

LOVE SONG

• a song of solomon series •

STUDY GUIDE
Crossroads Church

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INTRODUCTION

Song of Solomon is sadly often neglected and many times when it's spoken of, it's only in hushed tones. It's like people are ashamed of the book and of the fact that we are sexual beings. Yet, God is not ashamed of that fact. He shaped us and knows what's good for us. We need the guidance of the Song of Solomon.

Romans 15:4 reminds us that what was written in the Old Testament was written for our instruction. 2 Timothy says that "all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (3:16-17).

Notice that there are no qualifiers. 2 Timothy does not say most of scripture is good, for most people, most of the time. It says it's all good, for all people, all of the time. What if you're single, or widowed, or recently divorced? Does Song of Solomon have anything to say to you?

Absolutely. Scripture time and time again reminds us that God woos and pursues His people. All others might turn away and we may feel like we have no one else in the world, but God has made a way for us to come back into the garden where we can have intimate fellowship with Him.

Song of Solomon has much to say about many things. It does focus on marriage, but marriage is to focus on Christ. So, through the picture of marriage we have a picture of the better and ultimate marriage: the marriage of Christ and the Church. So, marriage is a pointer, Song of Solomon is a pointer. It points us to Christ. Christ overcomes all opposition to welcome His bride in.

Song of Solomon or "Song of Songs" as it's sometimes called is a collection of love poetry. It celebrates love, romance, beauty, and sexual intimacy. "Song of Songs" is a Hebrew idiom like "holy of holies" or "king of kings." Essentially, it's saying it's the greatest song.

The Bible has different genres of writing. There are parables, proverbs, prophecies, laments, speeches, songs, visions, historical narratives, etc. Genre is something most of us are familiar with because there are different genres of movies and music. For example, with movies there's western, comedy, drama, romance, documentary, etc. For music there's classical, rap, rock, country, jazz, and a whole lot more.

It's important that we understand which genre we're reading because it will impact our interpretation. For example, David says in Psalm 22:14: "I am poured out like water." Does that mean that David was literally turned into a liquid and poured out?

No, David is giving a poetic description.

Poetry often uses hyperbole, simile, metaphor, and figurative language.

- Hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration: “you will trample upon lions” (Ps. 91:13).
- Simile is a comparison: “the LORD is like a father to His children” (Ps. 103:13).
- Metaphor is an implied comparison: “the LORD is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1).
- Figurative language: “wear pride like a jeweled necklace” (Ps. 73:6).

Poetry can be difficult to understand because many people don’t regularly read poetry. But understanding poetry is important because it conveys meaning powerfully through pictures and poetry is often more emotional. Also, around one-third of the Bible is poetry.

The Song of Solomon encourages us to get over inhibitions about the goodness of romantic passion. When romantic passion is carried out according to God’s design it is good. Song of Solomon also communicates more generally the goodness of God’s creation and the place that recreation should have in our life. It is good and right to take walks, relax, and smell the roses.

Appropriately enjoying God’s creation glorifies God. Song of Solomon has much to say about the beauty of God’s good creation. Romantic emotions and desires are not wrong. They are good when appropriately cultivated.

One of the repeated exhortations in the book is not to prematurely awaken love (Song of Sol. 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). That is a timely encouragement for us today when everything is about love—defined however we want to define it—and love now. The scripture in contrast to society, says “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb. 13:4).

