

## **"WHEN I FALL IN LOVE"**

### **A VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON**

Have you ever fallen in love? Do you know personally the excitement of being enthralled with someone of the opposite sex and being arrested at the thought of living life at the most intimate level with that person for the rest of your days? Have you ever felt the unstoppable power of physical attraction? The breathtaking experience of seeing the smiling eyes of someone welcoming you into an exclusive friendship? The satisfaction of belonging to someone who is satisfied in you? The rush of a passionate, lingering kiss? The security of a long, welcoming hug? The euphoria of a physical, tender touch that communicates desire and delight? The joy of being cared for by someone who sees your uniqueness and loves it? Who sees your weaknesses closely and fills them? Who values you in every way? Who depends on you vulnerably? Who affirms and cherishes you utterly? Who thinks about you moment by moment? Who cannot stand to be apart from you?

Have you ever experienced the opposite? The devastation of being hurt at a level so deep, words fall short? Of being rejected? Of having your vulnerabilities exploited? Your trust broken? Your affections refused? Your advances ignored? Your heart broken? Love is a powerful thing. It motivates people to do the most silly and monumental things. We will trade anything we have to get the real thing, and go to any lengths to secure it or avoid losing it. With it, the soul sings! Without it, the soul languishes and dies! The presence of love is the height of bliss! The absence of love is the worst of all torture!

Bambi calls it "twitter-pated." The world knows it as "infatuation." Fairy tales describe it as "enchantment." God calls it love – holy love: the passionate and pure devotion between a man and a woman who are committed to one another in a spiritual oneness of heart, soul, body, and mind for life. God inspired an entire book about it. It's called the Song of Solomon.

The Song of Solomon is that little, crispy portion of God's Word tucked away in the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament that most Christians wander into unexpectedly and receive such a shock that they turn their Bibles to the front again to make sure that they are reading the "Holy Bible" because they can hardly believe it is in His Word. Many Christians, and scholars for that matter, aren't sure what to do with this book. It's racy, poetic, explicit, and frank! Yet, it's beautiful, dignified, romantic, and holy. Some verses make you blush, others send your mind off into a world that looks so different than the one we live in, we wonder if such a love story could ever be a dream come true for us. The good news is, according to God, it can.

#### **THE CAST OF CHARACTERS**

The Song of Solomon is a real love story about the young, romantic, righteous love relationship between Solomon the king of Israel (1:4; 3:11) and his young bride

known hereafter as the "Shulamite." He is the son of David and heir to the Messianic promises that have passed through his line; she is a commoner. He is the wisest man to ever live (next to Jesus Christ), having been given wisdom by God to rule and lead; she is a farmer's daughter—a rustic maiden, virtually unknown to the nobility of the land. He was raised in the palace with privileges and delicacies that few enjoyed; she was raised in obscurity in the rural village of a remote part of Galilee and excluded from society by her protective, harsh brothers (1:6; 8:8-9). He is attended by a secret-service cohort of bodyguards and groomsmen that number into the sixties (3:7); she is attended to by a company of bridesmaid friends that both prepare her for her wedding and counsel her toward holiness (2:7, 15; 3:5; 5:8-9; 8:4).

Theirs is a real story of holy, natural love – the way it is meant to be. It has echoes of Eden in it that give us a sense of how God intended His gift of righteous romantic love to be enjoyed, to His glory. It's as close as two people, fallen but redeemed, can get to the perfections of love.

- What does **Song of Solomon 1:1** call this song? What does it mean?
- According to **1 Kings 4:31-32**, how many songs did Solomon write?
- Knowing that this song was read annually at the Passover celebration in Jerusalem, what implications does this have for our understanding of God's gift of marriage today? See also **Isaiah 1** and **Amos 5**.
- Knowing that the Song of Solomon was introduced into the teaching of Israel's children before/right at puberty (Jr. High age), what implications does this have for our view of kids, purity, and marriage?

