

The Song of Solomon, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 5: The Beauty of the Beloved and Mutual Delight

Song of Solomon 6:4–8:4

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

What is doctrinally at stake in this section is the very shape of love that God authored. The Song insists on exclusivity (“my undefiled is but one”), on mutuality (“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me”), and on restraint (“stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please”). These three guardrails reflect God’s design announced in Genesis 2:24, that a man leaves, cleaves, and becomes one flesh with one wife for life. Teach the class that marriage is the lifelong, exclusive, one-flesh union of one man and one woman, and that the warm celebration of bodily and emotional delight in the Song belongs precisely and only within that covenant. Honor the poetry’s discretion; you need not be explicit to be honest. The aim is to show that God is not stingy about marital joy but generous, while He fences that joy so it stays holy.

Be ready also for the question of allegory. Generations of readers have leapt straight to Christ and the church. Do not deny that marital faithfulness genuinely reflects God’s covenant love, for Paul himself draws that line in Ephesians 5. But do not reduce the Song to a coded message, as though it were embarrassed by what it plainly says about a husband and wife. Let the text be what it is: an inspired celebration of God-designed married love, given to us for our instruction (Romans 15:4). Where the reflection of God’s steadfast love rises naturally, point to it; do not force it.

The spiritual formation aim is twofold. First, to free married believers to cherish and delight in one another without shame and without wandering, and to free the unmarried to wait with dignity, trusting God’s timing rather than stirring love before its hour. Second, to let this picture of being wholly wanted train the heart to rest in God’s own love, so that we serve and obey not from anxious striving but from secure belonging.

Question 1

Student Question:

When the bridegroom says “my dove, my undefiled is but one” (6:9), what does the Song teach us about the exclusive, undivided nature of the love God designed for marriage?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The bridegroom’s praise in 6:4–9 climbs to a peak in verse 9: “My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother.” The Hebrew word behind “undefiled” carries the sense of perfect, complete, wholly his. In a royal world crowded with “threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number” (6:8), the bridegroom turns from the whole glittering

multitude and fixes on one. The contrast is deliberate and pointed. True beauty, the Song says, is not found in many but in the one to whom love is wholly given.

This is the Song's quiet rebuke of the divided heart. Solomon's own life would later show the wreckage of multiplied wives and scattered affection (1 Kings 11:1-4), and the Song holds up the opposite ideal as the design. "But one" reaches back to Eden, where God made one woman for one man and called them one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Exclusivity is not a cage; it is the very thing that makes the love precious. A love spread thin over many is no love at all.

Notice that even the queens and concubines, when they see her, bless her (6:9). The exclusive love of the bridegroom does not diminish the bride before others; it crowns her. To be the chosen one, the only one, is to be honored. This is what God's design protects: the dignity of being singularly, faithfully wanted, not one among many.

For the church, this undivided love is a window into how God loves His people and how He asks to be loved in return. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) is the same logic in the vertical direction. God is a jealous God, not pettily but rightly, because covenant love by its nature will not be shared. The faithful marriage and the faithful soul keep the same shape: one heart, wholly given.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- "My undefiled is but one" affirms exclusive, undivided love as the design, against the polygamy practiced even by Solomon.
- Exclusivity reaches back to Genesis 2:24, one man and one woman becoming one flesh.
- Solomon's later many wives (1 Kings 11:1-4) stand as a warning, not a pattern; Scripture records what it does not commend.
- Exclusive love honors rather than diminishes; the bride is crowned, not caged.
- The same logic governs our devotion to God, who will not share His glory (Exodus 20:3).
- Avoid reducing this to allegory; let it first mean what it says about a husband and wife.

Discussion Prompts

- What does our culture tend to believe makes a person beautiful or desirable, and how does "but one" challenge that?
- How does undivided faithfulness actually increase love rather than limit it?
- Where do you see the same call to undivided devotion in our walk with God?

Question 2

Student Question:

Think honestly about your own attention and affection. Are there ways your heart or eyes wander from the one person, or the One God, to whom you owe undivided devotion?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a self-examining question, and it follows naturally from the doctrine of undivided love. If God designed love to be wholly given, then the searching question for each of us is whether our hearts and eyes stay where they belong. Jesus pressed this very point when He warned that adultery begins not in the act but in the look and the wandering thought (Matthew 5:28). Faithfulness is first a matter of where the inner life travels.

