



A SERIES ON SONG OF SONGS

June 26

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July 31

THE SONG OF SOLOMON



LEADERS

SONG OF SONGS

A STUDY

on the book of Song of Solomon

June 26 - July 31

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NOTE TO LEADERS

Our goal in writing these discussion questions is two-fold. We hope to encourage orthodoxy (right thinking) and orthopraxy (right living). Some questions focus on the exegetical work of the text while other questions focus on the practical application of the text.

We always write more questions than time allows. Here are a few suggestions for how to use the guide:

- Use it as a personal devotion throughout the week. If you take a few questions a day then you will have worked through all of the questions in a week.
- As a small group leader, preview the questions and select the ones that you believe are most applicable to your group.
- Use these questions as a beginning point for discussion. Don't feel the need to answer all the questions. As you ask a question it is very likely that it will spark other discussion on the text (interpretation or application) that is not included in this guide...how exciting! This is great news because it means YOU are making connections and seeking to understand the text better in your own contextual setting.
- If you have any questions or wish to discuss these themes further, please feel free to reach out to the church leadership. We would love to hear from you.



A SERIES ON SONG OF SONGS

June 26

SONG THE OF SOLOMON



CHRIST: GOD'S BIG PICTURE

Song of Solomon 1:1-4, 2:8-17

Christ: God's Big Picture

Song of Solomon 1:1-4, 2:8-17

1:1-4

She

1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

For your love is better than wine;

3 your anointing oils are fragrant;

your name is oil poured out;

therefore virgins love you.

4 Draw me after you; let us run.

The king has brought me into his chambers.

Others

We will exult and rejoice in you;

we will extol your love more than wine;

rightly do they love you.

2:8-17

She

8 The voice of my beloved!

Behold, he comes,

leaping over the mountains,

bounding over the hills.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle

or a young stag.

Behold, there he stands

behind our wall,

gazing through the windows,

looking through the lattice.

Christ: God's Big Picture

10 My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away,

11 for behold, the winter is past;
the rain is over and gone.

12 The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree ripens its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away.

14 O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the crannies of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice,
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

15 Catch the foxes for us,
the little foxes
that spoil the vineyards,
for our vineyards are in blossom.”

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

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

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# Christ: God's Big Picture

This week we begin a new series in the Song of Solomon. Other than Revelation, this is perhaps the most misunderstood book of the Bible. Therefore, we must be very careful how we interpret each section of the book.

Here are a few tips to help us along the way:

- It's poetry. So read it like poetry not prose. Not everything is literal. Not EVERYTHING has hidden figurative language. The language is meant to evoke emotion, not endless speculation on the meaning underneath every leaf or rock.

- It's a song. Notice that it is the SONG of songs...not SONGS of songs. In other words, this is meant to be read as ONE song. To rightly understand this book we must read it as a whole.

- It's in the Bible. We must allow Biblical Theology to speak into how this book contributes to the overall narrative of the Bible. What's the big story of the Bible? How does this book give voice to that big story?

- It's short. I suggest you read it through without stopping two times. The first time read it as a love story between a man and a woman who become husband and wife. The second time read it as a love story between Jesus and the church that anticipates the wedding feast of Revelation 19. Then go back and read it slow trying to enjoy the little words of encouragement that you will hear afresh each time.

- It's complicated. If you have an idea that stems from the book then check that idea with the Bible as a whole. Is that idea or truth proclaimed in the law or epistles? Do the Psalms repeat or clarify this idea? Do the prophets or gospel speak to this truth? If not, then most likely it's imagination not inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We must always ask, what's the intended meaning of God as He inspired the writer of Song of Solomon.

# Christ: God's Big Picture

- It's a love story. As you read this love story you will be tempted to add your own cultural understanding of love into the story. Every culture has an idea of what it means to be male or female or what it means to be a husband or wife or what is appropriate and inappropriate in "love and war". As much as possible try to read it with a Biblical lens of manhood and womanhood, love, and marital roles.
- It's erotic. Some of the language present vivid images of love making. Be careful not to allow your mind to wander into unhealthy places. Don't read this book as a voyeur. Heed the repeated words of the bride: Song of Solomon 2:7 - 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.
- It's God's message to you. It doesn't matter if you're male or female, married or single, young or old, widowed or divorced, seeking love or shunning love, this is a book for you.

As you read this book with the help of the Holy Spirit your eyes will be opened to hear and encounter God. May He stir up your love for Him and for one another through this song of all songs.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm,  
for love is strong as death,  
jealousy is fierce as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
the very flame of the LORD.  
7 Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can floods drown it.  
If a man offered for love  
all the wealth of his house,  
he would be utterly despised.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

1. What is your favorite love story and why?

Various. This question is simply an ice breaker to prepare us for the discussion of love.

2. Take some time as a group to go over the background of the book Song of Solomon.

The sermon mentioned several things:

- **There are two main characters set in a historical context:**

Solomon and the Shulammite in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside when Solomon was King of a united Israel. This is a story about love between a man and a woman who eventually become husband and wife.

- **At a deeper level it is the story of Everyman and Everywoman.**

It's not just Solomon's song, but it is OUR song...or at least God is encouraging us to make this ideal relationship our own.

The name Solomon has as its root, "Shalom" Peace. And in 6:13 the woman is referred to as, Shulammite, which is a feminine form of Solomon, which again means, "Shalom". Here is a man and a woman who are empty of everything that shouldn't be in them and filled with everything that should be in them. As a man He is fully Shalom. As a woman she is fully Shalom. And together their Shalom extends out into the community, the KINGDOM, for He is the King and she is the Princess who rules over their people in perfect Shalom, creating a world of Shalom through their love.

So there's an invitation for us to grow into a fully Shalom man or woman.

Because all of scripture is God-breathed and profitable it's a book for the married and the single, for the widowed and divorced, for the young and the old, for those looking for love and those running from love. It's for us all.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

2. Take some time as a group to go over the background of the book Song of Solomon.

(cont'd)

- **A warning of the erotic nature of the book.**

How do we appropriately read and discuss this book?

- **It is a story of God's love for His people (the Church).**

This is a story of the ultimate love relationship between God and His church. And I say that for several reasons:

- I say it because of **what this book is**. It's poetry and therefore must be read as poetry. Poetry deals in the world of symbols, metaphors, similes, analogies, and allegory. Poetry almost always acts on two levels...the literal and figurative meaning. It's to be read with both in mind. Yes it's Solomon and his bride, but it's also God and HIS Bride.
- I say it because of **where this book is**. It's in the Bible and therefore it has to be read in that light. What is the story of the Bible? From Genesis to Revelation it is a story of God's love for His people. This book is no different. If this is not about God's love for us then it would stand utterly apart from the other 65 books in the Bible. As it stands it uniquely contributes to the big story of how God is redeeming us from our sin to be in relationship with Him forever.