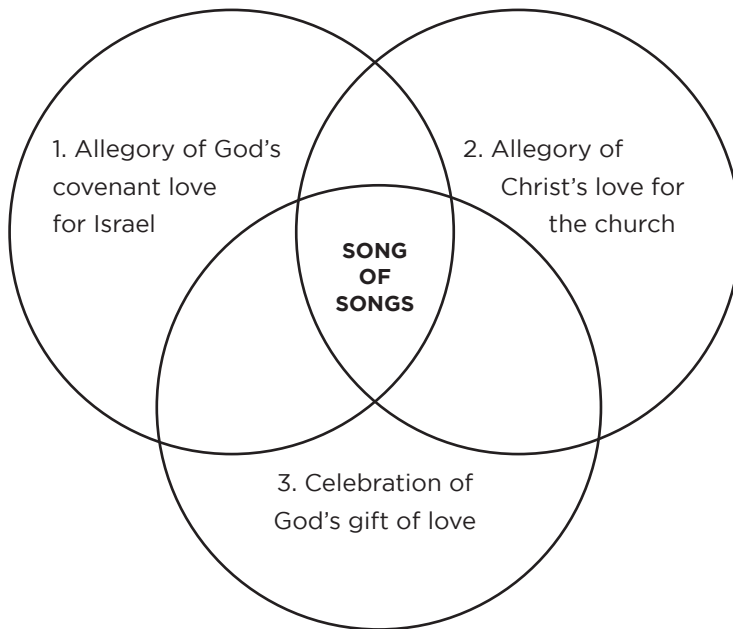
HELP READING SONG OF SOLOMON

There are some visuals that seem quite strange when you first read them. So, instead of visualizing what’s being said, you should think about the meaning of what’s being said. So, for example, the woman says that the man is like “the vineyards of Engedi.” This is a compliment because Engedi is an oasis of abundant water located west of the Dead Sea. The man says the woman is “beautiful as Tirzah” (Song of Sol. 6:4). Tirzah was the capital of the northern kingdom and literally means “pleasing.”

MAIN INTERPRETATIONS OF SONG OF SOLOMON

Here are the three main interpretations of Song of Solomon:

1. Allegory of God's covenant love for Israel (Hos. 2:16-19)
2. Allegory of Christ's love for the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 21:2,9)
3. Celebration of God's gift of love (Prov. 5:15-19)



A FEW KEY THEMES

- Desire for and seeking of the beloved (e.g., Song of Sol. 1:2; 3:1-2).
- Praise of the beloved (e.g., Song of Sol. 1:15; 2:2-3; 4:1).
- Joy of attraction to the beloved (e.g., Song of Sol. 2:14; 4:10-11).
- Love exclusively reserved for the beloved (e.g., Song of Sol. 2:15; 4:12 cf. Prov. 5:15-23).

CHARACTERS

- Man
- Woman
- Daughters of Jerusalem
- Watchmen

PLOT

The poems give more of a kaleidoscope perspective than it does a linear timeline of events. Nevertheless, we can still sketch out some of the main scenes: Courtship/dating, Wedding, and Marriage interspersed with various challenges and roadblocks (for example, physical separation which requires seeking).

QUOTES

- “As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women” (Song of Solomon 2:2).
- “As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men” (Song of Sol. 2:3).
- “You are altogether beautiful, my love, there is no flaw in you” (4:7).
- “You have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes” (4:9).
- “Your lips drip nectar, my bride” (5:11).
- “There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one” (6:9).
- “Who is this that looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun?” (6:10).
- “Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand” (7:1).
- “Your belly is a heap of wheat” (7:2).

STATS

- 8 chapters
- 117 verses
- “My beloved” 31x
- “Love/s” 29x
- “Beautiful” 15x

DID YOU KNOW?

The Song of Solomon nowhere mentions the name of God, but that doesn't mean that God is not present. It is God that gives the good gift of romantic and sexual passion between a husband and wife.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- *The ESV Study Bible*
- *Ryken's Bible Handbook*

WEEK 1: WHY A LOVE SONG?

Read: Song of Solomon 1

INTRODUCTION

We probably all have that song. The song that reminds us of someone special. Maybe it's a spouse, fiancé, or the potential of what a future spouse might be like. It's a love song; a song that stirs your emotions, moves your heart, and fills your mind with desire. Whatever song yours might be, it serves as a connection point to someone you have loved or hope to love.

Probably very few of us would connect love songs to the Bible. In fact, in our minds the Bible and love songs seem to view life from opposite lenses because we naturally think that the Bible only focuses on spiritual life and not the physical realities that we find in the here and now. But this cannot be further from the truth. One of the places we see this greatest is in one of the most famous love songs in the Bible, the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon). It's an ancient Israelite love song about the dating, marriage, love, conflict, and intimacy between Solomon (the wisest man who ever lived) and his wife.

There probably isn't a better book for the season we find ourselves in. Confusion about love, sexuality, and marriage abounds in our culture. The Song of Solomon is God's gift to the church for such a time as this. While it is certainly mentioned, it's rarely studied or taught. However, without the Song of Solomon, we would be left with only negative words about a reality that is crucial to the human experience: love and intimacy.

This book gives us a godly, beautiful perspective on the love between a man and a woman. We see sexuality in its purist yet most mysterious forms...the way God intended it in the garden when He created male and female to be "naked and not ashamed." This book is wonderfully permeated with images and scenes of this intimate love, as the man and woman chase, play, and embrace each other poem after poem. It captures the fullness of human intimacy with all its joys,

insecurities, sorrows, and frustrations while reminding us of the patience needed in the journey of love. In a world devoid of true intimacy, it reminds us that love, marriage, and intimacy should be celebrated and honored.

