

The Book of Song of Solomon

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Outline for Song of Solomon

Chapter 1: Learning to Love (Song of Solomon Overview)

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Chapter 3: Moving Toward Commitment (2:4 – 3:11)

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Section 1: Learning to Love

Scripture: Song of Solomon Overview

Overview

Song of Solomon focuses on God's ideal for human love. Throughout history many interpreters have viewed this book in different ways. Although the book does point indirectly to God's love for His people, it is best to recognize that the primary emphasis of the book is to teach how to love within the context of marriage.

Outline

I. Authorship and Date

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VI. Theme and Outline

A. Allegorical

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I. Authorship and Date

Although the first verse of the book states that Solomon authored it, many modern-day "critical text" scholars (stay away) have questioned this fact. They would argue that loanwords from Persia and Greece in this book would date the book to around 300 b.c. However, Solomon's time was a period of extensive international contact for Israel, so the loanwords can be explained in more than one way.

The book gives no evidence of a divided kingdom. Therefore, the book must have been written either before the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah after Solomon's death. The lavish wealth pictured throughout the book is suited to the reign of Solomon. The traditional view that the book was written by Solomon has strong support.

II. Unity

At first glance, Song of Solomon may appear to be a loose combination of poems about love. In fact, some interpreters consider the book a collection of love songs composed for a wedding celebration or as a set of disconnected songs extolling human love. They claim it has only the general thematic unity of songs about love.

On the other hand, several features in the book argue for a unified message. Throughout the book there are the same two major characters, the maiden (Shulamite) and the lover (Solomon) and the chorus of the daughters of Jerusalem. Similar figures of speech and expressions occur repeatedly. For example, Solomon calls Shulamite "darling" and Shulamite calls Solomon "beloved." In addition, the book includes refrains such as "My beloved is mine, and I am his".

The most prominent feature arguing for the unity of the book is the progression of the subject matter. The first scenes of the book show how Solomon and Shulamite begin to love one another and proceed through their courtship. After their wedding their relationship continues to flourish and mature into their old age. Thus, it is best to regard the Song of Solomon as a single unified poem, not as a collection of unrelated love songs.

III. Interpretation

Of all of the books in the Bible, the Song of Solomon has provoked the widest range of interpretations. These viewpoints fall into four major categories.

A. Allegorical

Historically the book of Song of Solomon was commonly interpreted as an allegory. An allegory is a story that points to a reality outside the story. The Jewish allegory stated that Song of Solomon portrayed God's love for Israel and the Christian allegory Jesus Christ's love for His church.

However, there are several strong objections to the allegorical view. First, in the allegory the figure of Solomon is taken to represent God or Jesus Christ. Solomon was morally flawed later in life and seems an inappropriate picture of God or Jesus Christ.

Second, the allegories in the Bible are clearly identified as such (Gal. 4:21-24). If the book is intended to be literal but is treated as an allegory, the interpreter has handled God's Word inaccurately. He has not "rightly divided the word of truth."

Third, allegorical interpretations are subjective. There are dozens of allegorical renderings of SOS. Interpreters are reading ideas into the text rather than leading out what the text genuinely means.

Fourth, allegorical interpretations side-step the frank sexual language of the book. Instead of accepting the book at the literal level as speaking of intimate love within marriage.

B. Typical

Typical interpretation interprets SOS as an actual, real-life story. It sees Solomon and Shulamite as people who really lived and loved. It is a true love story that actually happened. It recognizes that the author intended many of the details to be what really happened.

C. Dramatic

Others have interpreted Song of Solomon as a drama (TV, movie, on stage). The three main characters: a king (Solomon), who has all the power and wealth of his office; a poor, common shepherd; and Shulamite. The men vie for her love.

As this interpretation goes, Shulamite grew up in the country and was pledged to the shepherd. One day Solomon was overwhelmed by her beauty, and he determined to win her love. He took her to the palace, where he tried to win her over. As she was on the verge of surrendering to Solomon's advances, she remembered her first and true love, the shepherd. She fled from the palace and fell into the shepherd's waiting arms.

As thrilling as this story sounds, it is difficult to support by the text. The plot and the characters must be read into the book. Another reason to dismiss the dramatic view is that the ancient Hebrews did not develop dramatic literature and neither did the nations that surrounded them.

D. Literal – This class will use

The fourth method of interpretation is the literal interpretation. It is reading it at face value, meaning taking it for what it says without trying to make it mean something else. It is not interpreted symbolically as an allegory of God's love for His people. It is not the typical interpretation of an actual historical event between Solomon and the Shulamite. Nor is it interpreted as a drama.

