

makes him a very bad example of married love for Israel. Third, the book mentions Solomon but general as a distant, even idealized figure.”¹

Picture and Ponder

“This is how the Song speaks to us today, whether we are looking for love, in love, out of love, forsaken and disillusioned by love, or totally confused about the whole subject. Our desire to love and be loved by a human being is at its core simply a reflection of our desperate need to love and be loved by the God who made us for himself.”²

Day 2- Chapter 1-2

“The poems in the Song do not follow a strict chronological sequence but flash back and forward as they illustrate different themes or aspects of love.”³

1. The girl in these love songs is the speaker of nearly two-thirds of the dialogue. How would you describe her from verses 2-4?
 - a. What is she attracted to besides the physical, according to verse 3?
 - b. How does she exhibit insecurity as well as confidence in verses 5-6?
 - c. What is she worried about because of her brother’s demands on her according to verse 6?

Scholar's Note: *She is dark* (Song 1:5), which here is not a racial feature but a social feature: it comes not from her birth and ethnicity but from having been forced to work outside in the vineyards, where the harsh glare of the sun has darkened her complexion...In ancient cultures...the sign of being a wealthy woman was the ability to stay out of the sun. Poor people worked in the fields where their skin became darker and darker, while rich women stayed indoors and could keep their skin pale.⁴

2. Chapters 1 and 2 are the beginning of the romance before the wedding and marriage. What kind of affirmations do the two lovers give each other in this section?

Picture and Ponder

"...the eager desire for sex is not denigrated or squelched but affirmed as something good and appropriate, not just for young men but for young women as well—which would have been countercultural in its ancient context."⁵

3. These are romantic love songs, but remember they are wisdom literature and show us God's design for living wisely. Verse 2:15 reminds us that even in this idealized love story there are things that can spoil a relationship and we are wise to catch them before they wreak havoc. What "foxes" would need "catching" in a relationship before it causes problems? (See 2:7 for one idea)

For Discussion

When talking to young people about not having sex before marriage how do you think emphasizing the beauty of passion, intimacy, and sex in marriage rather than just what not to do might give them a vision of God's purpose in waiting?



Passion and desire make their entrance on the first note of this love song. The woman expressing these feelings is the main character of these songs and she is not the stereotypical shrinking violet that some imagine a godly woman should be. The Jewish Study Bible suggests that she may have written this book and dedicated it to King Solomon. Whatever the case, she is portrayed as a strong and equal partner in love.

- ◆ What do you learn about desire from this sacred book of the Bible?
- ◆ How does this chapter shape or challenge your view of your role as a marriage partner?
- ◆ Everyone wants to feel desired. Think about how you can affirm your spouse so that he knows he is your beloved.

Picture and Ponder

"The intensity of the heavenly love with which Christ has loved us relativizes all our earthly desires. Jesus loved perfectly as a human being without ever being married, or enjoying the kind of intimacy and sexual pleasure that our hearts and bodies so easily feel that we cannot live well without. This means that if God's perfect plan for us doesn't involve sex and marriage (which always go together in God's plan), we are not somehow less than human or doomed to live unfulfilled and unsatisfied lives. Equally, if we have failed in our sexual or marital history, what counts far more than our record of unfaithfulness is the faithfulness that our heavenly Husband has shown to us. Human marriage is a pointer to Christ's love; if we have the reality, then everything else may fade away."⁶



One commentator asks, "If you are married to Christ, [as all believers are] is that relationship the center of your thinking? Do you find yourself dreaming about him, lost in amazement at how wonderful Christ is, how incredible it is that he should love you, and longing for more of his presence? Do you constantly wear out your friends and relations with your endless chatter about how wonderful your Beloved is?"⁷ If your answer, like mine, is no, the solution to our "self-centeredness is worship: beholding the beauty of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ."⁸

◆ Spend some time meditating on the wonderful things you love about Jesus. (write them in the margin if you like.)

◆ Praise and thank God for his unfailing love for you and rest in this love as you soak in these verses:


Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Psalm 90:14 (NIV 84)

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but my steadfast love shall not depart from you...Isaiah 54:10a

Day 3- Chapters 3-5:1

1. In 3:1-4 the young woman is dreaming about searching for her beloved. How do you think her dream shows that:

- love is hard work-
- love can be risky-
- intimacy, not just sex is important-
- commitment keeps love going-

 Dreams can sometimes express our fears, insecurities, and desires. In our lovesick girl's dream, we see her passionate pursuit of her beloved. She is desperate for the one whom her soul loves. She does not give up, but searches until she finds him.

◆ How are you pursuing your mate?

◆ How are you cultivating intimacy in your marriage?



Our relationship with God deserves the same passion for intimacy. God says in Jeremiah 29:13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.* The wonderful thing is God is searching for you as well. Jesus is the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one lost lamb.

- ◆ What do you think intimacy with God looks like?

- ◆ How are you pursuing God?

- ◆ We all have times when we don't feel like God loves us or is seeking us; what do we do when we feel like this?

2. The wedding at long last has arrived and their love can be consummated (Ch. 4). How is the beauty and goodness of God's design for married love shown in this love song?

- a. What does the groom's admiration and celebration of the bride's body, recorded in Scripture, teach us about our bodies and how God made them and how we should view them?

