

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Song of Solomon | *The Greatest of All Love Stories*

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Sixteen years ago, a couple of college kids were on a date at a movie theater. Halfway through the movie, the guy put his arm around his girlfriend and whispered these words in her ear, “*Your hair is like a flock of goats...*”

And that was the moment that she knew that she was going to marry him 😊

Q. What would possess a young man to tell his girlfriend that her hair looked like a bunch of goats?

A. *The Song of Solomon (4:1)*

Almost 16 years ago, I quoted a verse from the Song of Solomon to Elizabeth, and that was the moment she knew we were meant to be together. So I have a unique fondness for this book!

If you’ve never read the Song of Solomon, let me tell you, it’s spicy!
It’s romantic and sweet and gushy and beautiful...and spicy.

We are swept into a love story between a man and woman, and it’s breathtakingly romantic. The picture that we get in this book is so vivid (so explicit) that Jewish men (in certain places) weren’t allowed to read it until they were 30.¹

And there are pastors who will never preach through the Song of Solomon because the romance feels too hot to handle.

For example, look at **Song of Solomon 7**.

READ 7:1–5

Once you get passed the shock that stuff like this is actually in the Bible, then all sorts of other questions immerge:

- *What am I supposed to learn from this?*
- *What does this teach me about God?*
- *How does this point to Jesus?*
- *How is this supposed to strengthen the church?*
- *Am we allowed to read these words from the pulpit...during a Sunday morning worship service...in front of the kids?*

In the NT, the apostle Paul wrote several letters to a younger friend of his (a man named Timothy, who was a pastor). In one of those letters, Paul was talking to Timothy about the OT (which included the Song of Solomon), and here’s what Paul wrote (**2 Timothy 3:16–17**)...

¹ <https://biblecentre.org/content.php?mode=7&item=139>

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Q. What does that mean?

A. It means that the Song of Solomon was given by inspiration of God, and every word of it is profitable to equip God’s people to live lives that glorify Him.

PRAY

The first verse describes this book as “*the song of songs, which is Solomon’s*” (1:1).

- Which is why some Bibles title this book as “***The Song of Solomon***”
- And some Bibles call it “***The Song of Songs***”

Even though Solomon’s name is connected to this book, Bible scholars are not in agreement regarding exactly how this book is connected to him. The way this sentence is worded, it could mean that this book...

- Was *written by Solomon*
- Is *about Solomon*
- Dedicated *to Solomon*
- Was written in a style the *resembles Solomon’s writings*
- Is a collection of songs that were *collected by Solomon*.

That’s not the only thing about this **Song** that Bible scholars debate.² There is also disagreement around what this book is really about. Some pastors & scholars read this book...

- **Allegorically** (like the parables that Jesus told): it’s a story that’s meant to give us a picture of the love between God and His people.
- **Typologically** (similar to an allegory except) that it’s a true story about real people. The people and the places really existed, and the story really happened, but all of it is still ultimately just a type, pointing us to an infinitely greater story about the love between God and His people.
- **Literally**: it’s just a straight up, beautiful love story. It’s a story about a man and woman who fall in love: about their courtship, about their wedding, about their marriage (the joys and the trials), and it’s about them growing old together. It’s one of the greatest pictures we have of the beautiful, intimate, romantic, lifelong love that God designed to be experienced within the covenant of marriage.

And there are a handful of other ways that pastors and scholars read this book.³

² Not only is there debate regarding how Solomon is connected to this book, there is also debate regarding whether Solomon is a good guy or a bad guy in this story.

³ For example: Mark Dever would appear to read it as a **musical collection**. In other words, it’s not really a *story* at all. It’s a collection of poems and songs that go together and are designed to impart wisdom regarding love, marriage, and relationships.

But regardless of how we are supposed to understand the characters and the movements within the Song of Solomon, the truths & the lessons remain the same.

1. Take a moment to walk through the basic outline of the book (*as I understand it*)
2. Close by highlighting a few powerful truths that we can learn from this book?

OUTLINE:

Characters:

1. **The girl (the Shulamite)**⁴
 - a. We are introduced to her right away (**1:1**), and immediately we are swept into her romantic affections for her man! **Read 1:2–4.**
 - b. Nobody knows for certain who she is or exactly where she is from, but she's called a "Shulamite" in **6:13**, and she's one of the two main characters in this book.
2. Then we are introduced to "**the daughters of Jerusalem**"⁵
 - a. They are mentioned seven times in this book (beginning in **1:4**). It seems most likely that these girls are the young, unmarried women who lived near the Shulamite. And they talk often with the Shulamite about her relationship with her man!
3. He is the other main character of the book: "**the Beloved.**"
 - a. He speaks for the first time in **1:8**.
4. The girl's brothers make a couple appearances (**2:15; 8:8–9**)
5. And then we also hear the man talk to his friends in **5:1**.