## THEMES

The key verse of **Song of Solomon is 5:16**, "**This is my beloved and this is my friend.**" It is a summary statement of their relationship given at the height of her longing for him as they are maturing in their love – they are lovers and friends. They are intimate companions. Soul mates. They are one. Nothing held back. Fully engaged. Both sinners. Totally committed.

FRIENDSHIP is a dominant theme in the book. They are clearly friends before they are lovers. Their erotic passion flows from it and their conflict falls back on it. They illustrate by their sometimes playful, sometimes somber attitudes and words, how marriage that is between two friends will last. It's what endures after the fireworks

fade, the bells stop ringing, and the goosebumps flatten. It's also what stirs all of those emotions and affections up again in an ever maturing fashion.

COMMUNICATION is also key to their relationship success. She is wordy (no surprise there). In fact she accounts for nearly 53% of all the words spoken in the book. When he speaks, he reveals that he is practiced at carefully composed words that do more than show his interest in her body. He has touched her soul long before he has touched her body! And what he says isn't shallow or crude, it's honoring and pure.

PASSION does come though, because he definitely touches her body. And she touches his. They are extremely physical in every phase of their relationship, including the dating period. And they long to do more. They talk about it, fantasize about it, dream about it – and so they should. It is God's gift to them (5:1) and they are meant to indulge themselves in it, in the proper context.

PURITY is their priority. Throughout the book, but especially in their dating period, every time their God-given passions are aroused and want to carry them further than they are intended to go they immediately They understand the difference between a fire in the fireplace and a fire on the rug. One warms and relaxes; the other kills and destroys. They are radically committed to purity (2:7, 15; 3:5; 8:4).

PRIVACY is something they strive to maintain, while on the one hand speaking very clearly and obviously about romantic things, on the other and especially when the topic at hand is highly erotic, the language Solomon uses is more picturesque and shrouded with word pictures, all of which communicate at the same time they conceal. In other words, once you understand the analogy that the couple is using to describe their intentions, it makes you blush. However, you realize that they have purposefully worded those ideas in a way that is guarded, dignified, and appropriate instead of raw, crass, or grungy. In fact, the most intimate part of the book, their honeymoon sex is in the white spaces, where they speak of it "before" and "after," but leave the "during" out (4:8-5:1).

SELFLESSNESS between them is what gives them their strength. Only once does selfishness enter into their relationship and when it does, it devastates (5:2-6). The irony of their relationship however is that while neither of them are selfish, their expressions of delight in one another reveal that they are both mutually gratified. This is not two passionate people manipulating and using the other to gratify their out of control hormones – it is the beauty of how two people who are sacrificial and giving can actually both be satisfied at the same time, without selfishness. It's not me and me! It's us – together as one.

ENDURANCE is a quality that they develop early on. Because they are sinners, they know that conflict is a given, but also an opportunity for growth. They fight and then reconcile, leaving us an example to follow and realistic expectations that these people are real, just like us. This is a couple who grapples with the same issues we

do and model how to face it with God's help and mature and deepen in their love by returning to the commitment they made on the day they said, "I do!"

