

October 24, 2021

“Finding True Love”  
Lesson 8 of Unit

Song of Songs 4:8-5:1

**Intro**

Today’s lesson is from another of Solomon’s wisdom books, The Song of Songs, sometimes called the Song of Solomon. The theme of the book is the very special bond, designed by God, that exists in marriage between a man and a woman, particularly in the area of physical intimacy. Some commentators have attempted to completely spiritualize the book, saying that it is meant to show God’s love for his people, and Christ’s love for his bride, the church. There are always spiritual applications to be made from any part of the Scriptures. However, if we “read the lines” as Machiel suggested in his message about “Strange Scriptures, Bad Interpretations”, we start with what the words actually say.

This lesson will use the view that there are three main characters in the book: Solomon, the Shulammitte maiden, and a young man (a shepherd) from whom Solomon is trying to woo the maiden. In this view, the maiden refuses Solomon’s offer and chooses to devote herself to the man she loves. In writing about this, Solomon has recorded a romantic failure on his part. Why do that? Consider Ecclesiastes: its main point, given at the end, is that life is best lived by recognizing and honoring God. In Song of Songs, the lesson seems to be that the most satisfying relationship is one man and one woman bound to each other for life (not in having many spouses, as Solomon did).

**Read Song of Songs 4:8-5:1**

1. vs. 8: This verse is from the shepherd, calling to the maiden

First, he wants her to come *from*...

From Lebanon, from Amana, Senir, Hermon

Lebanon is north of Israel, a far distance from Jerusalem

Amana, Senir, and Hermon are all mountains in the same region

She is not literally in all these places

Think of this as love poetry, like “I would climb the highest mountain...”

Each of these represent distance and separation

The shepherd is merely saying he wants to be near her; she seems far away

Second, he warns of dangers

Lion’s dens, places with leopards

The shepherd feels she is in some danger wherever she is at

Simply put, the shepherd wants to be with the woman he loves

2. vs. 9: The words in vs. 9 are similar to things we have either heard or said before!

This woman has “stolen” the heart of this shepherd

What did it take to accomplish this?

“One glance”

She is so beautiful that one glance of her eyes has captured the young man

Our text provides a good explanation of this:

“...it is customary for an Eastern woman to unveil one of her eyes when addressing someone. This would render visible some of the ornaments worn about the neck. The idea is that only a portion of her beauty has overpowered him.”

One note about him referring to her as “sister”

The term is being used as a term of affection or endearment

The term “father” doesn’t have to mean one’s father

It can be a term of respect, or mean one’s ancestor

Think of the term “sister” in this same way, as one of affection

3. vs. 10: The expressions of the shepherd here show his love’s superiority to earthly things

Her love is “more pleasing than wine”

That sounds like an odd comparison to us now

In OT times, wine was used as a source of refreshment

Her love is more refreshing than wine

The fragrance of her perfume is more pleasing “than any spice”

Our sense of smell is the one that is closest connected to memory

There are certain smells that immediately remind us of places or people

Perfumes have always been associated with romance, even in OT times

4. vs. 11: The joy of a righteous intimacy is developed here

His mention of her lips and her tongue connect to kissing

Kissing has always been an expression of romantic feelings

Her kisses are sweet like a honeycomb

Milk and honey are connected with the blessings of the promised land (Deut. 6:3)

The tongue and the lips are also used to refer to how one speaks

Prov. 10:20, 15:2; Prov. 20:15, Is. 6:5

Her speech may be being referred to here as good and pleasing as well

Lebanon is most often associated with its cedars

Cedar items (jewelry boxes, chests, etc) are quite fragrant

It’s uncertain, but that could be the smell described here.

5. vs. 12: The garden and the spring here are both being used as symbols of virginity and purity

A garden suggests fruits being grown which can be eaten

A spring or fountain contains water that can be drunk

That fact that the maiden is described as “a garden locked up” and “a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain”, implies that she is still a virgin

Enjoying physical intimacy is a blessing of marriage

Only the shepherd will be allowed to enter the garden or the spring

6. vs. 13: This verse uses various elements in a figurative way

The enjoyment of physical intimacy is described as “choice fruits”

These include pomegranates as well as henna and nard

The fact that there are several mentioned shows there is much to be enjoyed

Pomegranates are frequently connected with love in Song of Songs

4:3, 6:7, 6:11, 7:12, 8:2

Henna is a shrub whose flowers provide a valuable perfume

Nard is a costly perfume

This is what Mary Magdalene poured on Jesus’ feet (Mark 14:3)

7. vs. 14: The list of figurative elements continues with things that smell good

Some are spices, like cinnamon

Some are dyes, like saffron

Some are perfumes, like nard, calamus, myrrh, and aloes

All these are figurative expressions of what the shepherd sees in the maiden

She is a source of abundant pleasures to him

8. vs. 15: A second water image here (see vs. 12 as well)

Here, the maiden is described as a “garden fountain”, “a well of flowing water”

Water satisfies our thirst

The waters here show the satisfaction that comes from a love that is genuine

9. vs. 16: For the first time in this section, the maiden is the one who speaks

She appears to be responding to what the shepherd has said previously

“Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad”

She uses the garden imagery he has mentioned to refer to herself

She wants to attract the shepherd to come to her

He alone will be allowed to have access to her

This again shows the blessing of intimacy between a man and a woman

10. vs. 5:1: The shepherd responds to the call of the maiden in 4:16

The enjoyment of one’s beloved is obvious here

This type of enjoyment isn’t possible in a place with multiple partners

Solomon’s 700 wives and 300 concubines doesn’t fit this kind of intimacy

Application: The way our text concludes this lesson is better than anything I could develop.

“The topic of sex seems to move toward extremes. On the one hand, certain sectors of today’s culture glorify sex to the point of making it a god. Sexual themes permeate television and movies, and very seldom is sex portrayed in the way God intended. A Christian perspective on sex is ridiculed as out of touch and restrictive to personal freedom.

“On the other hand (often Christian circles), the subject of sex is avoided out of embarrassment. As a result, young people who have legitimate questions about their bodies and emotions go to the secular world for insights after finding the church ill-equipped or unwilling to address such matters. The outcome is often Christian relationships, marriages, and homes end up looking like their secular counterparts. An important means of witnessing to the world is therefore lost.

“Consider that today’s lesson is part of a quarter of studies that is dedicated to the theme of wisdom. In Proverbs 1:20, wisdom is described as proclaiming her voice ‘aloud in the street...in the public squares.’ Biblical wisdom is clearly not something restricted to men and women of great learning, locking inside their hallowed halls of ivy. Wisdom is “street smart”!

The Song of Songs, as part of the Old Testament’s wisdom literature, fits perfectly with this perspective on wisdom. Biblical wisdom is not just for the “religious” setting; it is for the workroom, the classroom, and, says the Song of Songs, the bedroom. In fact, all “rooms” of our lives (the bedroom included) are meant to reflect God’s wisdom and in that way to be sanctuaries just as much as the places where we worship on Sunday.”

Prayer: Father God, help us not to compartmentalize our lives in such a way that we leave certain areas untouched by the lordship of Jesus. May we submit every area of life, even the most intimate, to Him whose beloved bride is the church. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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