*Seal upon your heart*

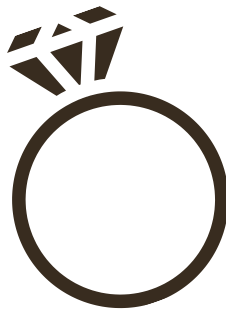
## Discussion Questions

2. Take some time as a group to go over the background of the book Song of Solomon.

(cont'd)

- I say it because of **who is in this book**. Solomon. It's no accident that the SONG of SONGS portrays Solomon as the ultimate lover. Solomon plays a very important role in the Biblical story. In 1 Kings 4 and 2 Samuel 7, a promise was made to David...your SON will sit on the throne forever and will be the promised Messiah that restores true SHALOM to the world. Solomon is depicted in the Old and New Testament as a picture of the coming Messiah. And so in a very real sense, when we read about Solomon's love for the Shulammite, we are reading about Jesus' love for us. Jesus Himself, in Matthew 12, calls himself the true and better Solomon.
- I say it because of **how the main character in this book is portrayed**...as both King and Shepherd. Solomon was certainly a King, but there is no indication that he was a shepherd. Again, it's poetry so the language doesn't have to be literal...Solomon is like a King in that He rules in justice and like a shepherd in that he cares, pursues, and protects this Shulammite. But I do think it's important for us to consider that God often refers to HIMSELF as both KING and SHEPHERD. I think the usage of both in this book is an indication for us to interpret the story as God's love over us.





*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

2. Take some time as a group to go over the background of the book Song of Solomon.

(cont'd)

- I say it because the **Old Testament is constantly representing God's love to His people through a marriage.**
  - It takes place in **Exodus** as God is seen as the jealous husband who enters into a covenant with His bride.
  - It's seen in **Isaiah 54** as the prophet reminds Israel, *"Your husband is your maker."*
  - It's displayed in **Jeremiah 2** as God declares, *"I remember your love as a bride."*
  - It's pictured in **Ezekiel 16**, with language VERY similar to Song of Solomon. One section makes it clear that God is entering into a marriage relationship with Israel: *"When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine."*
  - It's seen in **Hosea** where the husband Hosea becomes a picture for God and Gomer the wife becomes a picture for Israel.
- I could go on with more examples, but I hope you get the point. The main metaphor God uses to express His love toward us is a marriage, so it makes sense to see this book as the ultimate metaphor. The metaphor of metaphors.



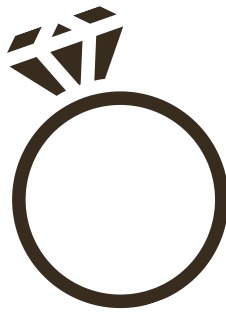
*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

2. Take some time as a group to go over the background of the book Song of Solomon.

(cont'd)

- I say it because **the New Testament continues this marriage image** as it pictures Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as the bride. Matthew 9, 25; John 3; 2 Corinthians 11; Revelation 19, 21, 22.
- I say it because of **Ephesians 5:31-32** - 31 *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* 32 *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*
- I say it because Paul teaches us to take parts of the Old Testament allegorically (Gal. 4:24) and Jesus (Luke 24:44) teaches us to interpret all of Scripture as pointing to Him.
- The majority of ancient rabbis and early church fathers took this book to be about God's love toward His people. There is a great precedence to take this book allegorically.
- **A second warning – don't over interpret this book.** Let poetry be poetry. There isn't hidden meaning behind every word. Not every part of the story is meant to be a one to one parallel between us and God.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

3. Read Song of Solomon 2:8-9, 14, 4:9-10, 6:4-5, 2:10, 13, 4:8, 3:11, 4:1-5. Take some time to discuss Solomon's love for his bride. How does this speak to us about God's great love for us today?

- Too often we forget to meditate upon how much God loves us. This love poem gives us an image of a man madly in love longing to be with the one he loves. This is certainly a good reminder for us as to the heart of God towards His covenant people. Here are a few things to note:
  - God enjoys hearing our voice.
  - God receives great joy from us.
  - God is captivated by us.
  - God pursues us. He is the initiator of this relationship.
  - God is continually inviting us to "come away" with Him.

4. What New Testament parallels do you find with Jesus' love for the church and Solomon's love for his bride?

- Solomon leaps over mountains to get to his bride. Jesus leaps over galaxies to get to his bride. He became flesh to be near us.
- Solomon continually says, "come away with me". Jesus uses this same language with His disciples. His main way of calling a disciple was to come follow me.
- Solomon's heart was gladdened by his bride. Jesus teaches that God is joyful when a sinner repents.
- Solomon is described as both King and Shepherd. Jesus is described as both King (the Kingdom is at Hand) and Shepherd (I am the good shepherd).
- The song speaks of jealous love. God describes Himself as a jealous God.
- Solomon sees his bride as without any flaw. Jesus describes the church as without blemish (because of His cleansing us through His work on the cross).



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

5. What are some reasons people doubt God's love for them and how can we stand firm and resolute in His unconditional love for us?

Various answers including experience, suffering, disappointments, deeming oneself unworthy of love, wrong teaching about God or wrong reading of the scriptures (forgetting to balance truth and grace).

- Meditate on the cross. The cross is the ultimate display of the love of God. For God so LOVED the world He gave His son. A rereading of the gospels can often reorient our heart to see and experiences God's love afresh.
- Sit and listen to how God speaks to you and about you. The Song of Solomon is a great way of reminding ourselves of God's love. Read and reread until it seeps into our heart.
- Stay in community. It is the community of faith that often times God uses to help us experience His love.

6. In what ways has God demonstrated His great love for us both in Scripture and in your present circumstance?

Various.

- In Scripture focus on the stories of God's patience. God's sorrow over humanity. God's provision for people who rejected Him.
- For your present life think of the great gifts that He has given you. Perhaps you don't have everything you want, but I am sure that there are signs of His love in your life.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

7. Read Song of Solomon 1:5-6, 4:7, Ephesians 5:25-27. Discuss the reality of us being sinner and saint at the same time.

- This is a tension we must hold.
- If we ignore our sinfulness then we are prone to “sin that grace may abound.” We don’t fight for holiness, “without which no one will see the Lord.”
- But if we ignore our sainthood then we live miserable dejected lives. We become people who try to please God and earn favor with God and never enjoy a friendship with God.
- Tim Keller helps sum up this tension well: The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

8. What are some false identities you have had about yourself and how does Jesus’ love help reshape how you view yourself?

- The bride in the Song could have allowed culture to define her beauty and worth. I’m dark therefore I am not beautiful. But instead she listens to Solomon’s voice, the one person whose opinion truly matters.
- Here are some lies we might tell our self. I’m no good (Jesus says I am a new creation). I’m too sinful for God to love me (Jesus says I have cleansed you from all unrighteousness). I can’t overcome this sin...I will always be this way (Jesus says no temptation overcomes you without a way of escape). Etc.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

9. Read Song of Solomon 2:16, 6:3, 7:10. Discuss what it means for you to be Christ's and for Christ to be yours. What New Testament verses help develop your thoughts?

- There is great security in our love with Jesus. He will never leave us or forsake us. We will never do anything to separate us from the love of God.
- Verses for further exploration would be all the Union with Christ verses (in Christ or Christ in us) - 1 Cor.3:23, 6:19-20, John 15.

10. In what ways does the Shulammite meditate on Solomon's love? In what ways can we meditate on Jesus' love for us?

The Shulammite takes time to sit and think about Solomon. She goes slowly over who he is and what he has done and how he makes her feel. We can do the same with Jesus:

- Taking time each day to read from the Bible and hear how He describes us.
- Taking an attribute of God and meditating upon it throughout the day.
- Listening to songs that make much of Jesus (focus on Jesus centered songs).
- Practice journaling about God.