Day 4- Chapters 5:2-6:13

1. In 5:2-8 the bride is having another dream. What are the similarities and differences between this dream and her dream in 3:1-4?

- a. Summarize the story about her and her husband that her dream is telling.

b. What fear do you think her dream is revealing?

Scholar's Note: "Presumably, [the watchmen in the dream] took her to be a prostitute, especially if her "mantle" is to be understood as a light and flimsy garment rather than a proper covering."⁹ Part of the job of the watchmen was to guard against illicit sexual encounters.

2. Remember this is poetry/love song, not narrative, so we don't know where dream ends, and real life begins because poems and songs don't follow our structured way of thinking. So, in verses 8 and 9 the daughters of Jerusalem are back, and they ask our distraught bride why exactly her beloved is so great. How does she describe her husband in the last line of 5:16?

a. How does her admiration and celebration of his body in verses 10-16 fit with her description of her husband as beloved and friend?

Picture and Ponder

"This is one of the few poems (5:10-16) that has come down to us from the ancient world in which the female gives an inventory of the male's features...Her description witnesses to the uniqueness of this little book in its world in that it illustrates in its own way the equality of position and freedom that she enjoys."¹⁰

3. What does she remember in 6:2-3 that calms her fear that her beloved is gone forever?

Digging Deeper

In this section of the love song the ideal is replaced with the real. The honeymoon is over and the couple is not in synch. Her dream in the song represents the constant

struggle to put someone else's needs above your own. In the following Scripture, how does Paul address this struggle in the context of sex and marriage?

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 *The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* (NLT)



How can you put your husband's interests above your own?

For Discussion

Throughout the Song of Songs, we hear a form of the refrain *I am my beloved's and he is mine*. What are all the implications of this in a marriage relationship?



The new wife is afraid that because she did not respond right away to her husband's knock on the door, he has abandoned her. She eventually remembers their commitment to one another and knows that he would not leave her—they belong to each other. However, in this broken world, abandonment, infidelity, neglect, betrayal and unforgiveness break into our marriages and relationships and cause untold heartbreak. We must turn our eyes to Jesus, the only who is actually more than we can imagine and hope for; the only one who will always keep his promises. He promises to never leave; to never forsake his own.

Scholar's Note: 6:13 “Literally, he calls her Shulammite, which some have taken to be her name, or the place where she is from. But I think it is better understood as a title drawn from the word shalom, which means “peace” or “wholeness.” She is the perfect one for him, the one who brings him peace and wholeness (see Song 8:10).”¹¹

Day 5- Chapters 7-8

1. What do you think the woman is expressing in 7:10?

Picture and Ponder


"Sex was invented by God to be delightful in its own right as a way to bless your spouse and for him or her to bless you. It wasn't intended to be fun for men and a necessary nuisance for women; on the contrary, it was supposed from the beginning to be a mutually enriching experience of great joy for both."¹²

2. The poetry in chapter 8 affirms the continuing passion of married love if it is nurtured and valued. In verse 6 she asks her husband-lover to set her as a seal on his heart and arm. What do you think is the significance of *heart* and *arm*?

Scholar's Note: "In antiquity, seals were among a person's most precious possessions. They were used to sign documents and to mark ownership of precious objects... the image of the seal describes her longing that their relationship remain inextricably bonded and exclusively committed, until death parts them."¹³

For Discussion

What do you think it means that *love is strong as death*?

 Several trusted scholars do not see Solomon as the groom in the love song, but as a poor contrast to the lovers. In 8:11 Baal-hamon means, *husband of a crowd*. Solomon may have his harem of 700 wives, while the shepherd and shepherdess have each other only, but they are supremely happy with God's design for marriage.

- ◆ Spend some time praying for your marriage. Ask God to renew your love for your spouse and your delight in him. Think about ways you could build up intimacy, passion, desire and satisfaction in your sex life.

3. How does this love song from the Bible challenge or reshape your views on sex, gender roles, romantic love and marriage?

For Discussion

How does Song of Songs and its picture of the beauty, goodness and delight of sex in marriage help us address the sexual issues of our day ie: sex before marriage, homosexuality, gender issues, open marriage, pornography etc.?

Picture and Ponder

"We are all broken people, and the answer that the Song gives to our sexual brokenness is to show us with incredible beauty what sexual wholeness would actually look like: one man and one woman deeply and permanently bonded together in a unique relationship of love."¹⁴



"The Bible begins with a blind date (when Adam opens his eyes to see Eve) and ends with a wedding reception (where all of us get to dance with Jesus)."¹⁵ The marriage imagery throughout the Bible is a shadow of the real thing that it reflects. If you belong to Jesus you have a groom who loves you perfectly and has sacrificed his life to make you beautiful. Reflect on the Revelation 19:6-8

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

*“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;
it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”–*

¹ ESV Study Bible

² Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 11). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

³ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (pp. 156-157). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 14). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 57). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 11). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 102). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Expositor's Commentary

¹¹ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 131). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹² Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 137). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹³ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (pp. 146-147). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴ Duguid, Iain M.. Song of Songs (Reformed Expository Commentary) (p. 9). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ The Love of Loves in the Song of Songs by Philip G. Ryken