The wandering need not be dramatic to be real. It can be the slow drift of attention toward someone we should not be admiring, the screen that feeds discontent, the comparison that makes our own spouse seem less. It can also be the divided heart toward God, the way affection leaks toward money, status, comfort, or approval until He is one loyalty among several rather than the One. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24) names that fracture honestly.

The remedy is not merely willpower but a recaptured delight. The bridegroom does not stay faithful by gritting his teeth; he stays faithful because he genuinely treasures his “but one.” When the heart is full of the right love, the wandering loses its pull. So the question is not only “where am I drifting” but “have I let my delight in the right object grow cold.”

Help the class see this without shame-driven despair. Drifting is common; that is why the warning exists. The path back is confession, deliberate attention restored to the one we are bound to, and a renewed feeding of legitimate delight, whether toward a spouse or toward the Lord Himself.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithfulness is first inward, where the heart and eyes travel (Matthew 5:28).
- Wandering is often quiet and gradual, not dramatic, which makes it easy to excuse.
- Divided love toward God shows up as affection leaking toward money, comfort, or approval (Matthew 6:24).
- The cure is recaptured delight, not mere gritted-teeth restraint.
- Confession and restored attention are the path back from drift.
- Address this pastorally; the goal is repentance and renewal, not crushing guilt.

Discussion Prompts

- What are the quiet, ordinary ways a heart begins to wander long before any obvious failure?
- How can recovering genuine delight in the right thing protect us better than willpower alone?
- What is one practical guard you could set this week over your attention?

Question 3

Student Question:

The bridegroom keeps praising the bride's beauty in detail (6:4-7; 7:1-9). What does this sustained, specific admiration reveal about how God means husbands and wives to value one another?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The bridegroom's praise in 6:4-7 and 7:1-9 is striking for how specific and unhurried it is. He does not say merely "you are lovely" and move on. He lingers, naming feature after feature with poetic care. He is paying attention. The discretion of the Song's culture clothes this admiration in imagery rather than crude detail, but the point is unmistakable: he sees her, all of her, and delights in what he sees.

Underneath the poetry is a principle for every marriage. Love that endures is love that keeps looking and keeps naming the good it sees. Familiarity is the great thief of admiration; we stop noticing what we see every day. The bridegroom resists that thievery. He keeps his eyes open and his words generous. This is not flattery, which inflates what is not there, but praise, which honors what truly is.

There is also dignity here. The bride is valued as a whole person, body and presence and character together. The Song will not let us split admiration of beauty from honor of the person. This matters in a culture that often does exactly that, prizing appearance while devaluing the person. God's design joins them: to be cherished is to be seen and honored at once.

Husbands and wives mirror God's own way of valuing when they look on one another this way. God does not love His people grudgingly or generically; He knows us by name and rejoices over us (Isaiah 62:5; Zephaniah 3:17). The specific, glad attention of the bridegroom is a small echo of a God who delights in His own.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Enduring love keeps looking and keeps naming the good it sees, against the dulling of familiarity.
- Praise honors what is truly there; flattery inflates what is not. The two are different.
- The bride is valued as a whole person, joining beauty and honor rather than splitting them.
- The Song's discretion clothes admiration in imagery; present it discreetly in our setting too.
- Such glad, specific attention echoes how God knows and delights in His people (Zephaniah 3:17).
- Do not allegorize away the plain teaching that spouses should genuinely admire one another.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does admiration so easily fade once a relationship becomes familiar?
- What is the difference between flattery and honest praise, and why does it matter?
- How does seeing a person as a whole, body and character together, protect their dignity?

Question 4

Student Question:

When was the last time you spoke specific, genuine praise to someone you love rather than taking them for granted? What holds you back from speaking it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the spotlight inward. The bridegroom's lavish, specific praise exposes how stingy our own words can become. We often feel admiration without ever speaking it. We assume the people closest to us simply know how we value them, and so the words go unsaid for weeks, months, years. Meanwhile the unspoken praise does no good to the one who needed to hear it.

Scripture treats words as powerful and life-giving. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul" (Proverbs 16:24). The bridegroom understood that love withheld in the heart is love half-given. Spoken praise is a gift only we can give to a particular person at a particular moment.