11. Read Song of Solomon 1:15-16, 2:2-3 and discuss the call and response of love. What does that look like for us as Christians?

As Solomon expresses his love for the Shulammite she naturally responds to what he has said by using her own words. Notice that Solomon calls her a lily and she calls him an apple tree. As you listen to God speak of you, then take time to use your own words to respond to God.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

12. Take some time to list out attributes of God (communicable and incommunicable) and how this can increase your love for Jesus.

Here are a few attributes you might discuss. He's:

- Infinite
- Personal
- Life Giver
- Life Sustainer
- Self-Existent
- Self-Sufficient
- Omnipresent
- Omnipotent
- Omniscient
- Sovereign
- Eternal
- Immutable
- Perfect
- Holy
- Wise
- Wrathful
- Jealous
- Full of Grace, Mercy and Love
- Truth
- Justice



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

13. How does the third party in this song help or hinder the bride's relationship with Solomon?

At times the daughters of Jerusalem beautify her and prepare her for Solomon, speak words of encouragement (eat, drink, love). At other times they question Solomon's worth, what makes your lover so great? Or they become jealous of the time she spends with Solomon and seek to have her to themselves. The same is true with the watchmen. At times they seem to help her find Solomon or point her in the right direction and at other times they beat her and discourage her pursuit of Solomon.

14. Can you share some examples when people have increased or decreased your love for God?

Various. This is a follow up to the previous question. Like the people in the song either encouraged or discouraged the Shulammite's love for Solomon, so too our friends can encourage or discourage our love for Jesus.

15. How do you find a right balance of being in the world and not of the world (having Christian and non-Christian friends)?

We must continually take note of what our friendships are doing to our greatest friendship (Jesus). If we are being tempted to do worldly things then we must begin to distance ourselves. If our relationships steal time away from Bible study, small groups, prayer, church meetings, etc., then we must put limits on those relationships.





*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

16. Give some examples of the love tension in this song and how the bride seeks to resolve it.

- There are times when she longs for Solomon but can't find him. She doesn't know where he is or how to find him.
- There are other times when Solomon comes to her but she is too busy/tired (excuses) to get up and respond to him.
- One thing we should notice is how persistent she is in seeking Solomon. Late at night she seeks. When friends discourage her she seeks. When the seeking becomes dangerous and she receives a beating she still seeks.

17. Have you ever felt as if God were distant? If so, what did you do?

Various. This is a follow-up to the previous question. We too feel distant from God at times. We too must learn how to be persistent even when it causes us pain to seek Him.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Discussion Questions

18. Read Song of Solomon 5:2-3 and Revelation 3:20. What excuses does the Shulammite give for not answering Solomon? What excuses do we give for not answering God's knock? If possible give examples in your own life or the life of others.

- She is ready for bed. Getting up would break her bedtime routine. She would have to bathe again. Basically she is saying, it's too much trouble... 太麻烦.
- We give various excuses including, too busy, too tired, not right now (later – never comes), it really isn't that important, I can manage to keep my relationship with God and NOT xyz, fear, etc.

19. Read Song of Solomon 2:15. What are some little foxes that can spoil our love with Jesus and how do we "catch" them?

- Busyness (including work, hobbies, entertainment, etc.), bad habits and routines, compromise (small concessions often lead to big ones – slippery slope like Samson, Adam and Eve, etc.), thoughts and desires that go unchecked! etc.
- Prayer, repentance, put off the old things and put on the new, accountability, regular spiritual health-checks, etc.

20. End your time together by reading Song of Solomon 8:14 and Revelation 22:17, 20-21 and allow the passage to inform your ending prayer.



*Seal upon your heart*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



A SERIES ON SONG OF SONGS

July 3

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON



SINGLENESS: REJOICING IN LOVE

Song of Solomon 1:4b, 11; 5:1b; 8:8-9; 8:4

# Singleness: Rejoicing in Love

Song of Solomon

1:1b

We will exult and rejoice in you;  
we will extol your love more than wine;  
rightly do they love you.

1:11

We will make for you ornaments of gold,  
studded with silver.

5:1b

Eat, friends, drink,  
and be drunk with love!

8:8-9

8 We have a little sister,  
and she has no breasts.

What shall we do for our sister  
on the day when she is spoken for?

9 If she is a wall,  
we will build on her a battlement of silver,  
but if she is a door,  
we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

8:4

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
that you not stir up or awaken love  
until it pleases.

# Singleness: Rejoicing in Love

The Song of Solomon is a love story between two people who are moving toward marriage. It celebrates courting, marriage, sex, and maturing in your relationship with your spouse. But at the same time it is a book that celebrates singleness. Besides the duet between the man and the woman, we often hear a beautiful symphonic choir urging love and advising on love. The Daughters of Jerusalem are most likely the young unmarried women of Jerusalem which is why many translations use the term, virgins of Jerusalem.

As the church faithfully reads this book it has much to teach us about the joy of singleness. The women are not seen as melancholy maidens whose only cure is to find a man to marry. They are shouting, dancing, and rejoicing over the love of others IN THEIR SINGLENESS. The advice given by the married woman to the single women is opposite of what many of our single friends in the church often hear...do not stir or awaken love until it pleases.

Enjoy your singleness. Embrace it. Engage in the larger community as a single. Allow your unique voice to break through...for the married couple needs to hear your voice.

Join us this Sunday as we discuss the topic of singleness in the Song of Solomon.

In Him,

Pastor TJ



*Do not stir up or awaken love*

## Discussion Questions

1. Make a list of single men and women (inside and outside the Bible) who have had tremendous impact on the Kingdom.
2. Give some examples of singles expressing joy in the Song of Solomon.  
*Note: The most likely identification of the daughters of Jerusalem is that they were the young, unmarried women of Jerusalem. Many translations use the term, virgins of Jerusalem.*
3. What are some of the difficulties of singleness and how can joy be found through the difficulty?
4. Read 2:7, 3:5, & 8:4. How is this advice often different from many church members to singles and how can we as a church do better to celebrate singleness.
5. Read Song of Solomon 1:6, 5:9, & 6:13. Discuss how, if unguarded, a single person might experience and express jealousy toward those who are married or pursuing marriage.
6. In what ways do singles and married people both struggle with contentment (think of the couple in Song of Solomon) and how does joy in Jesus practically help us overcome that struggle?



*Do not stir up or awaken love*

## Discussion Questions

7. Read again Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, & 8:4. What are some ways love can be stirred up or awakened?
8. How does one know when love is ready (pleases) to be awakened?
9. While some are singles because of God's calling, others intentionally avoid marriage that God may be calling them to; what are some reasons people might avoid marriage?
10. What are some wrong categories of people that singles should not stir or awaken love with?
11. Read Song of Solomon 8:6-7. What are the dangers of not properly guarding our heart?
12. Read Song of Solomon 8:8-9. How can the community of the church better help one another (singles and married) in the pursuit of sexual holiness?
13. Give examples from Song of Solomon where singles encouraged, celebrated, or advised concerning love.
14. What unique voice do singles have for married couples and what practical things can they do to strengthen marriages?





