

# DEER DEVOTIONAL

SONG OF SONGS 8:14

“Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag . . .”

## EXPERIENCE

“Oh honey, look at all the bucks in the backyard!” As my friend looked out the kitchen window, he was amazed and bewildered at the sight of multiple bucks in his yard. This sight was unusual, and he could not account for their presence so close to his house. A few moments later when he took his hunting clothes from the dryer, he found out why. As soon as the dryer door opened, the smell of warm doe urine greeted his nostrils. My friend had forgotten to remove his vial of doe urine from his pocket. Now the smell of doe was wafting through the air around the inside and outside of his home, much to his wife’s dismay but the delight of nearby male deer.

The rut is in full swing here in Western Pennsylvania, so the bucks and their desire for does are in overdrive! The unrestrained nature of their appetite to mate causes bucks to act hastily, and for many, self-destructively. The lust for female deer lures many bucks into hunters’



crosshairs. Last week my neighbor and his son were hunting and there were several does near their tree stand. At the sight of a buck in the distance my friend attempted to call the deer in closer. At the sound of the grunts, the buck became mad and sprinted in aggressively. He kicked up dirt and swung his head from side to side. My friend's son made a great shot and now this buck is fulfilling their family's craving for delicious deer steaks. I have not gotten a deer yet this season, but I share that craving for venison. Many hunters will enter the woods over the course of the next two months desiring to fill their freezer with meat or in pursuit of that elusive trophy buck.

## CONTEMPLATION

Sitting still in the woods watching and waiting for the deer to arrive is the perfect time to contemplate God's creation. Both hearing the woods wake up around you on morning hunts and enjoying the serenity of that fleeting period when the woods get quiet as the sun goes down elicits reverent prayer. Recently, I have thought a lot about appetites. I watch bucks chase does and I ponder my own romantic desires, good and bad. I observe deer come out to fill their stomachs on corn, acorns, and grass, and I think about my love of food (sugary baked goods in particular) and my struggle with my weight. Thank God for lean, healthy venison straight from field to table. My mouth waters at the thought of marinated tenderloins grilled to perfection. Hunters enter the woods with great big appetites. Countless hours and hundreds, even thousands, of dollars spent chasing trophy bucks.

To be honest, most of my contemplation is focused on the dark side of human appetites—lust, gluttony, and coveting the glory of a big buck on the wall, and all the accompanying story-telling. These thoughts prompt prayers of confession. Yet, God created us with appetites, and as those made in his image, somehow our good desires reflect his own. The parallel that comes to mind is God's appetite for expressing his glory. God delights to display his glory and he delights as his created world reflects his glory back to him (see Psalm 104:31 and Proverbs 8:30-31). Our appetites will only be healthy as our desires are aligned with and restrained by God's glorious and wise purposes. When a good desire becomes a desire in overdrive (unrestrained), it becomes a bad desire. When we desire created things over and above the Creator our appetites have gone astray. Like an arrow that misses its mark, our desires easily drift off-target.

However, we can never over-desire Christ. God designed our heart's desires to be aimed at Christ as their target. The human heart was made to hunger and thirst for him above all else. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God (Psalm 42:1). Restraining our appetites only happens as they are guided by God's Word and transformed by the Holy Spirit to savor the glories of Christ Jesus our Lord.

## PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, any honest assessment of my appetites finds that my hunger and thirst for you is too weak and my desire for things besides you too strong. Far too often my fleshly appetites have their way with me. Forgive me for my misdirected and unrestrained appetites. I pray that my heart might grow in looking to you as the

primary object of its delight. Guide the eyes of my heart to see how glorious you are and transform my spiritual tastebuds to savor you above all else. In Christ's name, Amen.