Rather, Song of Solomon is viewed as a collection of songs praising the love of a man and a woman arranged chronologically. At the beginning, the couple is starting their courtship. In the middle we find their wedding celebration. The final half contains lessons from their married life. At the end of the book, the now-aged couple reminisces about their long relationship together.

IV. Purpose

Song of Solomon provides an object lesson of God's gift of human love. As Solomon and Shulamite developed intimacy, they showed how rich the blessing of love is. In our world, love has been taken over by lust, and relationships totter on the verge of collapse. The message of Song of Solomon gives a renewed vision of what God designed for human love.

This book gives a balanced presentation of physical love (sex) within marriage. God commanded to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. They were to be united physically, as well as spiritually and emotionally, so that they were one flesh. The sexual aspect of marital love is not ignored by the Bible. It presents love, marriage, and sex, in that order. It teaches about genuine, guiltless intimacy.

V. Literature

Song of Solomon is an example of lyric poetry. Hebrew poetry did not use rhyme and rhythm but used imagery instead. Song of Solomon is full of images that draw pictures in the mind of the reader. When Solomon wrote that his love was as strong as death and that many waters could not quench it, he created pictures to express the faithfulness of his commitment.

Using poetry in Song of Solomon helps the writer speak indirectly of delicate topics. The sexual content of Song of Solomon could easily become indecent and offensive. However, by using the language of a garden and a spring (4:12—5:1), Solomon focused on the emotions of lovemaking on the wedding night without using inappropriate language.

VI. Theme and Outline

Although the Song of Solomon may indirectly teach about God's love for His people, its major focus is upon human love as God designed it. It is pure love, untainted by the immorality in our culture.

It is also sensual. The book highlights the physical expression of intimacy. When the poetic images are interpreted accurately, we recognize an undeniable sexual relationship between Solomon and Shulamite.

What makes this portrayal of sexual intimacy appropriate in a book of the Bible is that it takes place within the marriage relationship. This book celebrates marital love, and in particular its physical expression as God's good and sacred gift. Therefore, sexual love should be treasured, not perverted.

The outline of the book follows the chronological development of the relationship between Solomon and Shulamite.

In the first section, 1:1—3:11, there are ten scenes of their courtship.

The second section, 4:1—5:1, pictures their wedding.

The third part, 5:2—8:14, shows how love matures in marriage.

Section 2: Getting Started in Loving

Scripture: Song of Solomon 1:1 – 2:3

Overview

In the first five scenes of Song of Solomon, Solomon traced how the couple's initial attraction grew into love. They began by appreciating each other's character. Then they cultivated their love with conversation, compliments, and consideration. Their examples are beneficial for both a dating couple and a married couple.

Outline

I. Introduction (Song of Sol. 1:1)

II Building Proper Love (Song of Sol. 1:2 – 2:3)

A. Appreciate good character (1:2-4)

D. Cultivate the fragrance of love (1:12-14)

B. Build on legitimate common ground (1:5-8)

E. Delight in admiration (1:15 – 2:3)

C. Nurture by praise (1:9-11)

The first part of Song of Solomon pictures the courtship of Solomon and Shulamite. This section includes ten scenes that are like snapshots in a photo album. As we look at these brief scenes, it is evident that the couple's relationship progressed in confidence and commitment. As they became acquainted and learned to value each other, they built a strong foundation for a lasting love. This section will view the first five snapshots.

I. Introduction (Song of Sol. 1:1)

1.1 – It is described as "the song of songs." In Hebrew, it means "the best of songs." Among the 1,005 songs that Solomon penned (1 Kings 4:32), this was considered his finest. This song is "Solomon's." referring to Solomon as the author.

Note: The translation in our English Bible is often hard to follow, because the scenes run together, and we get confused who is speaking. However, the Hebrew language is a great help, for it has different forms when a man is addressed and when a woman is addressed. In addition, Solomon and Shulamite have favorite terms of endearment for each other. By using these hints, we can divide the book into scenes.

II. Building Proper Love (Song of Sol. 1:2 – 2:3)

A. Appreciate good character (1:2 – 4)

In the first scene (vv. 2 – 4), Shulamite was at the king's court. Chapter 8 implies that Solomon took her to Jerusalem from her hometown in the country.

In her inner thoughts, she had two desires. She desired a degree of physical intimacy with Solomon. She said, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (v. 2). She also desired his companionship, for she stated, "Draw me, we will run after thee" (v. 4).