*Do not stir up or awaken love*

## Discussion Questions

15. Give examples from Song of Solomon where the married couple went to the single for advice or help in matters of love.
16. What practical things can married couples do to better invite singles into their lives and learn from them?
17. Take some time to listen to your single brothers or sisters in the group. What advice do they have regarding this topic? What struggles are they currently experiencing? How can we practically support, honor, value, and utilize their specific gifting?



*Do not stir up or awaken love*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



A SERIES ON SONG OF SONGS

July 10

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON



PURSUIT: THE SPACE  
BETWEEN SINGLENESS AND MARRIAGE  
Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

She

1: 2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

For your love is better than wine;

3 your anointing oils are fragrant;

your name is oil poured out;

therefore virgins love you.

4 Draw me after you; let us run.

The king has brought me into his chambers.

Others

We will exult and rejoice in you;

we will extol your love more than wine;

rightly do they love you.

She

5 I am very dark, but lovely,

O daughters of Jerusalem,

like the tents of Kedar,

like the curtains of Solomon.

6 Do not gaze at me because I am dark,

because the sun has looked upon me.

My mother's sons were angry with me;

they made me keeper of the vineyards,

but my own vineyard I have not kept!

# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves,  
where you pasture your flock,  
where you make it lie down at noon;  
for why should I be like one who veils herself  
beside the flocks of your companions?

He

8 If you do not know,  
O most beautiful among women,  
follow in the tracks of the flock,  
and pasture your young goats  
beside the shepherds' tents.

9 I compare you, my love,  
to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.  
10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,  
your neck with strings of jewels.

Others

11 We will make for you ornaments of gold,  
studded with silver.

# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

She

12 While the king was on his couch,  
my nard gave forth its fragrance.

13 My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh  
that lies between my breasts.

14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms  
in the vineyards of Engedi.

He

15 Behold, you are beautiful, my love;  
behold, you are beautiful;  
your eyes are doves.

She

16 Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.  
Our couch is green;

17 the beams of our house are cedar;  
our rafters are pine.

# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

2:1 I am a rose of Sharon,  
a lily of the valleys.

He

2 As a lily among brambles,  
so is my love among the young women.

She

3 As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,  
so is my beloved among the young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow,  
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

4 He brought me to the banqueting house,  
and his banner over me was love.

5 Sustain me with raisins;  
refresh me with apples,  
for I am sick with love.

6 His left hand is under my head,  
and his right hand embraces me!

7 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.

# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

8 The voice of my beloved!

Behold, he comes,  
leaping over the mountains,  
bounding over the hills.

9 My beloved is like a gazelle  
or a young stag.

Behold, there he stands  
behind our wall,  
gazing through the windows,  
looking through the lattice.

10 My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my beautiful one,  
and come away,

11 for behold, the winter is past;  
the rain is over and gone.

12 The flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove  
is heard in our land.

13 The fig tree ripens its figs,  
and the vines are in blossom;  
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,  
and come away.



# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

14 O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
in the crannies of the cliff,  
let me see your face,  
let me hear your voice,  
for your voice is sweet,  
and your face is lovely.