This book is for you. Maybe you're praying for God to bring you that future spouse... Song of Solomon paints the picture of not only what to look for but what to pursue. Possibly you are a newlywed trying to understand how to grow your intimacy...listen to the words of someone who experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly of marriage. For others, you have been married for years but have lost some of the excitement and passion of love...let this book restore the joy of your marriage. And maybe you have been married for decades with love that has only grown sweeter with time...the Song of Solomon will remind you of God's gift of love to you.

DAILY STUDY

○ DAY 1

- Why do you think a book like Song of Solomon is needed in our current cultural climate?
- For centuries, the dominant view in Christianity was that sexual passion and true spirituality were contradictory or opposed to each other. Why do you think this thought was so prevailing?
- How does our current culture view sexuality and spirituality?

○ DAY 2

- Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). Why do you think this is considered the “Song of Songs”?
- Song of Solomon is a forgotten book in the Bible. Why do you think so many churches steer away from teaching this book?
- Of all the wives that Solomon had, what do you think makes this specific wife the focal point of this song? (Song of Sol. 1:1)

○ DAY 3

- Read 1 Corinthians 13. How is love so important to relationships? What role does intimacy play in healthy relationships?
- Whether you’re single, married, divorced, or widowed, what are some of the struggles you face concerning intimacy?

○ DAY 4

- Read Genesis 2:24. What does it mean to “leave and cleave”? How does this demonstrate God’s good purpose of marriage?
- Read Hebrews 13:4. How does marriage honor God’s desire for intimacy? What happens when we get this wrong? (1 Cor. 6:18)
- Why do you think that God ordered sex to follow marriage? In what ways does culture flip this (sex preceding marriage)?

○ DAY 5

- Read Ephesians 5. List some ways that marital love displays Christ's love for us.
- In what ways does marital intimacy paint a picture of our intimacy with God?
- What has been your greatest intimate date so far? Why?
- Read Song of Solomon 8:7. In what ways does true biblical love endure? Why is it so hard to remember this in relationships?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Tommy Nelson, *The Book of Romance*
- Douglas Sean O'Donnel, *The Song of Solomon: An Invitation to Intimacy*

WEEK 2: THE ART OF ATTRACTION

Read: Song of Solomon 1 - 2

INTRODUCTION

If someone is described as an attractive person, what does that mean? In our culture, attractiveness is almost always connected with physical appearance. While that is one important part of how God designed attraction to function, there are many other important facets. In 1:3 we read the woman describing the man with the words, “your name is oil poured out.” The word oil can also be translated as perfume or pure ointment. The intention of the writer is to convey that the character and integrity of this man spills out, making him attractive to all the “single ladies.” The fact that his reputation is pure makes him desirable.

Appearance does not dictate attractiveness. In 1:6 we read about the woman’s dark skin, and her plea for the man to look beyond her appearance. In that day, fair skin was considered a desirable trait among women. This was actually an indicator of economic status rather than a physical trait. A wealthy woman would spend her days inside and would have lighter skin than a woman who worked outside. (Ironically, in our culture people spend money to go tanning, quite the opposite of Solomon’s era.) The woman in this verse worked for her family in the vineyard and therefore “neglected” or was unable to maintain fair skin. In other words, her dedication to her family was more important to her than her physical appearance. Commitment is more attractive than what culture defines as beauty.

Purity is attractive. In 1:7, the woman’s request to know where the man would be at midday was so she could go to meet him. This was a meeting with purity in mind. When she refers to a veiled woman at midday, she is describing the behavior of a prostitute. She requests to know his plans so she can spend time with him appropriately rather than attempt to seduce him with debaucherous pleasures. Once again we see the consistent theme, the character of a person is the key component of attraction.

DAILY STUDY

DAY 1

- Can you describe what is attractive to you? Why are these things important?

DAY 2

- Who can help you to go beyond appearance and seek character?
How can they help you?

DAY 3

- In some cultures, it would be considered strange for a young person to pick their spouse. Instead, parents arrange marriages. They all would say the young people are not mature enough and have no experience being married and thus should trust the wisdom of those who have already managed marriage successfully. What are the benefits of this method? What are its drawbacks?

