

“Song of Songs” – Part 1

“My love is as a fever, longing still For that which longer nurseth the disease, Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill, Th’ uncertain sickly appetite to please. My reason, the physician to my love, Angry that his prescriptions are not kept, Hath left me, and I desperate now approve Desire is death, which physic did except.” Shakespeare – Love Sonnet 147

Isn’t that beautiful? Isn’t Shakespeare just the greatest? Now, does anybody have a clue what it means? I really don’t. Why is Shakespeare so hard to read and understand? If he really is the greatest writer ever, then why can’t we understand him? We can’t understand him because nobody writes like that anymore. Nobody uses words like that. That was a different time and the meaning of words have changed as times have changed.

Shakespeare wrote in English (believe it or not) but he lived about 500 years ago. So, you can imagine how difficult it is to translate and understand poetry written in Hebrew from 3,000 years ago. That is part of the problem with the book called “Song of Songs” or “Song of Solomon.” That’s part of the reason most preachers don’t preach on it. Do you know any other reason? Another reason is that it might make you blush in parts of it.

If you have never read the book, I encourage you to go home and read the whole story. But just read it to yourself or maybe to your spouse. That might be fun. But don’t read it to the kids as a bedtime story. I promise they will have some questions you might not be ready for. But it’s a fascinating book and as we make our way toward Valentines Day and toward our marriage seminar coming up February 4 and 5, I thought it would be good to get a view of sex and marriage as God intended.

That’s really what this book is about. Yes, some old school commentators want to make it into an allegory that has a hidden meaning. They want to say that the man in the story that is Solomon represents Christ and the woman, his bride, is the church. And they allegorize every last detail into ridiculousness. Most of these commentators lived a hundred years ago or more and talk of sex was taboo even if it was in the Bible.

But this is God’s word to show God’s will about how sex and marriage should be. This is the ideal and God wants you to know it and He wants you to read this book. I promise to be mindful that there may be little ones listening. That won’t be a problem. In fact, I think teenagers and young people need to hear this more than anybody because where else are they going to hear the truth about love, sex and marriage?

The book is obviously written by Solomon and I know what you might be thinking. Didn’t Solomon have 700 wives and 300 concubines? Is he really the best man to write about the ideal marriage? Well, having a lot of experience with weddings doesn’t make you an expert on marriage. That’s for sure. But in **1 Kings 4** we are told that Solomon was the wisest man on the planet. God gave him that wisdom and later Solomon squandered that wisdom and made at least 1,000 bad choices but what we have in this book is Solomon in his prime. This is evidently his first wife and his first real love and it is exactly what God wanted for him and what God wants for anybody that gets married.

This book is not written like the other books of the Bible. Think of it like a play or a musical. There are parts that are said by Solomon and parts said by his wife and parts said by her girlfriends. It’s poetry. It’s a song. It’s real-life dating, courtship and marriage that happened about 3,000 years ago but the overall theme is applicable to us today.

It starts with Solomon who is called “Lover” and his soon-to-be wife called “Beloved” talking about each other. They are not married yet and the first paragraphs are all the young girls admiring handsome young King Solomon. He was the king at this point but evidently was spending time with his sheep like a common shepherd. And why would he lower himself to this? So, he can check out the hottie in the vineyard next door, of course.

Let’s read a little bit. Turn to **Song of Songs chapter 1** and let’s read **verse 2** through about **verse 7**.

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—
for your love is more delightful than wine.*

*3 Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;
your name is like perfume poured out.*

No wonder the young women love you!

*4 Take me away with you—let us hurry!
Let the king bring me into his chambers.*

Friends

*We rejoice and delight in you;
we will praise your love more than wine.*

She

How right they are to adore you!

*5 Dark am I, yet lovely,
daughters of Jerusalem,
dark like the tents of Kedar,
like the tent curtains of Solomon.*

*6 Do not stare at me because I am dark,
because I am darkened by the sun.*

*My mother's sons were angry with me
and made me take care of the vineyards;
my own vineyard I had to neglect.*

*7 Tell me, you whom I love,
where you graze your flock
and where you rest your sheep at midday.*

*Why should I be like a veiled woman
beside the flocks of your friends?*

So, evidently what has happened, at least according to my commentaries is probably Solomon has leased out one of his vineyards to a family to run. This family has a mother, some sons and this stepdaughter, the Beloved. The sons didn't like her and made her work in the vineyard all day long and she has gotten quite tan and dark. That wasn't considered attractive back then like some people think of it now. It showed that you were probably poor because you had to work outside.

But I want to keep reading and I want you to listen to the way these two young people talk to each other. Maybe it will remind you of the way you used to talk when you were dating and that's a good thing. Let's pick up with him talking to her in **verse 9**. And remember that this was a different culture and a different time. Your results may vary if you use this line, fellas.

*9) I liken you, my darling, to a mare
among Pharaoh's chariot horses.*

Oh, yeah! That's a classic line. You look like a horse! That gets 'em every time, guys. Yes, use that and see what happens. Actually, to them this would have been quite the compliment. Solomon was a purveyor of fine horses. He brought the best horses in from all over the world and stabled them all over Israel. He knew what to look for in a horse and was impressed by the way his Beloved looked and carried herself. I'm sure she was flattered.

As you continue reading through this book, I want you to notice how much they talk about smell. They mention fragrance and perfume and flowery smells and incense all through here. And think about it. First, they probably didn't shower much and it was a hot, dry climate so it would be easy to smell bad. But also, when you are with your sweetheart and then they leave, can you still smell them on your clothes or in your hair? Hopefully it's in a good way.