But mostly, this book is the intimate conversations between the woman (the **Shulamite**) and her man (the **Beloved**).

Now what about the storyline?

It's kind of like reading the love letters between a man and a woman (not in any particular order)

...

- letters that they wrote to each other and about each other during their engagement
- letters they wrote to each other on their wedding day
- letters they wrote to each other about their wedding night
- the letters they wrote to each other as they grew old together over the years...

At the end of the book (in **8:5**) we read that the girl is "leaning on her beloved". Perhaps, this is meant to give us the picture of an elderly couple that are still together, still deeply in love, and reminiscing about what they have experienced and learned (about love and intimacy) during their lifetime together.⁶

⁴ She is only called the "Shulamite" once in **6:13**.

⁵ Interestingly, Jesus speaks to a group of women whom He calls "daughters of Jerusalem" as He was carrying His cross to Calvary (**Luke 23:28**).

⁶ I am here paraphrasing the suggestion of Daniel Estes from his chapter in **DeRouchie's** book, "*What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About.*"

Liz & My Letters

Just recently, I was cleaning out a cabinet in my basement (full of my stuff), and I came across a box full of letters that Elizabeth wrote to me while we were dating and during the early years of our marriage!

And she has a book full of all the letters that I have written her over the years. The most recent letter was a 2-page letter that I wrote to her this past Christmas. Now, I'm not nearly as spicy in my letters as he is, but I think that if you were to compile our letters together that we've written over the years – it would look something like this.

Now we turn to ask the question: **Q. WHAT DOES THIS BOOK TEACH US?**

Answer: many things.

I have a lifelong habit of marking & highlighting all the things that I'm learning & discovering as I read my Bible, and I thought I would share **a few of the pictures from one of my Bibles** as

I've studied the Song of Solomon over the years!

- I share these photos simply to show that I think there's a lot we can learn from this book!

1. We see a picture of **the intimacy that God designed to flow between a man and woman within the covenant of marriage.**

In **Genesis 2**, we read the story of God creating marriage.

- He created man (**2:7**) & said that it wasn't good for him to be alone (**2:18**)
- So He created a woman from the man (**2:21–22**) and brought them together
- And the chapter ends by saying that "*they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed*" (**2:25**).

God designed an intimacy in marriage that we hear about in **Genesis 2:25**, but we get to see a picture of what it looks like here in the Song of Solomon. What we see in the Song of Solomon is marital love and sexual pleasure and relational intimacy as God designed it.

It's the kind of romance that has been totally lost in our **Hollywood culture.**

- When we hear or see or read this kind of romantic intimacy in our culture today, rarely is it coming from a man and a woman who have covenanted themselves together in marriage; it's coming from an entertainment industry & a marketing industry that makes **hundreds of billions** of dollars every year off of sex.⁷
 - From pornography
 - To the casual sexual relationships on so many television shows and movies
 - To the sexual lyrics of secular music
 - To the images that are used in advertisements (*because "sex sells"...*)

⁷ According to an NBC News article published a few years ago, pornography is a **\$97 billion dollar industry** across the globe. Instead of celebrating sexual intimacy within marriage, our culture has found a way to offer an imitation intimacy through pornography and make billions of dollars in the process.



- To the magazines in the checkout isle of nearly every store
- To the clothes that our young people are being told they need to wear in order to be popular or to look normal
- To the sexual education curriculum that is being pushed into our public schools that isn't promoting saving sex for marriage but rather teaching kids how to have safe sex
- To the fast-growing sexual identity movement of the LGBTQ community
- To the divorce rate that continues to hover somewhere around 50%
- To the number of people who are no longer even getting married because our culture has made it so incredibly easy and normal just to move in together...

Our culture has lost a vision of marriage, and we have lost a vision for the beauty of sexual intimacy within marriage.

The Song of Solomon is the kind of love story that our Hollywood culture can hardly even fathom anymore.

So what do we see in this love story?