DAY 4

- In verses 8-17, it is clear that there is physical attraction in addition to attractive character. Clearly God designed man and woman to desire each other. What are the blessings associated with this desire? What dangers has sin created?

DAY 5

- In 2:1-7 there is a sense of anticipation balanced with patient restraint. How can those not married fight the battle of restraint successfully?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- *Couples Connection Journal* (from Promptly Journals)

WEEK 3: THE ART OF DATING

Read: Song of Solomon 3

INTRODUCTION

Ah, dating. It can seem somewhat mysterious. Is it an art? Is it a science? How do we go about finding our future husband or wife? How do I know I've found "the one"? These questions and so many more surround the idea of dating in our world. Even more than that, with our current technology, we have the opportunity to find a spouse from every part of the globe!

The question then becomes: How do I date? What should I look for? Does dating end at marriage?

First, we must understand that God loves single people! Our Savior was a single man. One of the greatest apostles, Paul, was likely single. And it is he who writes, "I wish that all were as I myself am" (that is, single) (1 Cor. 7:7). Why did he say that? A little later he writes, "Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles..." (1 Cor. 7:28). Any married person reading this knows how true this is! Paul, and apparently Jesus, too, believed that the best way to serve the Kingdom is singleness. I say this not to guilt-trip the married or those seeking marriage, but rather to encourage and exhort those who are currently single to seek the Kingdom of God more fervently than a spouse.

But, when dating comes your way, you must be ready. The first thing to be aware of is your own expectations and values and how the culture you were raised in has affected them. How culture defines what a good partner is, changes with each generation. But scripture hasn't left us empty-handed.

Second, what is the content of their character? Is the person you're interested in seeking to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt. 22:37) and their neighbor as themselves

(Matt. 22:39)? God desires His people to be equally yoked with another believer (2 Cor. 6:14). If they have not experienced the unconditional love of God and trust His Word, your relationship and marriage will be built upon faulty foundations. Is the person marked by the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) or the fruits of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22)? The fruits of the Spirit are the life we were designed for and by God’s grace, we can experience on this earth. If you or your significant other is operating in the flesh more than the Spirit, it will wreak havoc on your relationship, as sin does to every relationship!

Third, how do they view God’s design for sex? The bride-to-be in Song of Solomon 2:7 and 3:5 cries out, “[Do] not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.” A plea for young women (and men) to wait for marriage before engaging in their sexual relationship! The covenant commitment of marriage is the only foundation worthy for the most intimate of acts that combines our whole selves (physical, emotional, and spiritual)! Our promiscuous culture and pornography epidemic have led many to a hollow and atrophied view of sex and God’s beautiful design. Will they respect you and God enough to engage in this marvelous act in the proper way and at the proper time?

Lastly, is this person going to help you serve and grow in your faith with Christ or take you away from it? Will this person aid in your transformation into Christ-likeness or not? Our ultimate end is to glorify God in every part of our life. If we can see our dating lives through the lens of the gospel, we (and our relationships) will be more blessed for it!

DAILY STUDY

○ DAY 1

- Are you willing to be patient and allow the Lord to lead you in the dating process? Do you trust in God's timing in bringing you a spouse? Do you believe that your life will be as full as it can be in Christ without marrying or re-marrying?
- These questions help us know whether or not dating and marriage have become an idol in our lives!

○ DAY 2

- Give a few examples of characteristics our culture promotes in a significant other? Do you agree with them or find yourself desiring the same things?
- What do the scriptures say about characteristics to look for? (Prov. 31:30; Gal. 5:22; Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 7:24-27; Eph. 5:22-33)

○ DAY 3

- Relationships and marriage were not designed to complete someone. Often, though, this is what we're looking for, someone to make us whole. How can you guard yourself from seeking ultimate satisfaction in another person?
- It has been said, "don't look for the perfect person, be the perfect person." There is truth to this. For those that are single, are you seeking to grow in your walk with Jesus, or find someone who will make you feel whole?

○ DAY 4

- What is our culture's view of sex? Pornography? How have each of these streams of information affected your own view of sex?
- What are some of the reasons or excuses people give for seeking intimacy outside of marriage? Are these valid? Why do you think God designed sex to be enjoyed within the covenant commitment of marriage?

○ DAY 5

- What does it mean to be respected, loved, and cherished? Ephesians 5:33 says, “Let each [husband] love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” Love and respect. These are two crucial ingredients in a healthy relationship. A question to ask when dating or looking to date is: “Is this man willing to love me like Jesus loves the Church? (Eph. 5:25)” and “Is this woman willing to respect me in a similar way she does to Jesus (Eph. 5:22)”?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Justin Buzzard, *Date Your Wife*
- Greg Gibson, *Date Different: A Short (but honest) Conversation on Dating, Sex, & Marriage for Teenagers (and their parents)*
- Gary Thomas, *The Sacred Search*

WEEK 4: THE ART OF INTIMACY

Read: Song of Solomon 4

INTRODUCTION

Song of Solomon reaches its sexual climax in this section although there are still some other steamy sections (such as 7:6-10). When Song of Solomon refers to sexual intercourse it talks about eating the fruit of a luscious garden. The Bible has various metaphors that it uses to describe sex: “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24), “to know” (Gen. 4:1, 17, 25), “to enter” (Ruth 4:13), and “to lie with” (Gen. 19:32; 29:23, 30; 38:26).

The idea of “knowing” someone is far deeper and more intimate than merely an experience on the wedding night. Intimacy is a life devoted to knowing someone, your spouse, in a deep and unwavering way. To know them in a way that no one else truly gets to. That knowledge is often where joy is found within this intimate admiration of the wedding night. Intimacy is not seasonal, though it often may feel that way, it is actually a life-long journey with your spouse.

This week is all about discussing and understanding what intimacy is. If you’re married, this is an amazing week to have heart-led conversations about how you love one another, how you enjoy loving each other, and how you can both grow to selflessly love the other. But, even if you’re single and still looking, this week is a time to grow in your understanding of what intimacy truly is and what you can be already fighting for. There is also the Truth that for all followers of Christ, there is an intimate relationship between Christ and His people. He knows you better than anyone else ever has or ever will, and He chooses to love you.

DAILY STUDY

○ DAY 1

- What is intimacy? What does it look like to be intimate in your marriage? Talk through these things with your spouse. (Song of Sol. 4)

○ DAY 2

- The excitement of the wedding night, while not the same for everyone, is a gift from the Lord to enjoy in light of the covenantal promises of marriage. Why is this time of admiration important? How are you admiring your spouse? (Song of Sol. 4:1)

○ DAY 3

- Is your heart “captivated” by the one that you love? Is there anything you can do to reignite that admiration? (Song of Sol. 4:9)

○ DAY 4

- Why does romance tend to ebb and flow with time? How do you stir and cultivate an intimacy that is deep in all seasons of life, even when you’re past the “honeymoon” phase?

○ DAY 5

- What does it look like to be open with your spouse? Is there something that you are holding back from them that is hindering your intimacy?
- Remember, intimacy is more than just knowing each other’s naked bodies... it’s knowing and loving each other’s hearts. Do you really know and admire one another’s hearts? (1 Jn. 4:18-19)
- How does the way that God knows you and loves you relates to the way that you know and love your spouse? (Ps. 139:1; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 8:38-39)

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Kevin Leman, *Sheet Music: Uncovering the Secrets of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*
- Douglas E. Rosenau, *A Celebration of Sex*
- Randy Alcorn, *The Purity Principle*

WEEK 5: THE ART OF CONFLICT

Read: Song of Solomon 5

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable, handling conflict well is not. So, it would be wise of us to ask: how can we handle conflict well and who can we learn from?

The passage that comes to mind for me is 1 Peter 2:23 which says, “When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly” (1 Pet. 2:23).

There are two elements to Jesus’ response. Something Jesus didn’t do and something He did do. Let’s consider both.

First, Jesus did not respond to those that attacked or hurt Him with an attack. When struck He did not strike back. Of course, that’s not to say Jesus was a doormat and it’s not to say that you should be a doormat. But it is to say that we should not retaliate. When our loved ones or our enemies hurt us, it does not give us a license to hurt them.

This is much easier said than done. So, it’s vital that we have a model and motivation. Jesus provides both. Jesus took our sin upon Himself on the cross. He responded with love when all we brought Him was hate. It is when we know the depth of His grace that we are better positioned to respond to others with grace too.

Second, Jesus entrusted Himself to His good Father who He knew judges justly and rights every wrong. When we face conflict sometimes our gut response is to defend ourselves and clear our name. I know my inner lawyer often jumps out and testifies to my righteousness. Yet, Jesus—the perfect and righteous one—was slightly before His accusers. He entrusted Himself into His

Father's care. If we are to handle conflict well, we too must learn to entrust ourselves into the good care of our Father.