Shulamite's attraction to Solomon was built on her appreciation of him. She appreciated him emotionally, for "thy love is better than wine" (v. 2b). She appreciated his fine taste (v. 3). Most of all, she appreciated his name, or reputation (v. 3).

This first scene teaches an important principle about love. Proper love builds on an appreciation of good character. Solomon and Shulamite were physically attracted to each other. However, the real foundation for their love was good character.

B. Build on legitimate common ground (1:5–8)

The second scene shows that Shulamite reflected on herself. She said to the daughters of Jerusalem, the women of the court, "I am black but comely" (v. 5). In the ancient world, as well as in some cultures today, fair skin was the ideal for women. This is the opposite of the sun-tanned look that many aspire to today (US vs Thailand).

Shulamite made her point explicit in verse 6. Her skin had become dark from working outdoors in the family vineyards. Using a clever play on words, she stated that because she was responsible for the family vineyard, she could not pamper her own "vineyard," or her appearance. As she compared her dark complexion with the fair skin of the other court women, she felt inferior, even though she granted that she was "comely," or lovely.

1.7 - She turned to address Solomon. She asked him a serious question, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?" She wanted to know how she could spend time with him to build their young relationship.

As she reached out in this way to Solomon, she was careful not to throw herself at him like a prostitute who would proposition men in city streets. She wanted to keep their relationship pure and untainted by illicit sex. She wanted to build the relationship, not contaminate it.

Solomon recognized her good intent. Using imagery, he encouraged her to feed her flock of young goats alongside his flock of sheep.

In addition, their common interest in the outdoors made her more attractive to Solomon than the women of the court, who knew only the life of leisure. He found the Shulamite's beauty was superior to all the others, for she was "fairest among women" (v. 8).

"Opposites attract" may be true to some extent, but it is only a partial truth. It is important that both individuals bring their own contributions to a relationship, but it is also important that the couple share values, priorities, and interests. This second scene of courtship teaches this important principle: Proper love builds on legitimate common ground.

C. Nurture by praise (1:9–11)

The third scene follows closely after the previous scene. Shulamite was still uncertain of herself at the court. As she looked around, she felt as though she could not measure up to the beautiful, sophisticated women she saw. She was intimidated by them.

Solomon did not belittle her feelings. In his opinion, she was clearly the most beautiful woman in the realm. However, he was sensitive to her hurt. She had focused on how deficient she felt. Therefore, Solomon reassured her in her area of fear. He helped her self-image by complimenting her beauty. He nurtured her by praise.

In verse 9, Solomon used poetic language that may seem strange to us. He compared Shulamite to a horse in Pharaoh's chariot, but no doubt she understood. Solomon was indicating to Shulamite that the women of the court were beautiful but that they could not compare to her in beauty.

Solomon continued his compliments by saying about the Shulamite's lovely cheeks and neck that were adorned with jewelry. Solomon's compliments were seconded by the daughters of Jerusalem.

In this scene, Solomon demonstrates that proper love is nurtured by praise. Positive, gracious, encouraging words build a friendship, love, and marriage.

D. Cultivate the fragrance of love (1:12–14)

In the fourth snapshot, we see Shulamite contemplating Solomon. She did not speak to him, but she thought about him. In beautiful poetry she disclosed how Solomon's love affected her.

Smells can trigger emotions and memories. In this scene, Shulamite used smells to describe the fragrance of love that had taken over her life.

1.12 - Shulamite described her love as precious perfume. Her fragrant love reached out to Solomon so that even when he sat at his table, he was aware of her love.

1.13-14 - Shulamite used similar language of smells to describe Solomon's effect upon her life.

She is thinking of their future “shall” time of sleeping together. What Shulamite meant by this image was that Solomon's love was a refreshment to her all through the day and all through the night. His love brought her delight that continued to please and nourish her even when they were not together.

It is usually not hard to tell when someone is in love. Love brings a special radiance to life—a joyful face, a cheerful attitude, a contented spirit. Love can bring a special fragrance that makes life special.

E. Delight in admiration (1:15–2:3)

In the fifth scene from their courtship, Solomon and Shulamite first spoke to each other and then about each other. This was a tender, intimate scene, as they used the affectionate nicknames "my love" and "my beloved" in addressing one another.

Shulamite responded to Solomon's admiration by focusing on them as a couple rather than just two individuals. By saying "our bed is green" she demonstrated that intimacy must transcend individuality. Love is not just two people linking their lives together—it is a genuine, thorough merger of their lives.

1.17 - Shulamite poetic imagery of a country scene to describe her thoughts and feelings. Cedars surrounded her and Solomon, and overhead hung a lattice of fir branches. She compared herself to a rose on the plain of Sharon. This imagery means that Shulamite saw herself as a lovely flower in a rural setting. Though she was still a country girl at heart, her self-image had improved considerably as it was nurtured by Solomon's love.

2.2 - Using image of her like the lily blossoming in the valleys, he compared her to a lily among thorns. Earlier, she had compared herself unfavorably with the women of the court (1:5, 6). She was conscious of her darkened skin, and she felt intimidated by the sophisticated ladies around her. By comparing her to a lily surrounded by thorns, Solomon turned her area of concern into a compliment.

2.3 - Shulamite continued her picture by describing Solomon as an apple tree among all the other trees of the wood. She said that under the shelter of this tree—that is, under Solomon's nurturing love—she found rest, shade and delight.

This lovely scene demonstrates that proper love delights in verbal admiration. Verbal expressions of love build people and nurture relationships. Love learns how to bring delight by using words of admiration.

Lesson 3 – Moving Toward Commitment

Scripture: Song of Solomon 2:4–3:11

Overview

In scenes six through ten of the courtship between Solomon and Shulamite, Solomon traced the progress of the relationship. As their love grew, they had to be patient in order to stay pure. In addition, they learned to overcome destructive factors that could have torn down their love.

Outline

I. Passion and Purity (Song of Sol. 2:4–7)

IV. Risk (Song of Sol. 3:1–5)

II. God's Timing (Song of Sol. 2:8–14)

V. Effort (Song of Sol. 3:6–11)

III. Destructive Factors (Song of Sol. 2:15–17)

I. Passion and Purity (2:4–7)

2.4 - The sixth scene of courtship finds Shulamite reflecting on how Solomon's love affected her. Up to this point the book has spoken only of their private interaction. However, this private expression of love was now made public by his proclamation of love. When he took Shulamite into his banquet hall, his love for her was as evident as though he had unfolded a banner over her. He acted lovingly both in private and in public.

2.5 - This expression of love by Solomon deeply moved Shulamite. Her love for Solomon fueled the fire of her imagination of intimacy with him.

2.7 - These feelings could have easily slipped into premarital sex. Therefore, Solomon urged the daughters of Jerusalem not to encourage Shulamite in her dangerous thoughts. Proper love keeps passion and purity in proper perspective.

As God intended it, a relationship begins in love. As that love grows, the couple takes on greater commitments and enjoys the delight of greater intimacy. When commitment reaches the point of marriage, intimacy can reach the point of sexual union. The desire for physical intimacy is good and proper, but it ought to occur within the context of marriage.

II. God's Timing (Song of Sol. 2:8—14)

2.8-9 - This seventh scene from Solomon and Shulamite's courtship is one of the most beautiful scenes in the book. The two could hardly bear being apart.

2.10-14 - Solomon's proposal of marriage. He used a picture of springtime to speak of the beautiful prospect of their life together. He urged her to arise and go with him, using the terms "my love" and "my fair one").

2.11 - As Solomon described it, the dark, cold, rainy winter of their lives was over. Everything up to that time had been dull compared with the bright future ahead.

2.12 - It was the approach of spring, for the flowers had blossomed and the birds had begun singing.

2.13 - The early figs and the fragrant blossoms in the vineyard completed the idyllic scene. This was the perfect time for their love to bloom as well, so Solomon once again urged her, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (v. 13).

This tender invitation to walk into the fields was a proposal to walk together into the future. Circumstances might not always be as beautiful as that lovely spring morning, but for their love, spring had come. It was time to pledge themselves to each other.

2.14 - Solomon invited her to go with him to a secluded spot on the terraced hillsides. There, in privacy, they could talk leisurely, plan, and dream of their married life. The principle in this scene is proper love waits for God's time.

III. Destructive Factors (Song of Sol. 2:15—17)

Shulamite pictured their love as a vineyard in blossom. The fruit was not yet ripe, for they were not married yet. Nevertheless, the blossoms promised a rich harvest. Similarly, the quality of their love during their courtship anticipated a rich and fruitful marriage.

2.15 - Vineyards are always vulnerable to damage by animals. Shulamite used this fact when she spoke of the need to catch the little foxes that spoil the vines. Application pertains to any destructive factors that can damage love before it matures.

It may be a selfish spirit that insists on "my career", "my money" can inflict a heavy price on a relationship. Little foxes might also include pressure to please others, minor personality differences, guilt of premarital sex, and pride expressed in stubbornness and lack of forgiveness.