15 Catch the foxes for us,  
the little foxes  
that spoil the vineyards,  
for our vineyards are in blossom."

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

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

# Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Song of Solomon 1:2 - 3:5

3: 1 On my bed by night  
I sought him whom my soul loves;  
I sought him, but found him not.  
2 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.  
3 The watchmen found me  
as they went about in the city.  
“Have you seen him whom my soul loves?”  
4 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.  
5 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.

~~~

Pursuit: The Space Between Singleness and Marriage

Last week in our study of the Song of Solomon we focused on the voice of the 'Others' and discussed how to honor God as a single person. Over and over we heard the words, 'Do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases,' but what do we do when we discern that love is pleased to be stirred up and awakened? This week we will be focused on the first three chapters of the Song to explore that question.

Some refer to this time of stirring and awaking love as 'Dating' and others prefer the term 'Courtship,' but I am choosing to simply call this space 'Pursuit.' Throughout these first three chapters we see the couple pursuing one another, drawing close, pulling away, and pursuing again. We will explore why they have chosen to pursue, who is doing the pursuing, and how they pursue each other.

But these chapters are not only for those who are in the season of pursuing. Married people need to be reminded to continue pursuing their spouse, those who are single and not looking to pursue anyone can apply some of these principles to other relationships in their life, and we all should be equipped to give encouragement and Godly counsel to those around us who are ready to stir up and awaken love.

Be blessed,

Pastor Ben



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways are the man and woman physically attracted to each other in Song of Solomon?

- In the Song of Solomon both the man and the woman describe one another's beauty from head to toe. As you read their description it may not seem romantic, but let us remember that this is Hebrew poetry, therefore what we consider a great parallel may not be one in Hebrew. AKA...your teeth are like a flock of sheep, not one of them missing sounds almost like an insult to us, but in a day and age where dental care wasn't readily available, having all your teeth was a thing of beauty. Or your neck being compared to a tower of David may sound strange, but the comparison is most likely referring to a regal neck or a shining, shimmering neck covered in beautiful jewelry.
- Obviously the man and the woman are completely attracted to one another. Consider the statement in 4:7, there is no flaw in you. He likes everything he sees, because he is in love with her.

2. What role does/should physical attraction play in a relationship?

- Often times we place too much emphasis on physical attraction forgetting the other equally and often more important attributes we should be looking for. Certainly the Bible talks about beauty and physical attraction; see Sarah's beauty that kings longed for her, Isaac and Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, etc.
- But the New Testament picks up on the overarching theme of a deeper beauty and reminds us that more than descriptions of physical beauty, the Bible focuses on the heart.
- See Proverbs 11:22, 31:10-30, 1 Peter 3:3-4



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

3. How can two people pursuing one another cultivate an attraction for one another and fight against only a cultural understanding of beauty? (give biblical standards and examples)

- In 1:5 - 6 we learn that the Shulamite didn't have all the attributes of beauty that they valued in that culture. While the world might have seen her as less than the ideal woman, Solomon praises her beauty rather than give in to the cultural understanding of beauty.
- We need to be aware of how our conceptions of beauty are being conditioned by the world. Air-brushed models on advertisements. Characters from romance novels and other entertainment that are contrived and not real. etc.
- If you are in a group of mixed culture it could be interesting to have a discussion on what your culture deems beautiful and then compare that to what the Bible says.
- The Bible constantly challenges us to look past the external (that is fading and passing away) and focus more on the eternal characters of a person. The Lord himself doesn't look on the outward appearance but on the heart. As we put a higher standard on inward beauty the way we judge outward beauty will begin to change. We will begin to think of the other as not only spiritually beautiful but physically beautiful.



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

4. In what ways are the man and woman attracted to each other's character in Song of Solomon?

- Verse 3 in chapter one says 'your name is oil poured out.'
 - This means that his reputation is solid.
 - He is known as a man of integrity and character...
- In verse 6 of chapter one we learn that the Shulamite was sent by her brothers to work in the vineyard.
 - She is a strong, hard-working woman...
 - We get the idea that her brothers might not have been the most kind and caring, but nevertheless she submits to their authority and fulfills her duties to the family...
- In chapter 8 she calls herself a wall and not a door – she has kept herself sexually pure.
- Etc.



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

5. What type of character is most lauded in the Bible and therefore something we should be in search of in a potential spouse?

- If you are thinking about pursuing someone in a relationship, look for the fruit of the Spirit!
- No one is perfect but there should generally be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control
- The idea that you can change them, or that they will get better when you are married is a HUGE LIE!
 - We all have besetting sins...
 - Are you willing to put up with theirs for the rest of your life?
- I encourage those who are pursuing marriage to look for a few things.
 - Firstly, are they growing in their love for Jesus?
 - Secondly, do they show a deep commitment in other areas of their life?
Marriage is about committing for life to another person, if they do not show maturity in other commitments then that is a warning sign to be cautious with moving forward with them into marriage.

6. What role does friendship play between the man and woman in Song of Solomon?

- The woman is to the man “my darling” or “my friend” (ra’yati), and the man is to the woman “my lover” or “my love” (dodi)—terms found throughout the song (ra’yati in 1:9; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4; dodi on twenty-six occasions, including 1:13–14; 2:3; note that the woman also calls the man “my friend” [re’i] in 5:16).
- They are more than just lovers indulging in physical pleasure, they actually like being around one another. They love spending time together (see 1:7). When their relationship is less than ideal, they work hard to restore their relationship (see 5:2–6:1).



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

7. What are some things one can do to ensure that their relationship is a growing, maturing friendship and not simply one centered on romance?

- It's clear from the first man and woman relationship that it was meant to be a true friendship where they co-labor together, supporting one another, to fulfill God's mandate to fill and subdue the earth. Spend time together doing mutually enjoyable activities.
- Here is a good resource to find such activities: <https://www.marriagebuilders.com/download/library/questionnaires/recreational-enjoyment-inventory-6.pdf>
- Take time to talk daily and continue to really know one another. There are several discussion card packs you could purchase online or even consider watching a documentary together and then discussing your opinions and thoughts afterward.
- Fight for date night...especially after marriage! Couples need extended time together where the sole purpose is to nurture and care for the relationship. Date night should not be a time to work on your problems, but to stir up love!
- Have regular times where you do a "health check" on your relationship. Perhaps read through 1 Cor. 13 and self-evaluate how you are doing in loving the other.
- Romance is exciting... but friendship is sustaining.
 - If you are pursuing people who give you romantic feelings but that you don't actually feel safe with and that you can't be yourself it will not be able to last.
 - Do you enjoy spending time together? Can you have an extended conversation about things other than your relationship?



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

8. Discuss the ways in which both the man and the woman in Song of Solomon initiate the pursuit of love and how their roles break current cultural expectations.

The idea that only the man can pursue is disproven by the Song of Solomon. Every culture has certain expectations, and I believe we should engage with those expectations wisely, but we need to recognize our ultimate authority in Scripture. Here are a few examples, be sure to add your own,

- The Woman's initiative
 - 1:2 let him kiss me
 - 1:4 take me with you
 - 1:7 tell me you whom I love
 - 2:17 turn, my beloved be like a gazelle
 - 3:1 I looked for my beloved
 - 3:2 I will get up and search...
- The Man's initiative
 - 2:4 He has taken me to the banquet hall
 - 2:14 arise my love, beautiful one
 - 2:14 show me your face



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

9. What are some worldly reasons and ways to pursue love and how do they differ from Biblical principles?

Why:

- For sex
- To make ourselves feel good/validated/wanted
- To make someone else jealous
- For status
- To make our parents happy

— Pursuing for sex will give momentary pleasure but leave us empty

— Pursuing for our own validation is unfair to the other person (because we are using them) and will fail us because only God can give us the value that we need.

— Pursuing to manipulate someone else violates the other person and fails to treat them as God's image bearer.

— Pursuing for status or to make our parents happy will leave us hollow, because it also violates the dignity of the other person and we can end up in a relationship that is toxic and that leads us away from Christ.

How:

- We hide our true selves
- We are deceptive about certain parts of our life
- We treat love like a game between winners and losers and try to manipulate/win the other.
- We use money, sex, beauty, etc. as bait to “catch” someone.



Draw me after you

Discussion Questions

10. How does the Song of Solomon teach both sexual intimacy and sexual purity?

- Two times in this section the lovers seem like they are getting pretty intense in their physical demonstrations of love.
 - 2:6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!
 - 3:4 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.
- Both of these moments are abruptly cut-off with this verse
 - 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.
- This is a warning to the single not to go too far, not to place yourself in a situation where you will compromise your morals.

11. What are some helpful Biblical principles that can guide us as we seek both intimacy and purity?

How far is too far?

First of all, that is the wrong question... we don't want to try and get as close to sin as possible!

Some questions:

- a. Does our relationship have enough of a foundation for this physical expression?
- b. Is this physical expression leading either one of us toward lustful thoughts?
- c. Is this physical expression putting us on a steep hill?
- d. Is this physical expression honoring Jesus and honoring one another?



Draw me after you

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



A SERIES ON SONG OF SONGS

July 17

THE SONG OF SOLOMON



CONSUMMATION: THE JOY OF SEX

Song of Solomon 4:1 - 5:1

Consummation: The Joy of Sex

Song of Solomon 4:1 - 5:1

He

4:1 Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold, you are beautiful!

Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.

Your hair is like a flock of goats
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.

2 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
that have come up from the washing,
all of which bear twins,
and not one among them has lost its young.

3 Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
and your mouth is lovely.

Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.

4 Your neck is like the tower of David,
built in rows of stone;
on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.

5 Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle,
that graze among the lilies.

6 Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
I will go away to the mountain of myrrh
and the hill of frankincense.

Consummation: The Joy of Sex

7 You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
come with me from Lebanon.
Depart from the peak of Amana,
from the peak of Senir and Hermon,
from the dens of lions,
from the mountains of leopards.

9 You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride;
you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.

10 How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

11 Your lips drip nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue;
the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

12 A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a spring locked, a fountain sealed.

13 Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard,

14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all choice spices—

15 a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Consummation: The Joy of Sex

16 Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden,
let its spices flow.

She
Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.

He
5: 1 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
Eat, friends, drink,
and be drunk with love!

~~~



# Consummation: The Joy of Sex

There's no denying that the Song of Solomon is a book about sex. Chapters 3 and 4 are clearly describing both the wedding day and wedding night (if you know what I mean). But while it describes, in detail, the sexual enjoyment of both the man and the woman it is not like reading *Fifty Shades of Grey* or watching a *Game of Thrones* sex scene. The poetry enables God to describe what sex should look like without moving into the realm of erotica.

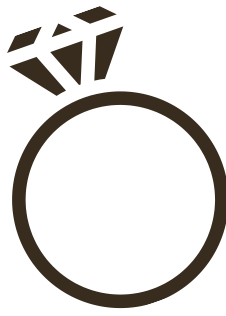
Just as the world has much to say about sex, so does God. He has placed this book in the center of our Bible to help reorient our thinking on this important subject. The church must not become religious prudes on the subject, avoiding it for fear of embarrassment. To so do is to allow the world to inform us on what is good and right rather than God.