1. We see that marital intimacy is **exclusive** | *“My beloved is mine, and I am his”* ~ **2:16**.⁸
 - a. Your eyes belong to your spouse. Your hands, your body, your affections, your daydreams, your heart, your love, and your lovemaking.
 - b. When I turned 16 my parents gave me **a gold ring & a gold necklace**, and it was meant to remind me that to save my body and my heart for the woman who would one day be my wife. And on our wedding night, I would give the ring to my wife as a symbol that every part of me was for her and her alone.
 - c. It was meant to be a reminder to me not to stir up love before the time was right.⁹
 - i. Now we all make mistakes. I've made my fair share of them. But there's forgiveness; there's a love that covers a multitude of sins.¹⁰
 - ii. The point of this book is **not** to cast shame on what our relationships have been...but to give us a vision of what they could be. It's giving us a picture of a love that is so much deeper than any of the imitations our culture is selling us. It's a picture of a love that is **exclusive**.
 - d. Maybe your love hasn't been exclusive in the past. Maybe **you're a teenager or a young adult**, and you've made choices with your heart and with your body and with your eyes where you have given yourself away to somebody else. Maybe you've been in a relationship where you've gone too far. Or maybe you traded your heart for the temporary pleasure of pornography. Maybe you've even become addicted. Or maybe you are **married**, and you have made choices with your heart, or with your eyes, or with your body where you have been unfaithful to your spouse.

⁸ See also **6:3**.

⁹ I.e., marriage.

¹⁰ 1 Pet 4:8.

- i. Wherever you are and wherever you've been, there is a bloodstained cross where Jesus died to forgive your past, and there is a breathtaking story to give you a vision for your future.
 - ii. Maybe your past hasn't been exclusive; but by the grace of God your future can be.
- 2. We see that godly love is **intentional** | It requires effort, thought, time, energy...
- 3. We see that love within a marriage is **vulnerable** | as you read this book, you see two people who seem to know each other inside and outside.
 - a. If you have **secrets** that you are keeping from your spouse, there is a chance that you do not yet understand the kind of intimacy that God designed to be experienced in a marriage.
- 4. We learn how to **build each other up** in our marriage: they are constantly **praising** one another.
- 5. We learn what it looks like to pursue each other even in **the hard times**...

BUT of all the truths that we learn about love and marriage from the Song of Solomon, the most important truths are the pictures that we see about **our relationship with Jesus**. This is true, not just about the Song of Solomon, but about every marriage.

In **Ephesian 5**, the apostle Paul talks about the love between a husband and wife, and then he finishes his teaching on marriage by quoting from **Genesis 2:24** and then making a really important comment...

30. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh."
31. This is a great mystery,
but I speak concerning Christ and the church."
~ *Ephesians 5:30-31*

Paul says that God created marriage to be a picture of Christ and the church. In other words, every marriage is designed to show us something about the relationship between Jesus and His bride – His people – His church – you and me.

If every marriage is meant to give us a picture of the covenantal love relationship between Jesus and His people, then as you read the Song of Solomon, put yourself in the place of the Shulamite (the girl) and put Jesus in the place of the Beloved; and then as you read it that way, here are some of the pictures you will see:

- 1. He sees you as perfect (**4:7**; **5:2**; **6:9**)¹¹ – even though you know you're not (**1:6**)!
- 2. He knows every part of you (**7:1-5**) – and He still loves you with an unquenchable love (**8:7**).

¹¹ Eph 5:27.

3. He is pursuing a relationship with you – even when you aren't pursuing a relationship with Him. He wants to be with you. He wants to spend time with you.
 - a. There is a scene in **5:2** where the Beloved is knocking on her door and asking for her to open it so that he can come in.
 - b. What does this remind you of? **Revelation 3:20**.
4. Love is as strong as death (**8:6**). Jesus proved that this was true when He gave up His life for you on the cross (**John 15:13**).
5. He is perfect in every way (**5:16**). The passage that Adam read earlier reminds us of this.
6. And He is our friend (**5:16**).

Could you say that about your relationship with Jesus today?

- If somebody were to ask you about your relationship with Jesus, how would you describe Him?
 - Could you honestly say, “*Jesus is my best friend!*”
 - Would you say, “*He knows every part of me (all of my sin, all my mistakes), and He still loves me with an unquenchable love.*”
 - Would you say, “*He is the lover of my soul, and I love everything about Him!*”

We are going to close our time this morning by joining our voices in singing about the beauty and perfection and love of Jesus.

We join our voices in saying that:

- We feel the world is broken
- We feel the darkness all around us

But...

- We know that the darkness cannot stop the light from getting through
- Because the light of Jesus is stronger than the darkness, and His grace is more powerful than the sin in our lives, and His love runs deeper than all the brokenness we will ever experience.

We join our voices in reminding each other that...

- Jesus, our Messiah holds forever those He loves
- Jesus died to ransom us from our slavery to sin – and that He died for every people and tribe and nation and tongue
- Our Jesus is worthy of all blessing and all honor and all glory
- And that somebody He is coming back to take us home to dwell with Him forever.

Does our God intend to dwell again with us? He does.

Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? It is.

Would you stand as we celebrate our God & Savior together by singing that He is Worthy!