Ask the class to consider what holds the words back. Sometimes it is busyness, sometimes pride, sometimes a fear of seeming sentimental, sometimes simple neglect. Often it is that we save our most honest words for complaint and let the praise stay silent. The household where criticism is spoken freely and admiration rarely is a household slowly starving.

This applies beyond marriage to parents, children, friends, and fellow Christians. The same tongue that can tear down can build up (Ephesians 4:29). To grow in love is to grow in the habit of speaking the good we genuinely see, out loud, to the person who needs to hear it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Admiration felt but never spoken does no good to the one who needed to hear it.
- Scripture treats fitly spoken words as gold and honey (Proverbs 25:11; 16:24).
- Many of us speak criticism freely and praise rarely, starving the relationship.
- Pride, busyness, fear of sentimentality, and neglect all silence good words.
- The principle reaches every relationship, building up rather than tearing down (Ephesians 4:29).
- This is a call to a concrete habit, not merely a warm feeling.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do we so often save our honest words for complaint and leave praise unspoken?
- Who in your life most needs to hear specific praise from you, and what has held you back?
- What would change in a home where good words were spoken as freely as critical ones?

Question 5

Student Question:

The bride confidently declares, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me” (7:10). What does this mutual belonging teach us about security and self-giving in a covenant relationship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me” (7:10) is one of the great confessions of the Song. Earlier the bride had said, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16), and “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine” (6:3). Now the emphasis settles fully on belonging and being wanted. She is not anxiously cataloguing what she possesses; she rests in being possessed in love and in knowing his desire is set on her.

This is mutual belonging, the heart of covenant. Each gives self wholly to the other, and each receives the other wholly. Neither is consumed, neither is diminished; both are secured. The self-giving is not self-erasure but the freest kind of self-finding, the paradox Jesus named when He said whoever loses his life will find it (Matthew 16:25). In covenant love we give ourselves away and discover we are more truly ourselves than before.

Notice the order in her confidence. She does not say “I am desirable, therefore I am his.” She says “I am his, and his desire is toward me.” Her security rests on the settled relationship, not on her own fluctuating attractiveness. This is exactly how covenant differs from infatuation. Infatuation rests on feeling and performance; covenant rests on a bond freely made and kept.

The believer’s security before God runs on the same track. We do not rest in our own loveliness or performance but in the covenant God has made and keeps. “I am my beloved’s” can be spoken by every faithful Christian about the Lord who set His desire on us and bought us at a price (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Belonging to Him, and knowing He wants us, is the ground beneath an obedient life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The progression from 2:16 to 6:3 to 7:10 settles on belonging and being wanted, not anxious possessing.
- Mutual self-giving in covenant secures both persons rather than diminishing either.
- True self-giving is self-finding, not self-erasure (Matthew 16:25).
- Security rests on the settled covenant, not on fluctuating attractiveness or performance.
- Covenant differs from infatuation: bond kept versus feeling and performance.
- The same security grounds the believer who belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between resting in a covenant and resting in feelings or performance?
- How can giving oneself wholly to another make a person more, not less, themselves?

- How does belonging to the Lord, and knowing He wants you, steady an obedient life?

Question 6

Student Question:

Do you tend to relate to those closest to you, and to God, from a place of security or of anxious striving to be accepted? How does that shape the way you love?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question asks where our security actually comes from. The bride relates to her husband from a settled place: "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." Many of us relate to those closest to us, and to God, from the opposite posture, anxiously striving to earn a love we are not sure we have. The difference shapes everything about how we love in return.

Anxious striving makes us self-protective. When we are unsure we are accepted, we hedge, we perform, we keep score, we withhold ourselves to avoid being hurt. Love offered from insecurity is always a little guarded. But love offered from security can be open-handed, because there is nothing left to prove. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18), and fearless love can give freely.

This matters profoundly in our walk with God. If we relate to Him as anxious servants trying to stay in His good graces, our obedience curdles into dread and our worship into bargaining. The gospel calls us instead to obey from belonging, knowing we have been received in Christ. We do not obey to be loved; we obey because we are loved. The order is everything.