No matter what station of life you find yourself in, married or single, child or adult, ready for love or waiting for love, this book is applicable for you. For at the deepest level sex is teaching us something about God.

As Ephesians 5 reminds us, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh", (which is illustrated through the act of sex). This mystery (the one flesh covenant union between husband and wife) is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

In Him,

Pastor TJ



*This mystery is profound*

## Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways in which people learn about sex today and what are they being taught?
2. How is the wedding ceremony and consummation a description of Genesis 1-2, Exodus 25-30, and the beginning chapters of Joshua?
3. Why do you think Solomon chose to use such language to describe sex?
4. Read Song of Solomon 4. In what ways (sight, smell, sight, taste, touch) do Solomon and the Shulammite express their love to one another?
5. Which of the above do you hope to grow in and how?  
*Note: The way you answer this will differ depending on whether you are married or single. For the single, there is still much to incorporate into your friendships as long as that expression is within its proper bounds.*
6. How does this chapter (and the book as a whole) teach us that sex is much more than the act of intercourse itself?



*This mystery is profound*

## Discussion Questions

7. What are some ways married couples can better love one another before getting into the bedroom?
8. What are some ways singles can help married couples grow in this area?
9. Read Song of Solomon 4 and 5. In what ways do both the man and the woman create an emotionally safe space for lovemaking?
10. How do both the man and the woman invite one another into the lovemaking experience, why is that important, and what does it look like practically?
11. Read Song of Solomon 5:2-6. Why is it important that even married couples respect the “no” and how do we balance that with 1 Corinthians 7:1-5?
12. Read and discuss the meaning of Song of Solomon 4:12-15. Why does the Bible repeatedly place an emphasis on sexual purity and commitment to one another only?
13. How did Solomon fail in sexual purity and what hope is there for singles and married couples who have sinned sexually?



*This mystery is profound*

## Discussion Questions

14. Read Song of Solomon 4:10, 16. Why do you suppose God created sex to be so enjoyable and what does it teach us about ourselves (married and singles) and God?
15. What advice does the sermon give for married couples that are not experiencing joy in sex? What other advice might you add?
16. How does the consummation presented in Song of Songs 4:1-5:1 affect your hope for Christ's return?
17. Take some time to pray for married couples to enjoy sex the way God designed it and for singles to walk in sexual holiness.



*This mystery is profound*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



A SERIES ON SONG OF SONGS

July 24

# SONG THE OF SOLOMON



CONFLICT: WHEN SINNERS SAY "I DO"

Song of Solomon 5:2 - 6:13

# Conflict:

## When Sinners Say "I Do"

Song of Solomon 5:2 - 6: 13

She

5:2 I slept, but my heart was awake.

A sound! My beloved is knocking.

"Open to me, my sister, my love,

my dove, my perfect one,

for my head is wet with dew,

my locks with the drops of the night."

3 I had put off my garment;

how could I put it on?

I had bathed my feet;

how could I soil them?

4 My beloved put his hand to the latch,

and my heart was thrilled within me.

5 I arose to open to my beloved,

and my hands dripped with myrrh,

my fingers with liquid myrrh,

on the handles of the bolt.

6 I opened to my beloved,

but my beloved had turned and gone.

My soul failed me when he spoke.

I sought him, but found him not;

I called him, but he gave no answer.

7 The watchmen found me

as they went about in the city;

they beat me, they bruised me,

they took away my veil,

those watchmen of the walls.

# Conflict:

## When Sinners Say "I Do"

8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
if you find my beloved,  
that you tell him  
I am sick with love.

Others

9 What is your beloved more than another beloved,  
O most beautiful among women?  
What is your beloved more than another beloved,  
that you thus adjure us?

She

10 My beloved is radiant and ruddy,  
distinguished among ten thousand.

11 His head is the finest gold;  
his locks are wavy,  
black as a raven.

12 His eyes are like doves  
beside streams of water,  
bathed in milk,  
sitting beside a full pool.

13 His cheeks are like beds of spices,  
mounds of sweet-smelling herbs.  
His lips are lilies,  
dripping liquid myrrh.



# Conflict:

## When Sinners Say "I Do"

14 His arms are rods of gold,  
set with jewels.

His body is polished ivory,  
bedecked with sapphires.

15 His legs are alabaster columns,  
set on bases of gold.

His appearance is like Lebanon,  
choice as the cedars.

16 His mouth is most sweet,  
and he is altogether desirable.

This is my beloved and this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.

Others

6:1 Where has your beloved gone,  
O most beautiful among women?  
Where has your beloved turned,  
that we may seek him with you?

She

2 My beloved has gone down to his garden  
to the beds of spices,  
to graze in the gardens  
and to gather lilies.

3 I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;  
he grazes among the lilies.

# Conflict:

## When Sinners Say "I Do"

He

4 You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love,  
lovely as Jerusalem,  
awesome as an army with banners.

5 Turn away your eyes from me,  
for they overwhelm me—  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.

6 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes  
that have come up from the washing;  
all of them bear twins;  
not one among them has lost its young.

7 Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate  
behind your veil.

8 There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,  
and virgins without number.

9 My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,  
the only one of her mother,  
pure to her who bore her.

The young women saw her and called her blessed;  
the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

10 "Who is this who looks down like the dawn,  
beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,  
awesome as an army with banners?"

# Conflict:

## When Sinners Say "I Do"

She

11 I went down to the nut orchard  
to look at the blossoms of the valley,  
to see whether the vines had budded,  
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.  
12 Before I was aware, my desire set me  
among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince.