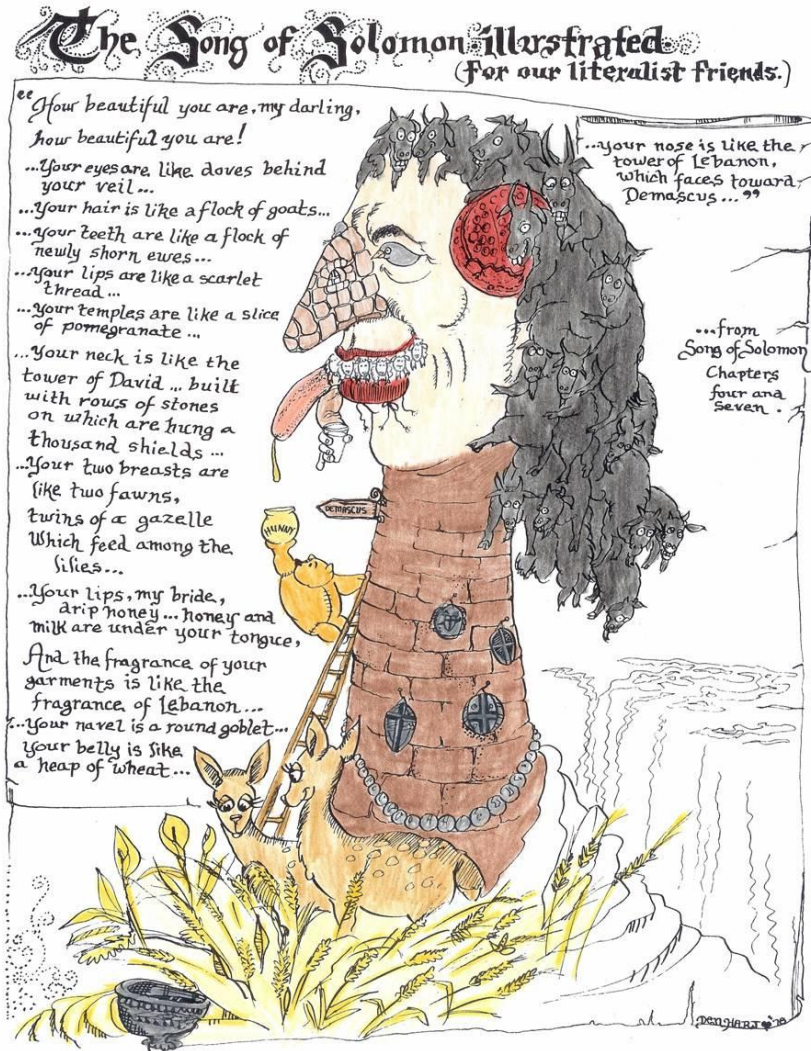
#### A WORD ABOUT INTERPRETATION

Because the Bible describes marriage as an illustration of Christ's relationship to the church in **Ephesians 5:22-33**, some well meaning scholars have interpreted the Song of Solomon allegorically, saying that the erotic, romantic, sensual references are a picture to how we relate to Christ, or that he relates to us. Here are some examples, some of which are not only ridiculous, but entertaining.

- **1:5 – "I am black but lovely"** – the grace of God that sustains us in the midst of trials that may scorch us but not take away the beauty of our character?
- **1:10 – "Cheeks lovely with ornaments"** – heavenly goldsmiths fashioning tokens of truth and inserting them in the soul's ears?
- **1:13 – "pouch of myrrh...between my breasts"** – Christ between the Old and New Testament?
- **3:6 – "who is this coming up from the wilderness"** – Jesus at His incarnation and entrance into the devastation of our fallenness?
- **4:11 – "lips drip honey"** – two lips of the law and the Gospel?
- **4:12 – "the mountain of myrrh"** – the hill of Calvary?
- **5:6 – "I called him but he did not answer me"** – sometimes Christ vanishes to us and though we pray to Him, He is silent and withdrawn?
- **7:7 – "breasts like cluster of the vine"** – the nurturing effect of sound doctrine has on Christians?

Though we would agree that marriage is ultimately a picture of Christ and the church, the consistency of our Biblical hermeneutics urges us to take the meaning of a text literally, unless there is something in the text to suggest otherwise. In addition, because of the absurd and awkward idea of relating to God erotically – we understand the Song of Solomon to be this: an entire book in God's Word celebrating the amazing gift of romance and sexuality enjoyed by His people in the context of marriage.

However, because this genre of Scripture is poetic in nature, the challenge will be to appropriately apply the metaphors as intended by the original author. While our method of interpretation calls for a literal understanding, we would also reject a "wooden-literal" meaning, one that would create this monstrosity:



## INTERPRETIVE OUTLINE

The Song of Solomon is not hard to outline, especially if properly understood as a real love story between two actual people – one that applies to every man and every woman. Broadly, it is the story of their love, which has already, by the time the book opens, blossomed into something more than chemistry. They have a commitment and have begun to experience the awakening of passions and desires for one another that God intends for them to enjoy as a couple, and which must ultimately find fullest expression in the marriage bed (which doesn't happen until ch. 5). In this book however, we get to see their love from the strength of their dating period to the building and renewing of their maturing period, and everything between:

1. **LEAVING** – Dating (1:1-3:5)
2. **CLEAVING** – Marrying (3:6-5:1)
3. **WEAVING** – Growing (5:2-8:14)

## PRACTICAL OUTLINE

The Song of Solomon has often been mistakenly characterized as just a book about sex. And while there is definitely sexually erotic experiences and language used in the book, a deeper look into what lies behind the passion is a strong, Biblical, enduring commitment to one another that has become the foundation upon which their romantic fervor and affection is built. That commitment appears and then reappears throughout the book, communicating that love is not primarily about chemistry – it is about a commitment to live out God’s design with passion and pleasure. Therefore, falling in love isn’t so passive as it sounds; it is the choice to live with a covenant partner with 10 choices that reflect a commitment that is both honoring to God and satisfying to one another.

### WHEN I FALL IN LOVE, I CHOOSE TO:

1. RESPECT YOU (1:1-4)
2. TRUST YOU (1:5-2:3)
3. COMPLETE YOU (2:3-7)
4. DESIRE YOU (2:8-3:5)
5. PROTECT YOU (2:7, 15; 3:5; 8:4)
6. CELEBRATE YOU (3:6-11)
7. PRAISE YOU (4:1-7)
8. SATISFY YOU (4:8-5:1)
9. FORGIVE YOU (5:2-6:13)
10. REASSURE YOU (7:1-8:14)

### **TAKING IT HOME AND MAKING IT REAL:**

Here’s the hard reality about relationships – your romantic relationships will thrive, survive, or dive based on the choices you make. C. S. Lewis appropriately said,

*“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part that chooses, into something a little different than what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature.”*

Lewis is right. Every day of your life, you are making choices, which at first don’t seem like they are significant (we really only make a handful of major choices in life), but cumulatively determine the course your life is on and the kind of life you will live. The choices we make eventually lead to patterns; the patterns we form

eventually lead to habits; the habits we cultivate will eventually dictate our lifestyle; our lifestyle will eventually determine our character; our character will eventually become our destiny. It all starts with the choices you make, or don't make, right now. Stick with this study and make these choices in your marriage, and you will not only be pleasing to God, you will have a marriage that you are going to love.

- A. Time for some inventory: how have the choices that you have made affected you and especially the romantic relationship in your life. Sit down with the Lord and evaluate your commitment level to your partner: 0-10 (10 being 100% committed) and then consider the concerns in your relationship: 0-10 (0 is no problems whatsoever; 10 is divorce court). Your commitment level must outweigh the concern level if the relationship is going to mature. Share your answers with your spouse and discuss where your relationship is at present, then pray about growth.
- B. If you are married, sit down with your spouse this week and respond to God's Word by renewing your commitment to passionately pursue the grace of God in your relationship. Specifically, sit down and reaffirm your love and your willingness to do whatever it takes, in so far as it concerns you, to honor God by doing your part in the marriage. Commit to take this study seriously and discuss its implications weekly.
- C. If you are not married, celebrate the glory and dignity of God's majestic design by 1) renewing your own commitment to purity –guarding yourself from any kind of reproach that would stain and defile your future mate, should God will it so that He provide you with one; and 2) elevating your view of what a godly mate should be, in order to know what to look for, so that you know what you should be.
- D. Start now – beginning next week you can submit ideas for our Ultimate Romantic Resource Booklet, the grand prize of which is a "Romantic Getaway Vacation." To be eligible, you must submit a meaningful and edifying entry. You can submit multiple entries to increase your chances of winning and there will be multiple prizes in addition to the grand prize. The category topics acceptable include: *The Ultimate Date Night: From Start to Finish; Preparing a Night that Will Honor my Wife; Preparing a Night that will Honor my Husband; The Best Inexpensive Date Nights; The Best Romantic Getaway Places; Date Nights at Home.* There will also be a *Rico-Suave Award* given to the man who composes the best and most creative love poem/song for his special woman – to be voted on by the congregation.