Press the class gently to locate their own posture. Striving often hides behind a busy, dutiful exterior. The telling signs are anxiety about whether we have done enough, difficulty resting, and a love for others that is conditional and easily withdrawn. The cure is to drink deeply of being already wanted, by spouse and supremely by God, until the striving quiets.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Security and anxious striving produce very different ways of loving.
- Insecure love is self-protective and guarded; secure love is open-handed.
- Perfect love casts out fear, freeing us to give (1 John 4:18).
- Obedience from belonging differs sharply from obedience from dread; we obey because loved, not to be loved.
- Striving often hides behind dutiful busyness and shows in restlessness and conditional love.
- The remedy is to rest in being already wanted by God in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How can you tell whether you are loving from security or from anxious striving?
- In what ways does insecurity make our love guarded or conditional?

- What would it change in your obedience to truly believe you obey because you are loved, not to earn love?

Question 7

Student Question:

The bride invites her husband out to the vineyards and villages, longing for shared life and undisturbed love (7:11–13). What does this teach about the daily, ordinary work of nurturing love together?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In 7:11–13 the bride takes the initiative: “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards.” This is mutual love in motion. She does not wait passively to be pursued; she invites her husband out into shared life, into ordinary places, to tend the vineyards and see whether the vines flourish. Love here is not only feeling but doing, planned and pursued together.

Notice how ordinary the setting is. Fields, villages, vineyards, the first light of morning. The Song’s romance does not float above daily life; it walks straight into it. Real love is built in the unglamorous shared work of a common life: rising early together, tending what must be tended, walking the same roads day after day. The vineyards must be visited, the vines watched, the fruit gathered.

She also says, “there will I give thee my loves” (7:12). The shared work and the shared delight belong together. Love thrives where a couple does life side by side, not merely living in the same house but truly sharing the labor and the joys of it. Companionship in the ordinary is the soil in which marital delight grows.

This rebukes the modern myth that love is mainly a matter of intense feeling that either is there or is not. The Song shows love as something cultivated, like a vineyard, by attention and shared effort over seasons. Where couples stop tending the common life together, the vines go untended too, and the fruit fails.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love is active and mutual; the bride initiates shared life, not only the bridegroom.
- The Song’s romance walks into ordinary places, not above daily life.
- Shared work and shared delight belong together (7:12).
- Companionship in the ordinary is the soil in which marital delight grows.
- Love is cultivated like a vineyard, by attention over seasons, not merely felt.
- Neglecting the common life lets the vines, and the fruit, fail.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that the bride invites her husband into ordinary, shared places?
- How does doing life side by side, not just living together, feed love?
- What does it look like to tend a relationship like a vineyard rather than waiting on feelings?

Question 8

Student Question:

What is one ordinary, shared rhythm of life you could intentionally protect or rebuild this week to nurture a relationship that matters to you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question takes the vineyard image and brings it home. The bride protected love by pursuing shared rhythms, rising early, going out together, tending the common work. The question presses each of us to name an ordinary, shared rhythm worth protecting or rebuilding in a relationship that matters: a meal at the table without screens, a regular walk, a weekly evening kept clear, a shared task done together rather than apart.

We tend to believe relationships are sustained by big moments, the anniversary trip, the grand gesture. But it is the small, repeated rhythms that actually hold people together over years. A marriage, a friendship, a parent and child are knit by ten thousand ordinary moments far more than by a few extraordinary ones. When the rhythms erode, the relationship quietly starves even if nothing dramatic is wrong.

The same is true of our walk with God, which is sustained by humble, regular rhythms: gathering with the saints on the Lord's Day, the Lord's Supper week by week, daily time in the Word and prayer (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25). These are the vineyards of the soul, and they must be visited regularly or the vines go untended.

Help the class get specific and modest. The aim is not a heroic overhaul but one concrete rhythm reclaimed this week. Small and faithful beats large and abandoned. What single, repeatable practice could be protected on the calendar starting now?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Small repeated rhythms hold relationships together more than rare big moments.
- Eroded rhythms let a relationship quietly starve even without obvious crisis.
- Our walk with God is likewise sustained by humble regular rhythms (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25).
- The Lord's Day assembly and the Lord's Supper are weekly vineyards of the soul.
- Aim for one concrete, modest rhythm rather than a heroic overhaul.
- Small and faithful outlasts large and abandoned.