Others

13 Return, return, O Shulammite,  
return, return, that we may look upon you.

~~~

Conflict:

When Sinners Say "I Do"

Last week we looked at an idealized version of marriage. But let's be honest...none of us has ever had, nor will ever have, an ideal marriage. For starters, we are sinners; therefore we bring our sin nature into the marriage. Secondly, our spouses are sinners, who also bring their sin nature into the marriage. When a sinner marries a sinner, no matter how in love they are or committed they are to one another, sin will be present in the marriage. A harsh word here. A selfish act there. A heart that harbors resentment instead of freely extending grace.

Anyone who has ever been married for more than a day can identify with the struggles of marriage. Anyone who has ever had a roommate or a sibling or coworker can equally attest to the realities of a fallen world that inevitably brings about conflict in EVERY relationship. When you look at your marriage you might be tempted to ask, is there something terribly wrong here? The answer is both yes and no. There is something terribly wrong...our own sinful hearts. But there is also something terribly natural about the struggles we face...In this world you WILL have troubles. My point is simply this, ditching your marriage and trying again won't actually fix the problem you face. It may fix the immediate problem of your spouse not paying attention to you or taking you for granted or the arguments you are currently having. But it won't fix the root problem of sin. That will follow you wherever you go, no matter who you marry.

Song of Solomon is a beautiful love poem that reminds us that even in the best of marriages, conflict will arise. Just one verse after the celebration of the joys of marital sex we find there is trouble in paradise. Join us this week as we look at how a marriage centered on Christ confronts conflict. And if you're single, remember this applies to you as well. As already stated, all of our relationships experience conflict. Song of Solomon isn't just for married couples, it challenges each of us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In Him,
Pastor TJ



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

1. What are the different types of relationships you have and what are the most common types of conflict with each one?

Various. Typical answers might include:

- Siblings
- Parent/Child
- Husband/Wife
- Coworker
- Neighbor
- Church Member
- Small Group member

Remind small group members that even though the context for Song of Solomon is a marriage, the principles of conflict management are transferable to all types of relationships. This isn't just a discussion for married couples only.

2. How does the Song of Solomon display the “ideal couple” and why are chapters 5-6 so important in helping us to understand how natural conflict can be?

- While Solomon and the Shulamite (in my opinion) are real historical figures, they also work in the poem as an ideal couple, much like Proverbs 31 and the virtuous woman.
- Solomon – Masculine Hebrew form of Shalom. Meaning peace.
Shulamite – Feminine Hebrew form of Shalom. Meaning peace.
- In other words, Solomon is set up as the ideal man and the Shulamite as the ideal woman. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, before the fall, so to speak.
- Here is the “man of peace” who married the “woman of peace” and what we find today is that they still struggled. If the ideal man and woman struggled in their marriage, then we should be prepared for conflict in our own marriages.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

3. Read Song of Solomon 5:2-6 and describe the nature of the conflict (note there are several different opinions on what the conflict actually involves).

There are several different interpretations of this passage. Below are a few of the most common.

- This is a dream of the Shulamite. Perhaps she is anxious about the pressures of marriage and this manifests in her sleep. This dream sequence serves to remind us that even the most healthy marriages will have trouble.
- This is the second of two scenes that follow a similar pattern of request/denial/search/find sequence. The emphasis is not on the problem but on the pattern and resolution. The resolution of the problem becomes possible only as the two lovers recognize the mutual responsibility each has to the other (1 Cor. 7:3-5).
- This represents a lover's tryst. The wife goes to bed angry about some argument between her and Solomon. She is "asleep" but her heart and mind are still "awake" because of their argument. Solomon comes to apologize and make up but she is not yet ready. When she refuses to forgive, Solomon leaves (probably angry or hurt). She then feels grief over her actions. She is now ready to reconcile, but Solomon is nowhere to be found. He has left the house and his wife wonders where he has gone. She searches for Solomon but does not find him. Determined to reconcile, she keeps searching in spite of the danger (watchmen). Eventually she elicits the help of friends (daughters of Jerusalem). In the end it is Solomon who comes back to her for he is now ready to reconcile (6:2). My beloved has gone down to his garden...aka returned to me (see 4:16-5:1).



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

3. Read Song of Solomon 5:2-6 and describe the nature of the conflict (note there are several different opinions on what the conflict actually involves).

(cont'd)

- This section records the tender approach of the lover and the indifference of the beloved. Solomon is making sexual advances to his bride (knocking at the door is connected to 8:8-9, the “latch/bolt” and “dripped with myrrh” are both referring to sexual intimacy). For whatever reason, the beloved is not interested in sex. She is tired. She has bathed and doesn’t want to get dirty, etc. Solomon is deeply hurt by her refusal. He leaves. By this time, his wife is aroused sexually and ready to respond to him, but now he is angry with her and refuses her sexual advances. If unresolved this will create major problems in the relationship. The tension builds in the conflict until Solomon returns and the two make love (6:2 is a euphemism for sex...down to his garden – 5:1...graze among the lilies – 4:5)

Regardless of the exact interpretation, almost everyone conclude that there is conflict in the marriage that needs to be resolved before the marriage suffers harm.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

4. What are some different ways that the world sends us the message that relationships/marriages should be easy or trouble free?

- Disney and fairytales with their happily ever after endings.
- RomComs that show tension before couples get together but then ends happily ever after.
- The de-emphasis of marriage in movies, tv shows, etc. It's easier to have one night stands, to date, to live together without the commitment of marriage.
- The same can be true about relationships. Pop psychology overemphasizes our emotional health, take care of yourself first, avoid negative feelings or relationships that are demanding. Most of what we ingest from the media is not true to life relationships.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

5. How does the Bible send us a very different message about relationships and conflict?

- Examples from Scripture - You can't even get past the third chapter of the Bible before conflict is introduced.
 - Adam and Eve who were given everything they needed for holy living, with God himself walking among them, sinned against one another. That WOMAN! It's her fault! Her desire is for you.
 - Then the very next chapter we see sibling conflict between Cain and Abel.
 - Conflict in Noah's family... father and son.
 - Conflict in Abraham's family. Between brothers, spouses, co-workers, and between Sarah and Hagar.
 - Conflict between Paul and Barnabas on taking John Mark with them on a mission's Trip.
 - Conflict between Peter and Paul over Jewish and Gentile status.
 - The first deacons are called to serve because of conflict between Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews.
 - The Corinthian church had conflicts among members that led to lawsuits
 - Conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, two women who were co-laborers with Paul...who needed an mediator... Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women.
- Conflict starts in Genesis and continues all the way to Revelation. It will not end until Satan is finally destroyed and the new heavens and the new earth are a full reality.
- If we adopt the wrong view about the difficulty of relationships then we will bounce around from relationship to relationship, church to church, small group to small group, looking for the IDEAL person or group. But when we realize that relationships are hard work we can then commit to a friendship, marriage, church, etc., and do the hard work to keep the relationship healthy.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

6. Can you share with the group a time when a relationship was harder than you thought it would be? How did you handle it? Looking back, is there anything you could have done differently?

Various. Be sure to encourage the singles in the room to share and expand this conversation to all relationships. For examples of types of relationship look back to question 1.

7. What's the cycle of conflict that Solomon and the Shulamite experience? Can you empathize with their experience?

- As mentioned earlier, many see the request/denial/search/find pattern. Therefore the cycle would be request/denial/search (request)/denial/search... only when both are ready to reconcile will the pattern stop.
- In the ideal world:
 - Husband hurts his wife.
 - Wife lovingly shares her pain with her husband in order for reconciliation.