## CONFIRMATION

Deer are an emblem of human appetites—romantic desires, physical hunger, and spiritual thirsts. The Scriptures confirm in many places this association. In the final verse of Song of Songs (8:14) above, the wife longs for her husband to make haste like a stag and run to her embrace. She expresses an intense romantic longing. For any deer hunter, using the emblem of a stag/buck making haste to a doe conjures up memories of watching bucks beelining their way to intercept does during the rut. Bucks can be oblivious to anything else as they pursue a doe. Such single-mindedness is both dangerous and admirable depending on the circumstances. In the context of the covenant marital love spoken of in Song of Songs, it is admirable. Romantic desire is beautiful and healthy within the confines of the exclusive sexual union between husband and wife (see also Proverbs 5:18-23). However, outside of the marriage covenant, sexual desires become deadly. Proverbs 7:21-23 says:

*“With much seductive speech [the forbidden woman] persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; . . . he does not know that it will cost him his life.”*

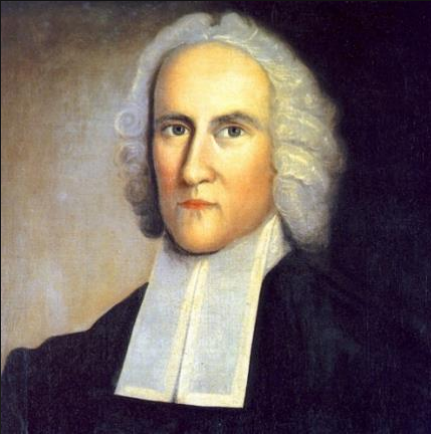
Whether a flesh and blood forbidden woman, a print edition temptress, an adulterous woman on a digital screen, or any forbidden female image conjured up in the mind, each of them brings

destruction in their wake. It is worth noting that lust is not exclusively a problem for men alone. Additionally, the Bible does not name a body part or parts that tempt the man. The man is tempted by the seductive lies he chooses to believe. His failure to heed the wisdom of God's Word over the urges of his flesh is what brings this buck down.

The power of romantic appetites is why the woman of Song of Songs warns others numerous times, saying: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken [romantic desire] until it pleases" (2:7, 3:5). She wisely counsels significant restraint considering the dangers connected with romantic appetites.

I already mentioned the emblem of spiritual thirst in the above example of deer panting for flowing streams. Deer are also referenced as a tasteful meat source—a meat people crave and described as an example of God's provision and blessing in Deuteronomy 12:15-22.

The above examples confirm that deer are used in Scripture as an emblem of human appetites. Biblical-minded meditation on deer will lead us to consider our own appetites and how those appetites may either glorify God or lead us astray.



## Jonathan Edwards

In Edwards's time (1700's), Song of Songs was mostly viewed and interpreted in light of Christ and his bride, the Church. In our day, we tend to prefer reading it from the perspective of our romantic relationships. What I appreciate about Edwards's vantage point is how it challenges us to consider

Christ's desires for his bride and helps grow the church's appetite for the Bridegroom's return. Regarding Song of Songs 8:14 he comments: "Christ says, . . . [in Song of Songs] 4:6, that he will get him 'to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, till the day break, and the shadows flee away'; that is, that he would leave this world, and ascend into heaven, till the morning of the joyful and glorious resurrection. Here in these words with which this song is finished, 'Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like unto a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices,' the spouse prays that Christ would quickly descend from thence, in like manner as [the] book of Revelation is concluded with these words, 'Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus' [Revelation 22:20]."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Jonathan Edwards, \*The "Blank Bible"\*, WJE 24:628.](#)



## Charles Spurgeon

So also in Spurgeon's time (1800's), Song of Songs was viewed and interpreted the same way. Spurgeon writes: "If you do not understand this precious secret [joyful communion with Jesus], may the Lord reveal it to you even now. You must first receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior or you can never know Him as your Bridegroom. Faith must trust Him before love can embrace Him. You must be brought to be washed or you can never be brought to be banqueted. Pant after the Redeemer as the hart pants after the water brooks and when you have drank of the water of life then shall you be as a hind let loose. Then, too, your feet shall be like hinds' feet and you shall be set upon your high places. When this shall have been made your own by experience, you shall understand the text and shall also breathe the prayer of another verse of the same song, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs1463A.pdf>