

The Song of Solomon

Lesson 1: The Bride's Longing and the Lovers' First Words -- Song of Solomon 1:1-2:7

Open the Bible to the very center, and you will find a love song. Tucked between Ecclesiastes, with its restless search for meaning, and Isaiah, with its towering visions of the Holy One, sits a small book of poetry where a man and a woman speak to each other of love. Some readers are surprised it is even there. They expected commandments, prophecies, and history, and instead they find a bride saying, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Yet the Spirit of God placed it in the canon on purpose. God, who made us male and female, is not embarrassed by the love He designed. He wrote a song about it.

Song of Solomon is unashamed and unembarrassed about the goodness of married love. It does not whisper in the corner or hide its face. It celebrates, openly and tenderly, the delight of a husband and wife who belong to one another. We come to it with reverence, the way we would step into a garden someone else has carefully tended, not trampling, not grabbing, but receiving. The poetry is discreet in its own way, and we will read it discreetly in ours. But we will not strip it of its joy. The God who said "it is not good that the man should be alone" is the same God who gave us this song to sing.

In these opening verses you will hear longing. The bride aches for her beloved. She is not ashamed of her desire for him, and her desire is pure because it is aimed at the one to whom she will be joined. You will hear her speak honestly about herself, "I am black, but comely," weathered by the sun and the labor of her family, yet still beautiful in her beloved's eyes. You will hear the first exchange of praise between the two, words so warm they almost glow on the page. And you will hear a refrain that will return like a tolling bell through the whole book, a charge to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up love until it pleases, not to awaken this powerful thing before its proper time.

As we begin this study, hold two truths together. First, this is a song about a real man and a real woman and the marriage God blesses, the lifelong, exclusive, one-flesh union of one husband and one wife. We will not allegorize away that plain and beautiful meaning. Second, the love between a husband and wife was always meant to point upward. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that marriage is a great mystery, and that it speaks of Christ and the church. So as we listen to these lovers, we will, where the text invites it, lift our eyes to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Let us read with open hearts.

Group Discussion: What does it tell us about God that He chose to include an unashamed celebration of married love in His inspired Word, and how should that shape the way the Lord's church speaks about love and marriage today?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own heart has longing been pointed in the wrong direction, or awakened before its proper time, and what would it look like to bring even your desires under the lordship of Christ?

Read Song of Solomon 1:1–2:7

Study Questions

1. The book opens by calling itself “the song of songs, which is Solomon’s” (1:1). What does this superscription claim about the worth of the book, and why would God devote an inspired book to the celebration of married love?
2. The bride begins not with restraint but with open longing, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth” (1:2). When you examine your own desires, are they aimed where God designed them to be, and what would it mean for you to long rightly?
3. The bride says, “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem” (1:5), honest about her flaws yet secure in her beloved’s love. What does this passage teach about how God sees us and how we are to see ourselves in the light of love?
4. The bride admits, “they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (1:6). What is the “vineyard” you have neglected while tending everyone else’s, and what would faithful keeping look like this week?
5. The lovers exchange their first words of praise, the beloved calling her fair and the bride calling him pleasant (1:15–16). What does this mutual delight reveal about God’s design for the way a husband and wife are to honor one another?

6. The bride longs to know where her beloved feeds his flock at noon (1:7), unwilling to wander among strangers. In your walk with God, are you seeking the Shepherd Himself, or drifting among substitutes, and how do you find Him?
7. The bride declares, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (2:1), and the beloved answers by calling her a lily among thorns (2:2). What does this picture teach about being set apart, and how does it echo God's call for His people to be holy?
8. The bride rests under her beloved's care and says, "his banner over me was love" (2:4). What banner is flying over your life right now, and what would change if you truly rested under the banner of God's love?
9. Three times in this book, beginning here in 2:7, comes the charge, "that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." What is the wisdom of God in this refrain about not awakening love before its time, and what does it teach about purity, patience, and self-control?
10. Looking back across this whole opening passage, the longing, the honesty, the first words of love, and the charge to wait, name one specific way Jesus is using these verses to form you. What is He asking you to long for, to lay down, or to wait for?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 2:18–25, God’s design for marriage and the one-flesh union of one man and one woman; Ephesians 5:25–33, the love of Christ for the church pictured in marriage; Proverbs 5:15–19, rejoicing in the wife of one’s youth and the goodness of marital love; 1 Corinthians 7:1–5, mutual devotion and faithfulness within marriage; Romans 15:4, the Old Testament Scriptures written for our learning and instruction.

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