 - Husband is grieved that he hurt his wife, he apologizes (specific), thinks about what he did, why he did it, how to avoid that in the future.
 - Wife graciously extends forgiveness (verbal and physical)

THIS RARELY HAPPENS!



Think about these things

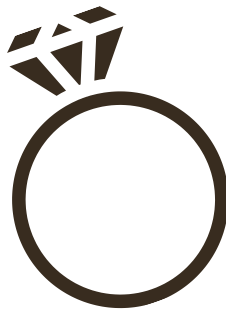
Discussion Questions

7. What's the cycle of conflict that Solomon and the Shulamite experience?
Can you empathize with their experience?

(cont'd)

- This is more realistic: (feel free to reverse the gender in this pattern)
 - Husband hurts the wife
 - She gets defensive (attacks or retracts)
 - They separate (typically involving slamming doors, raised voices, generalizations, extremities like ALWAYS and NEVER, and in highly toxic environments flying objects)
 - A few days pass, the husband feels guilty and tries to smooth things over, apologizes, buys a gift or says something sweet.
 - Wife is still angry, rejects his apology, it's not sincere enough, he's not proven himself, he hasn't suffered enough, felt as I felt.
 - Husband gets angry that she is angry...He retracts his apology, more argument ensues.
 - They separate.
 - Wife feels guilty and tries to smooth things over.
 - Husband is still angry and rejects her apology, it's not sincere enough, she's not proven herself, she hasn't suffered enough, felt as I felt.
 - Wife gets angry that he is angry...he's the one that started it in the first place..
 - They separate...

VICIOUS CYCLE REPEATS!



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

8. Read Song of Solomon 2:15. What “foxes” did the sermon mention? What other “foxes” would you add to the list of marriages/friendships.

- Sex
- Children
- Finances
- Time
- In-Laws

Allow the singles in the room to add to this list from the perspective of the various relationships they have.

9. From the previous list, choose one or two that are most common to the group and then discuss how we are to Biblically address these conflicts.

Various answers depending on your group.

10. Read James 4:1-2. How do these verses confront our sin problem and call us to the hard work of reconciliation?

- Take some time to discuss selfishness and desires.
- Most of our conflict continues (perhaps not arise) because we are selfish, not willing to listen, not willing to forgive, not willing to apologize, not willing to (as 1 Cor. 6:7 suggests) suffer wrong, not willing to (as Ephesians 5 suggests) lay down our life for the other.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

11. Read Song of Solomon 5:2, 4-6, 8. What mindsets have been most helpful for you in maintaining a healthy marriage/friendship?

Various.

- Divorce is not an option.
- Love is a choice not a feeling and I choose to love my spouse even when I'm angry at my spouse.
- Relationships will be hard, but the best things usually are.
- Problems are opportunities for Jesus to intervene.
- There is no sin too great that Jesus can't forgive and restore.
- Marriage is an opportunity to display to the world God's love for us.
- Romance and sex are nothing like the movies or pornography.
- I can't change my spouse, but I can, through the power of the Spirit, change myself.
- As much as it depends on me forgiveness will always be verbally, emotionally, and physically extended.

12. Read Song of Solomon 5:6. Share a time when you felt this type of conviction over conflict.

Various.

Get people to discuss how they feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit and how they respond to His conviction.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

13. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:15-19. How can this be applied practically to conflicts in our relationships?

- Notice the context of quenching the Holy Spirit is within conflict: repay evil, seek to do good, rejoice, be thankful.
- We need to be aware and sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- The cure for problems in marriage isn't found in a self-help book or working harder to be better, but through the power of the Holy Spirit as He convicts us, encourages us, and conforms us into the image of God.

14. Read Song of Solomon 5:6-8. Describe the hardships she endured and her persistence to be a peacemaker.

- Note that there may be differing ideas on what exactly is taking place in this sequence. Allow different people to share their interpretation of the events described through poetry.
- She experienced rejection, shame (veil being removed), physical and emotional pain, etc.
- The point the poem is making is that reconciliation is difficult, never easy. We are giving a realistic picture of marriage and called to imitate the bride here. Don't give up!

15. How can we grow in our persistence in our present relationship conflicts?
Various.

Your conversation will most likely be carried outside of The Song of Solomon. Perhaps to Matthew 5-6 or Luke 18. One of the greatest things we can do is to reflect on the cross and how persistent Jesus was in seeking reconciliation with us. He who has been forgiven much, loves much.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

16. Read Song of Solomon 5:8. What does she ask of the women and why? She asks for their help (specifically to tell her husband about her love) because she is aware that she cannot do it alone. God has created us to live in community to love one another, to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:1-2).
17. What qualities should you look for in a friend who is a counselor/mediator?
- Someone who is godly and will give Biblical advice.
 - Someone who is neutral. They aren't prone to take sides, but can see logically the situation as it is.
 - Someone who values the marriage and not just your friendship. They aren't just for you, they are for BOTH of you.
 - Someone who loves God deeply.
 - Someone who loves you deeply, without condemnation.
 - Someone who reminds you of the cross and forgiveness found in Jesus.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

18. Read Song of Solomon 5:10-16 and Philippians 4:8. Discuss the difference between stirring up anger (meditating on the hurt) and stirring up love (meditating on the good).

- 2 Cor. 10 tells us to take every thought captive to obey Christ.
- Romans 8 reminds us, to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.
- Romans 12 teaches, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

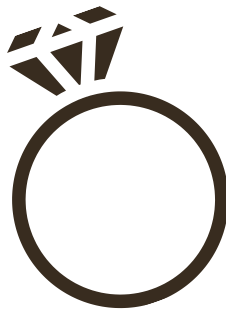
In many ways, conflict resolution begins with the mind.

- Do we choose to meditate on what was said in our argument or what the other person did that offended us?
- Do we choose to replay those scenes that stir up anger or hurt? Or do we instead choose to think on the good things our spouse has done for us or said to us.

Often times in our anger we can't think clearly and move to extremes... she never does x. he always does x. Philippians 4 reminds us that there is always something worth meditating upon, even if we can find nothing redeemable in our spouse, there is Christ and His work in our lives. To meditate on "these things" is to leave no room for the bitter thoughts that will destroy love for our spouse.

19. What are some practical things people can do to better stir up love?

- Keep a journal of the kind things said or done.
- Keep a box of letters written to you or an inbox of kind emails or text/WeChat messages.
- On good days, make lists of things you appreciate about your spouse. It could be very small but meaningful things like, helping pay the bills or doing housework, or spending time with the children, etc.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

20. Read Song of Solomon 5:10, 16, 6:4-10 and discuss the godly character each person possesses.

- He is distinguished among ten thousand
- His name is oil poured out.
- He is her friend.
- He is a man of honor...a godly man in society.
- She is described as pure, blessed, praised. Her description is VERY similar to the Virtuous Woman in Proverbs 31.
- She is a woman of honor...a godly woman in society.

There is a challenge here for each us to be these things.

Strive not to improve your spouse but to improve your own walk with the Lord.

21. How can we continue to grow in our own holiness and how will this affect our relationships?

Various. Have people share things that have really helped their sanctification.



Think about these things

Discussion Questions

22. Read Song of Solomon 6:11. What are some things couples can do to perform a marital check-up? Is there anything they should be careful NOT to do during marital check-ups?

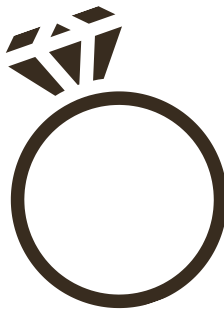
- Perhaps read through 1 Corinthians 13 and do a SELF assessment.
- **Marriage Builders** has many questionnaires that might be useful (Emotional Needs, Love Busters, Marital Problem Analysis, Financial Support Inventory, Time for Undivided Attention).

<https://www.marriagebuilders.com/questionnaires.htm>

- Be careful not to turn this exercise into a time of accusation. We can so often focus on the other person and not look to our own sins.
- Be careful not to turn date night into check-up night. Date nights should be for enjoyment only...doing things that grow one another's love rather than discussing problems.
- Be careful not to overwhelm the other person with a long list of issues that have been ongoing for years. Try to focus on only a few things at a time.
- Be careful not to be demanding. Remember the Gospel is grace, not law. This isn't an opportunity for you to be selfish and get your way, but an opportunity for each of you to learn how to love the other person better. There is always ways to grow our love for one another.

- Learn how to graciously take criticism. See Powlison's "Does the Shoe Fit"

<https://issuu.com/gospeldelta/docs/criticism---does-the-shoe-fit---david-powlison>



Think about these things

Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports