

The Song of Solomon

Lesson 3: The Wedding Procession and the Praise of the Bride -- Song of Solomon 3:6-5:1

Picture the road shimmering in the heat, and far off a column of dust rising from the desert floor. Heads turn. Someone shades her eyes and asks the question everyone is thinking, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" It is a wedding procession, and at its center is the king coming for his bride. There are perfumes and merchants' spices, sixty mighty men with swords on their thighs, and a carriage of cedar and silver and gold. The whole countryside has come out to watch. This is no small private affair tucked away in a corner. A marriage, in God's design, is a public, celebrated, covenant event, and the Song wants us to feel the weight and the joy of it.

We come now to the heart of the Song. The first two chapters gave us courtship, longing, and the careful awakening of love. Now love arrives at its proper home. Solomon is carried in on "the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." The waiting is over. What was held back is now given. And the way the Song narrates it should slow us down, because our culture rushes past everything this passage insists on cherishing: the gladness, the ceremony, the public blessing, the bride brought to the bridegroom with honor.

Then in chapter 4 the bridegroom opens his mouth, and what pours out is praise. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair." He sees her, all of her, and he delights. He calls her "my sister, my spouse," tender and committed in the same breath. He says she has ravished his heart with one look of her eyes. And he reaches for the image that crowns the whole lesson, "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." A garden with a wall around it. A fountain kept for one. Faithfulness pictured as a thing of beauty rather than a burden.

The lesson ends at 5:1 with the marriage consummated and heaven itself joining the celebration, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." God is not embarrassed by the love He created for husband and wife. He blesses it. We will handle this passage with reverence, the way you would handle anything holy, but we will not flinch from its joy. For the believer there is a deeper music underneath, the love of Christ for His church, the bridegroom who came out of heaven for a bride He cherishes. Let us watch the procession come, and let us learn what God means love and marriage to be.

Group Discussion: Our culture treats weddings as expensive parties and treats faithfulness as a restriction. How does the Song's picture of a celebrated public marriage and a "garden inclosed" challenge both of those assumptions at once?

Personal Reflection: The bridegroom looks at his bride and says, “thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” Where in your life do you find it hard to believe that you could be loved like that, fully seen and fully delighted in, and how does the gospel speak to that exact place?

Read Song of Solomon 3:6–5:1

Study Questions

1. When the watchers ask, “Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?” and the Song describes Solomon’s procession with its guard of sixty men and its day of “espousals” and “gladness,” what does this teach us about God’s intention that marriage be a public, honored, covenant event rather than a private arrangement?
2. Think about the weddings you have attended or the way you have thought about your own marriage or a future one. In what ways have you treated marriage casually or privately, and what would it look like to recover the sense of joy, ceremony, and public covenant the Song celebrates?
3. In chapter 4 the bridegroom praises his bride at length and tenderly, “Behold, thou art fair, my love.” What does this sustained, specific praise reveal about how God designed love within marriage to express itself, and why does it matter that he speaks his delight aloud rather than merely feeling it?
4. Whom has God given you to love, a spouse, a family member, a friend in the body of Christ, and when did you last actually speak your delight and gratitude to them rather than assuming they know? What is one thing you will say this week?

5. The bridegroom calls his bride “my sister, my spouse,” joining deep affection to settled commitment. What does this twofold name teach about the kind of love God blesses, and how does it differ from a love that is all passion and no covenant, or all duty and no delight?
6. Are there relationships in your life where you have leaned too far toward feeling without faithfulness, or toward obligation without warmth? Which way do you tend to drift, and what would the balance of “sister and spouse” look like for you?
7. The crowning image of the lesson is “a garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” What is the Song saying about purity and exclusivity in marriage, and why does it picture faithfulness as a walled garden of beauty rather than merely a list of prohibitions?
8. Be honest before God about the walls around your own “garden.” What guards your heart, eyes, time, and devotion for the one to whom they belong, whether a spouse or, if single, your future spouse and your Lord? Where has a wall come down, and how will you rebuild it?
9. At 5:1 the marriage is consummated and God Himself blesses the union, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” Taking the whole passage together, what does it reveal about God as the author of love and marriage, about the goodness of physical love within the one-flesh union, and about how this earthly covenant images the love of Christ for His church?

10. Look back across the whole procession, the praise, the garden, and the blessing. Name one specific way Jesus, the bridegroom who came out of heaven for His bride, is forming you through this passage to love more faithfully, to guard your purity more gladly, or to receive His delight in you more fully.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Ephesians 5:25–32, the marriage of husband and wife pictures the love of Christ for the church He gave Himself to cleanse; Genesis 2:24–25, the one-flesh union of one man and one woman as God’s design from the beginning, naked and unashamed; Proverbs 5:15–19, drink waters from your own cistern and rejoice in the wife of your youth, the fountain kept for one; Hebrews 13:4, marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled, while God judges the unfaithful; Revelation 19:7–9, the marriage of the Lamb and the blessed who are called to the wedding supper

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com