Discussion Prompts

- What ordinary shared rhythm has quietly eroded in a relationship that matters to you?
- Why do small repeated practices hold people together better than rare grand gestures?
- What single, repeatable practice could you protect on your calendar this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Three times the Song charges that love not be stirred up or awakened “until he please” (8:4; also 2:7; 3:5). Why does the same Scripture that celebrates marital love so warmly also so firmly fence it, and what does this teach about God’s design for love, restraint, and its proper time?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Three times the Song sounds the same charge: “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please” (8:4; also 2:7; 3:5). A refrain repeated three times in a poem is no accident; it is the structural spine, the warning that guards everything else. The Song that celebrates love so warmly will not let love be rushed, forced, or awakened out of its proper time and place.

This is the crucial balance for a mixed-age church to grasp. The very same inspired book that delights so openly in marital love also fences it firmly. The two are not in tension; they are partners. Love is fenced precisely because it is precious. We do not fence what is worthless. The high walls around marital intimacy are a measure of its value, not a denial of its goodness.

“Until he please,” or until it pleases, points to a proper time. There is a wrong time to awaken love, namely before the covenant of marriage is in place and before two people are ready to give themselves wholly and permanently. To stir up love prematurely is to take a holy fire out of the hearth where it warms and to scatter it where it burns. The charge calls the unmarried to patience and dignity, waiting for love’s right hour rather than forcing it.

This is God’s consistent design across Scripture. Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled, but God will judge sexual immorality (Hebrews 13:4). The fence is not prudishness; it is wisdom and love. Within the covenant, the Song says, let love be full and glad; outside or before it, let love wait. Both halves are the Lord’s gift, the freedom and the fence together. Teach the class that restraint is not the enemy of delight but its guardian, keeping the fire in the hearth where it gives light and warmth for a lifetime.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The threefold refrain (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) is the structural spine and central warning of the Song.
- The book that celebrates love most warmly also fences it most firmly; the two are partners.
- Love is fenced because it is precious; high walls measure high value.
- “Until he please” points to a proper time, before which awakening love is harmful.
- The charge calls the unmarried to patient, dignified waiting rather than forcing love.

- God's design joins freedom within the covenant and restraint outside it (Hebrews 13:4).
- Restraint guards delight rather than opposing it; the fire belongs in the hearth.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does a book so warm about love repeat this firm warning three times?
- How is fencing love a sign of its value rather than a denial of its goodness?
- What does honoring love's proper time look like concretely for the married and the unmarried?

Question 10

Student Question:

Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using this study to reshape how you love, whether to cherish more faithfully, rest more securely, or honor love's proper boundaries more carefully.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone asks each student to name one specific way the Lord Jesus is reshaping how they love through this study. The Song has set before us three great lessons: cherish faithfully ("my undefiled is but one"), rest securely ("I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me"), and honor love's boundaries ("stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please"). The Lord uses His Word, given for our learning (Romans 15:4), to conform us to His own character in each of these.

Encourage genuine specificity over vague good intentions. "I want to love better" changes nothing; "I will speak one honest word of praise to my wife each day this week" or "I will stop feeding discontent through that screen" or "I will wait, with dignity, rather than rush a relationship" can be acted on and reviewed. Formation happens in concrete obedience, not in admiration of ideals.

Remind the class that the One forming us is the very Lord whose covenant love the Song faintly reflects. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). He is the faithful Bridegroom who cherishes, who secures His people in covenant, and who keeps love holy. As we are joined to Him through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4) and walk faithfully to the end, He is at work shaping us to love as He loves.

Close by lifting the eyes from technique to the Lord Himself. The goal of the Song is not merely better marriages, good as those are, but hearts trained in faithful, secure, honorable love that mirrors the love of God. Ask each student to leave with one named, reviewable step, taken not to earn the Lord's love but in glad response to it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Song's three lessons: cherish faithfully, rest securely, honor love's boundaries.

- Scripture is given for our learning and our formation (Romans 15:4).
- Formation requires concrete, reviewable steps, not vague intentions.
- Christ is the faithful Bridegroom whose covenant love the Song reflects (Ephesians 5:25).
- We are joined to Him through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, then faithful to the end (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4).
- The aim is hearts trained to love as God loves, in glad response to His love, not to earn it.

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the Song's three lessons does the Lord seem to be pressing most on you right now?
- What is one specific, reviewable step you will take this week in response?
- How does seeing Christ as the faithful Bridegroom change why and how you take that step?