

A TWO PART HARMONY

SEXUALITY IN SOLOMON'S SONG

Once a son asked his father the inevitable question, "Dad, where do babies come from?" The father figured the question signaled it was time for *THE talk*, so he began to explain the birds and the bees to his son. When *the talk* was over the little boy looks up at his father, and asks, "Dad, does God know about this?"

Well, the Song of Solomon proves once and for all that "yes, God knows all about wholesome and healthy sexual expression." God created sex. It was His idea. Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created the male and female, and instructed them that they were to be "one flesh" – a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

And whatever God creates, He also commands. He has guidelines for every area of life – from faith to finances – even human sexuality. The Song of Solomon is the divine instruction manual for sexual expression.

Go to the bookstore and you'll see countless sex manuals from so-called *sexperts* – supposed experts in the field. But guys, you'll find only one manual from *THE* authority on the subject. God created sexual expression, and He tells us how to experience maximum intimacy and enjoyment in the Song of Solomon.

SPIRITUALITY IN SOLOMON'S SONG

But don't misunderstand, this book is much more than a sex manual, or an oriental love song. It has a deeper, more spiri-

tual, level of significance.

The Jews had a special reverence for this book. In the Jewish Mishnah, Rabbi Aquiba, is quoted as saying, "In the entire world there is nothing equal to the day on which the Song of Solomon was given to Israel. All writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is most Holy." In the Old Testament God illustrated His relationship with Israel as a marriage. He was the husband, His people were the bride – and the Song of Solomon was a picture of the intimacy God desired with His people.

Of course this analogy is also carried over in the New Testament. Today, Jesus is the Bridegroom, the Church is His bride – and likewise, this Song of Songs paints for us a picture of the spiritual intimacy we can experience with Christ.

Guys, the Song of Solomon stretches the limits of our potential. It shows us the depth and richness and lavishness of the love relationship we can experience with Jesus. Truly, He is not only the *Lord of our life* He is also the *Lover of our soul!*

As with all the Bible – the Song of Solomon does more than reveal *God's will*, it reveals *my heart*. One commentator sees the book as a challenge... He writes, "No book furnishes a better test than does this song of the depth of a man's Christianity. If his religion be in his head only, a dry form of doctrines, or a passing fancy... he will see nothing here to attract him. But if his religion has a hold of his heart, this will become a favorite portion of the Word of God."

Devotion Box - Beware Of The Little Foxes

The Shulamite's brothers warn the couple in verse 15, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Since this family owned a vineyard the brothers knew well the danger of the little foxes. They could slip through the cracks in the wall, and eat the grapes. Before you realized you had a problem the little foxes could devastate a crop.

The same is true in our relationship with God. Little compromises – white lies, the gray areas, willing accommodations, roots of bitterness, impure motives, slight hesitations – can rob us of our joy, and allow for further spiritual slippage to take place. Tolerate the little foxes and in time they'll eat away the vineyard.

This is also a danger to our marriages. We guard against the blatant attack. We refuse to let the calamities of life pull us apart. But what about the little foxes – are misunderstandings, insensitivities, and perceived slights eating away at the marriage? Let the minor issues pile up and major damage can be done. Watch out for the little foxes that spoil the vine!

WHO'S WHO

The one factor that makes the Song of Solomon difficult to interpret is you're not always sure who's talking... It can be Solomon, his bride, or the palace virgins – even the bride's brothers have a few lines. The NKJV uses headings that attempt to identify the speaker, and in most cases the divisions are helpful. Just remember, the headings are man-made, and certainly not infallible.

THE SONG OF SONGS... AN OVERVIEW

Verse 1 of chapter 1 introduces the book, "The song of songs, which is Solomon's." The phrase "song of songs" could also be translated "*first in magnificence, best or most excellent of songs*". We're told in 1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon authored 1005 songs. Only three have survived. Psalm 72 and Psalm 127 were big hits, but the *Song of songs* went platinum. This one reached # 1 on the Hebrew top 40.

The song is more like a cantata, or an opera. It's a song that tells a story... Here's an overview of the Song...

Chapter 1 introduces the young bride that King Solomon brought back to his palace in Jerusalem. Throughout the song she's called "*the Shulamite*" since she was from the town of Shunem. Solomon met her on a trip to the mountains of Lebanon. He was mesmerized by her rustic beauty, and country charm...

The Shulamite was a hillbilly, an Ellie Mae Clampett - *beautiful but backwoods*. She was an original *Hee-Haw Honey*. But this was why Solomon fell in love. His palace was packed with cover girls - *pampered pin-ups with store-bought beauty*. The Shulamite was different. Her's was a natural beauty. She was a woman of virtue - neither her beauty or character had been defiled by the big city.

The Shulamite worked as a shepherdess, tending her brother's flocks. When Solomon saw her it was no doubt love at first sight. But the king hid his royal identity from her, until he was sure her love for him was genuine. It was-

n't until he returned to Lebanon to take her to Jerusalem that he revealed he was the king.