Conflict happens with all couples. It even happens with the idyllic couple in the Song of Solomon. Actually, conflict happens with all people. So, it is wise for us to know how to handle conflict and communication is a big part of conflict. The Bible has a lot to say about good communication and handling conflict (e.g., Ps. 141:3; Prov. 18:13, 17; 21:23; 25:11; Eph. 4:25, 29, 31-32).

The Bible teaches us that words matter. The right word, at the right time, is like an important piece of art (Prov. 25:11); it's beautiful and life giving. On the other hand, words can wreak incredible havoc (James 3:1-12). So, this week we're going to consider conflict and communication.

DAILY STUDY

○ DAY 1

- Read James 4:1-3. Based on James 4 what causes conflicts?
- Read Matthew 15:19. Where does our conflict come from based on Matthew 15?
- Question 17 of the New City Catechism says, “Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security.” With that in mind, how does idolatry often lead to conflict?

○ DAY 2

- Read Matthew 12:36. Are you cognizant that you are accountable to God for how you communicate as well as what you communicate?
- Read Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29-32. Are you speaking the truth and doing it in love?

○ DAY 3

- Why is listening well important? What does listening well communicate?
- Read Proverbs 18:13 and James 1:19. Are you actively listening? What practical and intentional steps are you going to take to make you a better listener?
- Are you humble in your communication (Eph. 4:1-3)?

○ DAY 4

- Are you aware of what your nonverbal cues communicate (gestures, rolling of eyes, posture, etc.)? And that your nonverbal cues matter too (James 4:17)? What nonverbal cues are you most prone to?
- Read Romans 12:10-12. Are you putting in the necessary work to communicate and understand well?

○ DAY 5

- Do you seek to please God more than anything else when you are communicating (2 Cor. 5:9)? Or are you more concerned with proving that you're right?
- Good communication is something that we must be intentional about. It takes time. It takes work. How are you going to work on communicating well with those in your life for the rest of this week?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Ken Sande, *Peacemaking for Families*
- Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*

WEEK 6: THE ART OF DEEPENING

Read: Song of Solomon 6-7

INTRODUCTION

For most couples on their wedding day, they assume their spouse will never be more attractive to them than the moment they say, “I do.” When a bride-to-be walks the aisle and meets the gaze of her groom-to-be, they think they’ll never be more attracted to one another than they are at the altar.

I have seen grooms watch their bride-to-be walk the aisle and physically double over overwhelmed by the beauty of the woman he is about to commit “til death do us part.” The weight of the moment, the receiving of his prize, and her radiant beauty somehow can turn an iron man into a soft twinkie. But this is just the beginning of a God-honoring love song. Without realizing it at the time, even the affection of a bride and groom on their wedding day is shallow compared to what is to come. Deep-rooted love grows over time. Deepening begins by sowing the seeds of surface affections that then develop deep roots of love and knowledge of one another.

Early in the book of Song of Solomon, we see the man and his bride go from meeting to dating to honeymooning and then to conflict. In chapter 7 through the first part of chapter 8, we read of their relationship going to that next level. This is the result of a couple persevering through difficulty and celebrating victories together.

The man who was once enamored with the outward beauty of his bride now has his affection and appreciation grow deeper. He explores all the intimate details of his bride and describes her beauty and dignity (7:1-9). And then in verses 10-13, the bride responds in kind, complimenting the most intimate traits of her husband--particulars no one else but her would ever know. The more they explore, the more they discover. The more they discover, the deeper their love grows.

The deeper their love grows, the more their mingled souls are blessed.

A Christ-honoring marriage is intended for pleasure on an emotional, spiritual, and physical level as Solomon and his bride express for us. So, the result of pursuing God's holy plan for marriage is a deep connection between one man and one woman. It's the reward from hard relational work that doesn't diminish but gets better with time--something every bride and groom on their wedding day should endeavor to pursue.

DAILY STUDY

○ DAY 1

- Why is it so important to compliment your mate? What are the benefits for you and them? What are the dangers of failing to do so?
- Why is it important to have candid conversations with your spouse about what you enjoy about intimacy and what you do not enjoy?
- If you're married, take time to compliment your favorite physical characteristics of your spouse.

○ DAY 2

- Why do you think pleasure and satisfaction in marriage increases with time? How is this out of step with what culture says about sexual fulfillment?
- How does serving your spouse in the bedroom lead to greater fulfillment for both you and them?

