

LESSONS THIS QUARTER

- 12) 18 May Song of Songs 1:1-5:1 Righteous Romance
- 13) 25 May Song of Songs 5:2-8:14 Invest in the Best

INTRODUCTION What Romantic Love Looks Like

- **Song of Songs / Song of Solomon / Canticles**
 - ♦ One of the shortest books in the OT. Few biblical texts have produced more controversy throughout the history of interpretation
 - ♦ Several love poems are woven together to form a cohesive unit describing conjugal love between a bridegroom and his bride
 - ♦ There is an absence of theological themes and there are no direct references to Yahweh (God) in the Song
- **Author:** Traditional scholars affirm Solomon as the author, based on internal evidence (Solomon is cited 6 times) and 1Kings 4:29-34, which helps date the text to ~900 B.C.
- **Interpretive Strategies** – There are 3 interpretative possibilities:
 1. **Allegorical Approach.** Extensive use of figurative and often erotic language prompted early Jewish scholars and church fathers to adopt the allegorical approach to interpretation
 - The Jewish rabbinical writings (the Talmud, Targums, and Midrashim) identified the bride as representing Israel, and the groom as representing Yahweh
 - The early church fathers (Origen, Hippolytus, Jerome) saw the bride as the Church, and the groom as Christ
 - **Problems.** There is no deliberate attempt by the author to create an allegory, and the terminology within the book is not specific enough to warrant allegorizing the text
 2. **Typological Approach.** Yahweh’s intimate relationship with Israel (cf Hosea) and the Church’s representation as the Bride of Christ (cf Ephesians 5) does allow for typological interpretation
 3. **Literal Approach.** This interpretive approach took root with historical criticism in the late 19th century and remains the prominent view in our contemporary time – where this book depicts a blissful, healthy marriage, while adopting a positive attitude toward human sexuality in the confines of marriage
- **Participants:** There are 5 speakers or participants in this drama:

Chapter	Bride	Groom	Chorus	Narrator	Brothers
1	12	5	1		
2	12	6			
3	5			6	
4	1	15			
5	7	2	6	1	
6	4	7	3		
7	5	9			
8	6	6	1		2
Total verses	52	50	11	7	2

- Why such drama to convey the special love between a man and his bride? Is God a “hopeless romantic”? Wouldn’t it have been better to just give us the details how men & women should behave behind closed doors?
- **Our Perspective.** Look at this story as representing a vibrant and healthy marriage between 1 man and 1 woman for life, where constant communication and longing anticipation for each other are prevalent from courtship & throughout the life of the marriage

Passage	Comments
SS 1:1-17	<p>Romance is Not Trivial in a Healthy Marriage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bride (vv1-4a). She longs to be in his arms. He smells good, looks good, and he pleases her in every way (Note. We cannot be dogmatic about the king being Solomon. It could be representative of any groom) • Chorus (v4b). Her friends support her relationship • Bride (vv4c-7). “I am dark but lovely” – seems to indicate a lower class working girl (tanned from working outside); and she’s looking for her mate aggressively • Groom (vv8-11). He tells her where He can be found (no secrets in this relationship); he compliments her on her beauty; and he plans to enhance her beauty with jewelry (v11)

Passage	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bride (vv12-14). She makes the effort to be enticing; and she praises him for his strong attributes • Groom (v15). More praise from groom to the bride • Bride (vv16-17). More praise from the bride to the groom; and she even praises their bedroom for being conducive to love-making
2:1-17	<p>Watch out for Distractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bride (v1). “Rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys” seems to convey beauty and delicateness of the bride/wife (“Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way as someone weaker, since she’s a woman, and show her honor” 1Peter 3:7) • Groom (v2). He only has eyes for her. No one else compares to her • Bride (vv3-10a). She only has eyes for him; and she is overwhelmed by his attention on her. He is the only one who can meet her needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ v7. “...do not stir up love until the appropriate time” seems to convey wait for marriage to have sex (3x) cf 3:5; 8:4 • Groom (vv10b-14). Timing is everything in a romantic relationship – anticipation heightens the joy • Bride (vv15-17). “Catch the foxes” might allude to watching out for and avoiding distractions; “My love is mine and I am his” – there is no sharing (kids, work, church, TV, & hobbies should not compete with the love between man and wife)
3:1-11	<p>Love/Marriage is Worth Chasing/Fighting/Fixing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bride (vv1-5). “My mate is missing! I found him & would not let him go” – seems to convey this one-of-a-kind relationship (pearl of great price) is worth the effort to find and keep • Narrator (vv6-11). The groom seems to be prepared to fight for his bride and to woo her with royal attention (romance)
4:1-16	<p>The Bride has Made Herself Enticing and Available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groom (vv1-15). The Hebrew word-pictures are not static photographic images; but they convey dynamic movements, symmetry, elegance, and beauty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ v12. “You are a locked garden” – conveys marital fidelity ♦ v15. “You are a well of flowing water” - conveys availability • Bride (v16). She makes herself fully available to her man
5:1	<p>The Man is Ready and Willing to Meet His Wife’s Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groom (v1a). The day’s activities are behind him. He is present, prepared, ready, and willing to satisfy her needs

CONCLUSION/APPLICATIONS

- Don’t let romance die in your marriage. Make the effort to rekindle it and keep it alive and well. Romance begins with mental preparation (what to do, when to do it, how to do it, where to do it)

NEXT WEEK: Song of Songs 5-8. What Troubled Love Looks Like.



“He was very romantic when we first got married, but you know how men change.”