beauty and mystery that should characterize the physical consummation and enduring love of marriage. A study of the Song of Solomon can revise our understanding and help us reclaim in holiness the sexual expression that God has created and declared good. This inspired poem encourages husbands and wives are to share their adoration for each other with joy. The Song of Solomon contains sexual imagery in parts and is full of declarations of love and adoration. But the language is tasteful, poetic, and beautiful. It is ancient, divinely inspired language from another time. We need the fresh perspective on love and sexuality that the Song of Solomon offers.”*<sup>x</sup>
- **How does God feel about a husband and wife enjoying His gift of romance and sex?**

• Just look at Song of Solomon 4:16-5:1. It’s the wedding night. She [says] Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

He [says] **5** I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.

Others [say] Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love! <sup>x</sup>

- Who are the “others” or “friends” speaking? The Bible Knowledge Commentary on 5:1b: *“Only their Creator would have been a “guest” on that occasion. Since their love was from Him it was fitting that He approve it. He invited them to enjoy sexual love in marriage as if it were a banquet (“eat ... and drink”). This clearly indicates God’s approval of marriage, which He designed in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:24).”*<sup>xi</sup>

- Remember, sex was God’s idea! He created it not only for procreation, but also for enjoyment and to deepen the intimacy between husband and wife.
- I skipped over chapter two verse fifteen earlier. Let’s look at it quickly.

<sup>15</sup>“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.”

- If you’ve ever had critters eat up your plants and fruit you get the picture.
- “Little foxes” are relationship problems that can spoil God’s vineyard of marriage. If you’ve been married for very long you can spot those foxes. They are the behaviors and unresolved issues that spoil intimacy.
- The young bride-to-be was wise in asking her man to “catch” them. That means pay attention and be on the lookout to eliminate them.
- We can’t enjoy a peaceful and joyful marriage, much less satisfying physical intimacy, if there are unresolved relationship issues. We need to trap them and deal with them so our marital “vineyard” can blossom!

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Again, my opinion: Sometimes Christ-followers are too uptight about things and I believe God put this in the “wisdom literature” of scripture to teach us to not be so uptight when it’s just a husband and wife alone.
- God gave romance, passion, and sex as a gift to be enjoyed in a monogamous marriage. They are crucial to the “two becoming one.”
- The Song of Solomon makes it clear it’s not ungodly or unseemly for husbands and wives to relax and enjoy that gift in the privacy of their bedroom between the two of them.
- As the voice of God said to the honeymooners on their wedding night: “Eat, friends, and drink; drink your fill of love.”<sup>xii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Richards, L. O. (1987). [\*The teacher’s commentary\*](#) (p. 355). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.  
<sup>ii</sup> [Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (So 7:2–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.  
<sup>iii</sup> [Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (So 7:2–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

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- iii [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (So 7:7–9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- iv Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (So 2:16). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- v [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 7:2–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- vi [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 7:9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- vii Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (So 3:5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- viii The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Eph 5:25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- ix <https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-study-the-book-of-song-of-solomon/>
- x [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (So 4:16–5:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- xi Deere, J. S. (1985). [Song of Songs](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1020). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- xii [The New International Version](#). (2011). (So 5:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.