Ruth Graham, wife of Billy Graham said that her husband was gone a lot and she would get lonely so she would get one of his shirts and sleep with it because she could smell his scent in the shirt. Smell is a powerful reminder and a powerful help when you need to make a good impression. Listen to what Beloved says in **verses 12-14**. *While the king was at his table,*

my perfume spread its fragrance.

*13 My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh
resting between my breasts.*

*14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms
from the vineyards of En Gedi.*

In researching this, I found it interesting that En Gedi is an oasis surrounded by barren desert but in this oasis there are flowers that grow. She is basically saying that he is a sweet-smelling flower surrounded by a bunch of desert. Again, ladies this may or may not be a great compliment to your man. But let's continue on.

In **verse 15**, he says she is beautiful and has dove eyes. In **16**, she says he is so handsome. She's not quite the poet he is but that's ok. But they are talking sweet to each other. That's good. I know some people get too familiar with each other over the years but I hope you still know how to talk sweet and complimentary to your spouse. And if you notice, sometimes they are together and sometimes they are apart but they never speak anything but good about the other no matter who is around. That's a good lesson to learn. Never talk down about your spouse to other people. If you have a problem with them, tell them but nobody else. You don't want to be talked bad about behind your back. Don't do it to them. Let's continue with chapter two.

With all those compliments, the bride-to-be downplays her beauty just a little. She says she is just a rose of Sharon. Sharon was a plain known still today for having lots of flowers in the springtime. So, Solomon comes back with 2) *You are like a lily among thorns!*

Aww! Isn't that sweet? See guys, that's part of what a woman needs. Not just flowery talk but she needs to be seen by her husband as unique and a standout and beautiful. You keep telling her that and she might overlook the horse comment. Then we get into something that shows what else a woman needs. Look at **verses 3-4**. *Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my beloved among the young men. delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love.*

These two verses, but especially **verse 4**, show how much she wanted to be protected. She wanted to be safe. That's how most women – not all – but most women feel. That is their focus. Men are goal oriented. Women tend to be safety oriented. And here, the Beloved says her man is a tree that protects her but also *"his banner over me is love."*

A banner is associated with the military. It's like a flag. If a soldier gets lost on the battlefield, he might panic and not know which way to run but if he sees his sides' banner, he can run to it and know he will be saved. Beloved says she is safe in his arms and under his banner because his banner is true love. **1 Corinthians 13** says, *"Love always protects and never fails."*

Then she ends this part with a word she uses a couple more times in this book and it could easily be overlooked but it may very well be the theme of their relationship and hopefully of any relationship you have that is between a man and a woman. Look at **verse 7 of chapter 2**. *Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.*

Gazelles and does (or any kind of deer) are shy and timid creatures. If you move too fast, they are easily spooked and run off. Beloved is comparing that to love itself, especially the love of man and wife. Now, it may be that Solomon has fallen asleep. **Verse 6** says his arms are around her. Most commentators believe this is probably their wedding night and she doesn't want anybody to disturb her husband as he sleeps. But this has a much bigger ramification than a sleepy husband. Like I said she uses these same words in other places in this song and it is used more to show wisdom about love than it is not waking somebody up.

Do you believe in love at first sight? You hear people all the time say they fell madly in love the first time they saw their significant other. Well, you may fall madly in lust or fall madly in bed with somebody but true love takes time. I don't doubt there is an instant attraction between two people sometimes but that's not true love. You can't rush love. That's what Beloved here is saying.

Our world is infatuated and saturated with lust. Love has been replaced these days with lust in word and deed. I don't need to give you any examples. All you have to do is pick up your phone, watch TV, drive down the road. It's all over the place. Sex sells and it is celebrated and expected.

But it hasn't always been this way. I watched a great movie the other night: Roman Holiday. Know it? Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, made in 1954. Oh, it's great! Hepburn is a princess who was given some sleeping medicine and, long story short, wakes up in Gregory Peck's apartment the next morning. Nothing happened. Peck was quite the gentleman. But they both were very concerned on how to get her out of there without anybody seeing because it would look bad and the last thing they wanted was for anybody to think something sexual happened. Man! I miss the good old days, right?

It's a shame that reading Song of Songs is taboo even in the church because it uses the word "breasts" but church members will go home and watch all kinds of filth. It's especially dangerous for young people who may not know that God invented sex and in the right situation – marriage between one man and one woman – is a wonderful thing that should be celebrated. But that celebration is only for the couple. Anything outside of marriage between a man and woman is not going to be blessed.

I heard someone compare sex to fire. When you have a fire in the fireplace on a cold winter's eve, there's just something great about that. But if you take that fire and put it on the couch next to you, it's gonna be a big problem. Sex is the same way. When done correctly, God blesses it. If not, there will be consequences. And Paul explains in **1 Corinthians 6** that sexual sin has worse consequences than other sin. He says, *"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body."*

So, when Mrs. Solomon here says, *"Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires"*, she knows what she is talking about. You see, scripture isn't being a buzzkill when it says not to have sex before marriage. It's telling you the way to be blessed. It's telling how not to have consequences, many of which will last the rest of your life.

But I hear ya. For so many it's too late. Almost everybody here has been divorced. We have all made mistakes and some people can't forgive themselves much less believe that God can forgive them. But do you believe scripture? Because **1 John 1:9** says that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Unless it's something sexual...unless it's really bad...unless you did it over and over again...no!

If you truly repent and turn away from that lifestyle and are truly sorry, not just for the consequences, but for displeasing God, if you are truly sorry and ask God to forgive you, then He will. Right now.

Let's bow our heads and close our eyes because some of you need to do business with God right now. Some of you need to repent and ask God for forgiveness and to help you start over. Maybe you have never truly turned your life over to God. Your entire life, not just asking for forgiveness but asking God to come into your life and control you and your situation like only He can. Do that right now as the music plays.