Chapters 1-2 describes the early days of their marriage, and the joys of their new relationship. Like all newlyweds, the couple had adjustments to make. They had to adapt to new responsibilities, and become aware of new dangers.

The last half of chapter 3 through the middle of chapter 5 is a flashback to the honeymoon. Solomon came from Jerusalem in his royal couch to transport the bride to her new home in the palace. We discover the long trip back gave the couple ample opportunity to celebrate their commitment with lavish love-making.

But by the middle of chapter 5 the honeymoon is over. Solomon's wife has a dream in which God alerts her to a coldness that's crept into her marriage.

In chapters 6-7 it becomes obvious she's learned her lesson. She returns to her husband with a new attitude, and they revive the intimacy she'd neglected.

Chapter 8 describes their second honeymoon. To celebrate their renewed devotion they return to Lebanon. The couple revisits the country setting where their romance began. The change of venue revives their passion for one another. It's a wonderful love story... "*The Song of Songs*" is an appropriate title.

Devotion Box - Spiritual Kisses

In 1:2 the Shulamite says of Solomon, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth - for your love is better than wine." Did you know there are also spiritual kisses in your relationship with Jesus? Psalm 2:12 uses the exact phrase, "Kiss the Son..." We kiss Jesus when we express to him our longing to know Him, our intention to follow Him, our desire to walk close to Him. A kiss is a prayer, a song, a praise, a heartfelt thank-you...

In turn, Jesus kisses us when we sense His warmth and approval. He kisses us when His Spirit reveals His presence, or power, or plan to our hearts. And when Jesus kisses us it excites, and sparks, and ignites a further flame. Oh, how I long for Jesus' kisses. How about you? *They're better than wine*. Have you kissed the Son today?

LOVE-MAKING LANGUAGE

Notice the words God chooses to use to describe their sexual expression. In 2:3 the Shulamite says, "I sat down in his shade with great delight" - "his fruit was sweet to my taste." In verse 5, "Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick." The phrase, "*lovesick*", means she's exhausted from making love. *These are not Washington apples she's talking about...*

But here's a question, *why all this symbolism*? Understand, when God speaks of sexual expression He doesn't use *slang terms* which would be crass and crude. Neither does He use *medical or anatomical terms* which would sound unromantic and mechanical. God uses *poetic symbolism* to describe sexual expression.

Husbands and wives should give this a try. Don't talk *dirty*, talk *descriptive*. Some poetically suggestive language will spice up a couple's sex life.

Devotion Box - First Love

In 2:8 Shula flashes back to their courtship, and the day Solomon proposed. Verse 10, "My beloved spoke, and said to me: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." She recalls the initial love they shared with each other.

Jesus warned the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:4-5, "I have this against you, that you have left your first love." This is the problem with many believers today - they've lost the passion and desire they once had in their relationship with the Lord. The intensity of their love for Him has faded.

What about us? Do we still feel the joy of God's forgiveness, the rush of His love - do we appreciate His grace and mercy - does the desire to tell the world of all He's done for us still burn in our hearts... or have we become blasé, passive - cold and nonchalant? Have we left our initial enthusiasm - our first love?

In 3:1-5 the Shulamite recounts her response to Solomon's marriage proposal. She says in verse 4, "I held him and would not let him go..." What a wonderful example of a committed bride. Have you made that kind of a commitment to Jesus? Come what may you're going follow Jesus all the days of your life?

Rather than leave her first love, the Shulamite fans the flame by dwelling on the promises she's made, and the initial ways she expressed her commitment. This is how Jesus told the church at Ephesus to return to their first love. He said, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works..." Remember the promises you made, repent of not keeping them, and repeat those initial acts - the ways you expressed your commitment.

SEX AS IT SHOULD BE

From 1:12 through the 2:7 the Shulamite recounts an evening of intimacy with the king. This is the first of several romantic and erotic sections in the book.

In fact, the language in these sections is so graphic and sensual the Hebrew rabbis prohibited the Jewish young men from reading the Song of Solomon until they reached the age of 30. These passages will steam your glasses. They teach us that God created sexual expression not just for *procreation*, but for *pleasure*.

Once a farmer had three sows he wanted to breed with his neighbor's boar. He loaded the three pigs into the back of his pick-up and drove to his friend's house. There he put'em in the pen with the male pig, and left them the rest of the day.

When he returned that afternoon he asked his neighbor how he'd know if the mating was successful. His friend said, "In the morning when you wake up, if the pigs are rolling in the grass you'll know it took, but if they're rolling in the mud you'll know it didn't." The next morning the farmer ran to the window to check on his sows, and there they were, all three girls out rolling in the mud.

The farmer was disappointed, but he loaded up the sows into his truck to try again. The next morning though, the three sows were rolling in the mud.