2.16 - Shulamite's description of Solomon as feeding among the lilies meant literally that he was pasturing his flock. She pictured her beloved as a shepherd. Calling Solomon a shepherd implies his gentleness, sensitivity, humility, tenderness, and diligence. These were some of the qualities that made Solomon so attractive to her.

2.17 - Shulamite once again expressed her desire for sexual intimacy. The mountains of Bethel likely speak of her breasts. She was clearly inviting Solomon to hurry up and marry her. They kept pure throughout their courtship. Their desire for sexual intimacy grew as their commitment increased. They recognized that this desire could be fulfilled only within the context of marriage.

IV. Risk (Song of Sol. 3:1-5)

Every relationship has problems. As this ninth scene of courtship in Song of Solomon demonstrates, even Solomon and Shulamite had to work through some issues.

3.1-5 is a difficult section of the book to interpret. It is likely a dream sequence. In this dream, Shulamite searched for Solomon but could not find him (3:1). In her alarm she decided to search the city streets at night (v. 2). This was dangerous for a young woman, but she was thinking with her heart rather than with her mind. During her search, the watchmen of the city found her. She asked if they had seen her beloved (v. 3), but apparently they had not. Then she found him (v. 4). Then in v. 5 her intense feelings for intimacy with Solomon were kindled. Their wedding time was near, but until then they must not risk premarital intimacy. They must not stir up or awake love meaning that their passion needed to be bounded by purity.

V. Effort (Song of Sol. 3:6–11)

Courtship scene #10. In ancient Israel there was a period of betrothal between the proposal of marriage and the wedding. During the betrothal time, the man prepared a house for his prospective bride. When all was ready, he came to claim his bride.

3.6 - This scene describes Solomon's procession to his wedding with Shulamite. Solomon spared no effort to provide the best for her. She found him pleasing and attractive, because he had used the myrrh and frankincense she especially enjoyed.

3.7-8 - In addition, Solomon provided a bed for them. Along with the bed for their pleasure, he also assigned sixty warriors for their protection. He wanted nothing to tarnish the joy of that special day.

3.9-10 - The chariot described here was likely a royal carriage. Only the finest materials were used. The wood was choice cedar from Lebanon. Throughout were silver, gold, lovely purple cloth and intricate workmanship. Solomon's love moved him to provide for Shulamite's comfort and enjoyment. His thoughtfulness and generosity were a natural extension of his affection for her.

This reveals a key principle: Proper love gives its very best. Real love is not cheap; it is willing to be lavish. Real love does not cut corners; it is thorough. Real love does not say that anything will do; it seeks to give the best it can.

3.11 - The narrator invited the young women to view the scene. There stood Solomon, crowned with a wedding wreath, delighting in his wedding day. The days of anticipation were over. The waiting was finished. All was prepared for their wedding.

Lesson 4 – Wedding and Beyond

Scripture: Song of Solomon 4:1 – 6:13

Overview

In the tender wedding night scene, Solomon and Shulamite enjoyed intimacy. However, they had to work through the problem of insensitivity in their marriage so that their intimacy could be restored.

Outline

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| I. Sensitivity Strengthens Intimacy (4:1 – 5:1) | II. Insensitivity Threatens Intimacy (5:2 – 6:13) |
| A. Appreciation (4:1 – 11) | A. Threat (5:2 – 8) |
| B. Purity (4:12-15) | B. Focus |
| C. Physical Intimacy (4:16; 5:1a) | C. Restoration (6:4 – 13) |
| D. Approval (5:1b) | |

The first portion of this passage, Song of Solomon 4:1 – 5:1, contains the lovely, delicate wedding night scene. Solomon used tender terms to describe Shulamite's beauty and purity. God added His word of approval to their intimacy. In the second part, 5:2 – 6:13, Solomon was hurt by Shulamite's insensitivity to him. Their relationship was strained, but eventually gratitude led to the restoration of their intimacy. This passage has much to teach about how to maintain loving relationships.

I. The Delight of Intimacy (Song of Sol. 4:1 – 5:1)

Up to this point, Song of Solomon has presented a set of snapshots of courtship. These pictures show how Solomon and Shulamite's love, and commitment grew until their wedding.

In chapter 4 the scene shifts from the public joy of the wedding to the private intimacy of the couple on their wedding night. Because this tender scene is described in poetic images, the sexual consummation does not descend into improper language. Their sexual union was pure because they reserved it for marriage.