○ DAY 3

- How has the ways of the world affected your intimacy and expectations of your spouse?
- What would you and your spouse need to do in order to reorient your focus in the bedroom back to God's ways instead of the world's?

○ DAY 4

- Wives, how can your husband better approach intimacy with you like Solomon did with his bride?
- Husbands, what can your wives do to show you she desires you?
- Why do we have to work to keep passion alive in our marriage? Why doesn't it just happen naturally?

○ DAY 5

- In 8:1, Solomon's bride desired to express her love for her husband in public without shame or embarrassment. What are your desires or distaste for public affection? Share your thoughts with your spouse.
- How can couples work at being friends and lovers? How can your public and private displays of affection communicate friendship and love?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*
- Ed & Lisa Young, *Sexperiment: 7 Days to Lasting Intimacy with Your Spouse*

WEEK 7: THE ART OF FAITHFULNESS

Read: Song of Solomon 8

INTRODUCTION

Remaining true to your word is a vital part of life not only of the spouse but the Christian as well. When you are full of deceit, lies, and cover-ups then people do not know if and when they can trust you. Therefore, truthfulness and faithfulness are essential.

Faithfulness is a quality that builds over time but can quickly be removed when broken. Faithfulness is when trust and commitment collide. It is a character trait that must be proven time and time again. You must wake up daily and choose faithfulness. Every day requires a conscience decision to be and remain faithful.

DAILY STUDY

○ DAY 1

- Read Isaiah 25:1, Lamentations 3:22-23, Psalm 36:5. How does God's faithfulness impact the living out of your faith day-to-day?
- In what ways does remembering God's faithfulness help you to pursue faithfulness?

○ DAY 2

- How has God shown Himself faithful in your life?
- In the Old Testament at various times God's people would set up an Ebenezer stone. Ebenezer means "stone of help." The Ebenezer stones would be reminders of God's faithfulness and help (Gen. 28:11; Josh. 4:3-8; 1 Sam. 7:12). How can you set up a tangible reminder of God's faithfulness?

○ DAY 3

- Read 1 Corinthians 10:13-14. How does God's faithfulness come into play when you are tempted by the devil?
- Read 1 John 1:9. God is faithful to forgive sins. In what way does knowing that God is faithful to forgive sins help you to pursue a relationship with Him?

○ DAY 4

- How would you answer someone who asks, "Why do you trust God's faithfulness?"
- How has Jesus demonstrated the faithfulness of God?
- How are you imitating Jesus by being faithful to others in your life?

○ DAY 5

- How does a person grow in their trust of the faithfulness of God?
- When you think of God's faithfulness as shown in the Bible what verses or stories stick out to you? Take some time now to read that passage.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*

CONCLUSION

We trust you have been blessed and encouraged through this study. Remember, God's word is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, it pierces into the deepest recesses of our hearts and performs heart surgery (Heb. 4:12)! So, keep reading and mediating on the Bible. It will bless you!

We also want to encourage you if you are facing challenges in your marriage or singleness to pursue help. It is certainly true that we all stumble in many ways (James 3:2) and we all need help in many ways.

As a church we want to see you flourish and thrive. We want you to be walking in the free and abundant life that Jesus has provided. And God provides the Church—brothers and sisters—to walk alongside us and help bear our burdens (Gal. 6:2).

There's nothing wrong with getting help. In fact, I regularly go to the dentist, and I regularly take my car to a mechanic. Our emotional and spiritual hearts also need checked and tuned-up. So, if you need help, please seek out help!

We have a bunch of great groups at Crossroads that you can check out and if you need counseling below are some suggestions:

SMALL GROUPS

- You can check out the small groups at Crossroads by going to crossroadswired.com/communities

MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

The Crossroads Mental Health Team is a volunteer group of local professionals and peer supports called to bring awareness, compassion, connections, and God's love to individuals, their families, and communities who are overcome by their mental health trials.

To contact the Mental Health Team:

- Call Crossroads Church at 419-529-0750
- Visit Next Steps at Crossroads
- Email info@crossroadswired.com
- Or email Jeremy Smith at jeremygrantsmith@gmail.com

COUNSELING

- Encompass Christian Counseling (419-289-0970)
- Family Life Counseling (419-774-9969)

CARE AND PRAYER

- If you need care or prayer for your marriage or singleness, please go to crossroadswired.com/care and request care or prayer.



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