A. Appreciation (4:1 – 11)

Solomon initiated the intimacy by verbally appreciating Shulamite's beauty. As he had done in several scenes from their courtship, he affirmed her where she may have felt vulnerable. He spoke to her heart to assure her that he loved and valued her.

Most of Solomon's descriptions of the Shulamite seem unusual to us. However, we must remember that he was speaking to Shulamite in terms that she would understand and appreciate.

Some of the descriptions are quite clear while others require more thought. For example, Solomon's description of her hair as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead sounds strange (v. 1). However, even today in Israel, wild goats jump up and down the cliffs. From a distance their movement can be seen, just like Shulamite's curly hair. Solomon was complimenting her on her great hair style!

Another difficult description is found in verse 4: "Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury." What woman wants a neck that looks like a military fortress? This is a good example of an evocative image. Solomon was saying that when he looked at her lovely neck, he experienced the same kind of delight as he did when he saw the shields of his mighty men hanging in the tower of David. Both sights evoked joy and confidence.

4.9-11 - Solomon continued by describing the overpowering effect that Shulamite's beauty had upon him. Her love was intoxicating, and her kisses were totally delightful. Their physical intimacy was everything they had hoped it would be!

B. Purity (4:12–15)

As they made love, Solomon paused to praise Shulamite's virginity. She had saved this priceless gift for Solomon on their wedding night. Using two poetic images, he said that she was an enclosed garden and a sealed fountain (v. 12). No doubt, many men had admired the garden of her beauty and desired her. Nevertheless, Shulamite had preserved herself for Solomon alone.

C. Physical Intimacy (4:16; 5:1a)

4.16 – Before their wedding, Shulamite had longed for Solomon to make love to her, but each time Solomon had cautioned, it is not the right time. Now it was the right time for intimacy, and Shulamite said, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits".

5.1a - Solomon responded by saying that he had indeed entered into Shulamite's garden. Within the framework of their marriage, they had at last come to enjoy physical intimacy.

D. Approval (5: 1b)

God is the likely speaker and encourages them to fully enjoy themselves. His words place divine approval upon their love and their sexual union. God's blessing is the fitting conclusion to this tender scene. It confirms that sex is not bad. Rather sex with the right person (a spouse) at the right time (within marriage) is blessed by God.

II. The Danger of Insensitivity (Song of Sol. 5:2—6:13)

After the early days of their marriage were finished, life happened, and they had more lessons to learn in marriage. The last half of the book shows how their love continued to work through challenges in order to reach new levels of intimacy and fulfillment.

A. Threat (5:2-8)

Once again, Shulamite used a dream sequence to describe a painful experience in her relationship with Solomon. This dream was the product of her anxious thoughts and active imagination. What is most important are the feelings of anxiety and panic that overwhelmed Shulamite.

5.2 - She pictured Solomon coming to her at night. He addressed her elaborately by saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled".

5.4-5 - Once again, the writer used poetic imagery to imply a desire for sexual intimacy but when she finally responded to Solomon, but it was too late.

5.6-8 - At that point in Shulamite's dream, everything started to go wrong. She sought for Solomon, but she could not find him. She called to him but received no answer. She went out into the city but could not locate him. Finally, the watchmen found her, but thinking that she was a prostitute, they beat her. Despairing of finding Solomon herself, Shulamite appealed to the daughters of Jerusalem.

She had gotten into a rut of insensitivity in her marriage. When she realized what life would be like without Solomon, she recognized what a terrible mistake she had made. The only way Shulamite could rekindle their love was to go back to the foundation of their relationship. She had to be motivated by love. Her self-centeredness had drawn her attention away from her beloved.

B. Focus (5:9 – 6:3)

Shulamite's insensitivity developed when she started focusing on her rather than upon her relationship with Solomon. In order to rekindle her love, she needed to renew her focus him. She had to stop thinking only of her comfort and delighting in Solomon in a fresh, renewed way.

In 5:8 Shulamite appealed to the daughters of Jerusalem for their help finding Solomon. They replied in verse 9 with a double question to Shulamite. They asked her, What makes Solomon so special? In a sense, they were asking Shulamite to tell them why she had ever started to love him in the first place.

5.10-16 - Their questions compelled Shulamite to focus her thoughts on Solomon. She considered what he was like. The man whom she had just rebuffed was in reality one of a kind. Her self-centeredness had blinded her to his excellence. She forgot what she had until it was gone.

The key to rekindling love is to remember the one loved. Shulamite became insensitive when she forgot the qualities that had attracted her to Solomon. When she took time to consider what he was like, the embers of her began to grow into a roaring fire once again.

6.1a - The daughters of Jerusalem asked Shulamite a second set of questions. Now that she had told them what Solomon was like, they asked how she could become reconciled to him. They knew that she needed to move beyond regret for the past to a renewal of the relationship.

6.2 - Shulamite answered that Solomon was committed to her (6:2). While she was insensitive to him, he was faithful in his loyalty and love for her. Her “feelings” told that the relationship was over when Solomon turned away, but remembering his faithful commitment to her meant that their relationship was still intact.

Misunderstandings can take place without the marriage falling apart. Solomon and Shulamite could falter, but they would always have opportunities for making up.

C. Restoration (6:4—13)

When Shulamite recognized her insensitivity and focused on Solomon, she opened the doors to the restoration of their intimacy. However, Solomon then had to decide whether to respond in a positive way. He had been hurt deeply by her insensitivity, but he did not retaliate. He was more interested in resolving the problem. Because of that, he verbally reaffirmed his love for Shulamite in 6:4—10.

Using his favorite nickname for her, "my love," Solomon compared her to Tirzah and Jerusalem. Jerusalem, of course, was the impressive capital of Solomon's kingdom. Tirzah, a city in the northern part of the kingdom, was especially noted for its beauty. To him Shulamite was both attractive and awe-inspiring. His love for her brought into his heart a passion for her.

6.4-7 - Solomon then described Shulamite's beauty in terms similar to those he had used on their wedding night. By repeating many of the same words, Solomon demonstrated that his love for her had not changed. The relationship might have been strained, but it was still solid.

6.8-9 - Solomon praised the uniqueness of Shulamite. He said that there were sixty queens, eighty concubines and countless virgins, but his beloved was one of a kind. The quality of one genuine lover could not be matched by a vast quantity of sex partners. Promiscuity can never provide the satisfaction and fulfillment of one solid marriage.

6.10 - The young women added their voices to support Solomon's assessment of Shulamite. They, too, saw that she was pure, as clear as the sun. It was also obvious that Solomon was overwhelmed by her. The character and love of this couple were noticeable to all those around them.

6.11-12 - Shulamite stepped toward reconciliation, she wondered if their love was still in springtime if the vines and the pomegranates were blossoming. She did not know if the blasting heat of her insensitivity had killed their relationship or not.

6.13 - What she found exceeded her fondest hopes. Solomon's love embraced her with forgiveness. Their relationship was restored.

Lesson 5 – Rejoicing in Togetherness

Scripture: Song of Solomon 7:1 – 8:14

Overview

As the love between Solomon and Shulamite grew in their marriage, they experienced the joy of freedom within the security of their commitment. In the final scene of the book the aged couple reminisce about how their love was planted and prepared so that in later years they could enjoy its rich harvest.

Outline

- I. The Delight of Marital Love (Song of Sol. 7:1 – 10)
- II. The Desire of Marital Love (Song of Sol. 7:11 – 8:4)
- III. The Development of Marital Love (Song of Sol. 8:5 – 14)
 - A. Seed of love (8:5)
 - B. Planted in commitment (8:6, 7)
 - C. Prepared in purity (8:8 – 12)
 - D. Pleasure of fruitfulness (8:13, 14)

This final section of Song of Solomon reveals how Solomon and Shulamite's love deepened throughout their marriage. After working through the problem of insensitivity, they learned to find joy in their mutual commitment. As they looked back over their relationship in their latter years, they reflected upon what love is and how love is nurtured. This passage demonstrates that love is a process of continual growth. There is always more to learn and experience about love.

I. The Delight of Marital Love (Song of Sol. 7:1 – 10)

Chapters 5 and 6 reveal the painful reality that marriage has to work through misunderstandings and mistakes. Chapters 7 and 8 present married love that keeps growing and deepening. Solomon and Shulamite were not content to let their love dim, but rather they worked to make their love shine brighter as the years went on.

7.1-10 - Both Solomon and Shulamite have aged since their wedding night, yet Solomon still describes Shulamite's beauty. The language used showed that Solomon still delighted in Shulamite. Shulamite completed the lovely scene by saying, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (v. 10). She was totally convinced of Solomon's love and commitment to her. She belonged to him and he to her.

Their love over time had achieved oneness physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Through the years of their relationship, they had built a love that lasted.

Marriage cannot work if sin and selfishness remain unrestrained. If a marriage is to flourish, individualism must be surrendered out of love for the spouse. Therefore, a marriage relationship demands the same kind of yieldedness and surrender that God requires in us.

II. The Desire of Marital Love (Song of Sol. 7:11 – 8:4)

Solomon's tender words and loving actions convinced Shulamite that he desired her. In 7:11–8:4 Shulamite responded by disclosing her desire for him. Their marriage was one of mutual love. They found pleasure and fulfillment in the relationship they had nurtured over many years.

Early in the relationship, Shulamite had felt uncertain of herself and intimidated by the women around her. However, through the years she had matured in many ways. Solomon's love had gradually brought her to the place where she was personally confident and felt secure in her relationship with Solomon.

7.11-12 - Using the poetic language of vineyards and blossoms, Shulamite invited Solomon to come with her into the field, where they would have sexual intimacy.

7.13 - She said that the mandrakes were giving their fragrance. People in the ancient world believed that mandrakes encouraged fertility. Shulamite implied that she wanted to have children. Shulamite also added that she had treasured up all sorts of pleasant things for Solomon. Their love and their physical enjoyment did not grow stale. They were always continuing to learn more about each other.

8.1-2 - Shulamite's desire sound strange to us. She said that she wished that Solomon were like a brother to her so that she could kiss him without being despised. In their culture, public affection between spouses was not approved, and it certainly was inappropriate between the unmarried (Thailand). However, affectionate displays between family members were perfectly acceptable. Shulamite desired the freedom to express her love for Solomon all the time, without having to hold herself back because of what people would say.

8.3 - Shulamite repeated the wish she had first uttered in 2:6. She wanted Solomon's left hand to be under her head and his right hand to embrace her. Within marriage, God designed intimacy to be enjoyed. It is a blessing from God.

III. The Development of Marital Love (Song of Sol. 8:5—14)

The final scene of Song of Solomon views Solomon and Shulamite in their old age, looking back over their many years together. They reminisced about how their love had matured.

A. Seed of love (8:5)

Shulamite implied that their love was part of God's larger work in the world. Although, in one sense, their love was reserved for just the two of them, it was not truly independent. They were indebted to their parents, who had given them life and had taught them love. Like Shulamite and Solomon, every loving couple is indebted to many people who have sacrificed for them and shaped their lives.

B. Planted in commitment (8:6, 7)

Read vv. 6-7. Shulamite had found love to be rooted in commitment. In verses 6 and 7, she used four figures of speech to reveal what love is like.

1. Love is total commitment. It is like a seal used in Bible times to verify the integrity of legal papers. If a seal was broken, it meant that parts of the document could have been changed in some way.

Love, like a seal, is a lasting commitment.

2. Love is persistent. Verse 6 – love is strong as death. The love pictured here is willing to fight for the one it loves. It is not an easy, painless emotion. True love holds on and does not let go. It is persistent.

3. Love is tested by trouble. is like a powerful fire that cannot be extinguished. Even the worst problems of life cannot overwhelm true love.

4. Love is priceless. Even if a man were to give all his wealth to purchase love, he would find that love is not for sale. Real love requires commitment, not cash. One cannot negotiate or bargain for it.

C. Prepared in purity (8:8—12)

Early in Song of Solomon, Shulamite spoke of the harshness that she experienced in her family. Unlike the women of the court, she had toiled the vineyards. Because of her arduous work, she had not been able to pamper her appearance (1:6).

8.8-9 - Despite this hardship Shulamite was grateful to her family for their part in preparing her to love Solomon. She spoke of how her brothers helped her stay pure. In the ancient marriages were arranged by the families, and brothers were usually involved. Shulamite's brothers took their responsibility seriously. Even when she was still an adolescent, they had taken measures to protect her for her eventual marriage.

8.10 - The brothers' efforts were successful, for Shulamite had reached maturity as a virgin. It was in that enviable condition that she entered into her marriage with Solomon.

8.11-12 - Difficult to understand. Solomon owned vineyards in Baal-hamon, which he leased to tenant farmers. Shulamite used this arrangement to describe her commitment to Solomon by giving herself totally to him.

D. Pleasure of fruitfulness (8:13, 14)

In the final two verses of Song of Solomon, we gain a parting glimpse of the loving couple. Through the challenges of many years, Solomon and Shulamite had learned to love deeply and tenderly.

8.13 - He wanted to hear the voice of his lovely wife. In all the years of marriage he had not tired of conversing with her. He still loved to hear her talk to him.

8.14 - Once again she invited Solomon to enjoy intimacy with her. Years of marriage had only deepened their sense of oneness and nurtured their intimacy. This most beautiful song ends on this lovely note.

The End