Undaunted, the farmer loaded the pigs into the back of the pick-up to try a third time. That night he had to fly out of town. The next morning he called his wife and asked for a report... "Are they in the grass or in the mud?"

His wife answered, "Neither, two are in the back of your truck, and one is in the cab honking the horn!" Obviously his neighbor's male pig was *no bore!*

Here's the point of the joke – and a major point of the Song of Solomon - God created sexual expression, not just for *breeding* but for *blessing*. Within the parameters of marriage God intends for sex to be fun and pleasurable.

If all God cared about was repopulating the earth - cloning or cell division would've done the job. But sex brings a husband and wife together in a manner that creates intimacy and enjoyment. As a result sex fuses together two lives and solidifies their commitment and closeness. Make no mistake about it, when God created sex, like everything else He created, He said that it was GOOD!

The Song of Solomon proves that *God is no prude*. It's God's version of *sex-as-it-should-be*. There are passages in the book that race your pulse, and cause your face to blush - but remember, *God isn't blushing!* God wrote the book on sex and He wants us to read it, understand it, and model it in our marriages.

Devotion Box - Jesus Is Altogether Lovely

In 5:10-16 the Shulamite makes some pretty sensual statements about her husband's body. She summarizes her feelings in verse 16, "Yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Hey, just this morning my wife whispered, "*Sandy you're altogether lovely.*" For many women the word "*husband*" is a synonym for words like "*provider*", "*father*", "*nice guy*", even "*friend*" - but they have stopped associating the term "*husband*" with the word "*lover*". The Shulamite renews a sexual passion for her husband by daydreaming about his features, and thinking about him in sexual terms. But let me also apply this principle spiritually...

One way to renew a devotion and love for Jesus Christ is to make a list of His attributes. The more we ponder the grace and glories of our Lord the more lovable He grows in our minds, and the more we're attracted to Him in our hearts. If you never think about a person don't expect your love for them to grow. This is why the writer of Hebrews issues his call for devotion and perseverance by first saying in 12:2, "looking unto Jesus..." Focus on Jesus and our love for Him will grow. *The more we get to know Him the more we'll want to know Him.*

When we look to Jesus we'll join in with the Shulamite and say, "*Yes, He is altogether lovely...*"

Devotion Box - The Bride's Inferiority Complex

In 1:5-6 the Shulamite sulks, "I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept." She bemoans the fact that her skin is *tough* and *tanned*.

She's been comparing herself with the palace princesses. They're always indoors. They've had an unlimited Mary Kay budget. They're pampered with bubble baths and moisturizers. They all have *creamy complexions*. But the Shulamite has been in the fields, under the hot sun - caring more about her brother's sheep than about her own appearance. When she compares herself with the royal court she feels inferior, and wonders why Solomon would love her.

This is the experience of many Christians. They live under a cloud of insecurity. They're haunted by their flaws and blemishes. "*How could the Lord love the likes of me?*" They feel so unworthy of the Lord's affections. And their inferiority is made worse when they see

the purity and holiness in the lives of fellow believers.

But notice how the King speaks to the insecurities of his bride... In verse 8 he calls her "O fairest among women". In verses 9-10 he says, "I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh's chariots." Only the fittest and finest steeds pulled Pharaoh's rig. Horses were noble and valuable animals, and Solomon compares his bride to a stallion. It was the equivalent of him saying, "*I have compared you to a Rolls Royce, or a Mercedes Benz. Baby, you're a classic.*"

I have a friend who owns a body shop, and for years he drove a restored Porsche. It was his pride and joy. He bought it wrecked and fixed it up – turned it into a real gem – a classic. That's how God sees us. We're His classic. He bought us wrecked, and restored us. Now He values us dearly. We're His pride and joy.

Guys, we tend to see ourselves as a broken down Pinto, or a beat up station wagon – but through the work of Christ on the cross we've been paid for, restored, rebuilt, detailed, polished. We've been customized in Christ. We're God's Porsche.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - October 29, 2000 - Hallelujah Fest 10/31- Calvary Café every Wed @ 7:30 pm. - Financial Faithfulness Seminar, Fri PM /Sat AM 11/17-18 (for details check out the Announcement Sheet) - For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm

Next Bible Scan - November 5 - Isaiah 1-12

"Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it..." - Song 8:7

Memory Verse

ADVICE TO SINGLES FROM THE SONG OF SOLOMON

THE SHULAMITE'S WARNING

Throughout the song the Shulamite warns her single friends beware of the power of sex. "Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases."

Three times in the Song of Solomon — 2:7, 3:5, 8:4 — the Shulamite warns her maidens not to incite their sexual passions until after marriage. Sexual expression is like a nuclear explosion, once you lose control it's awfully hard to stop the reaction. Don't even stir up sexual passions until you're married.

The Shulamite is reasoning with her maidens, *why light the fires of sexual expression when it would be wrong to follow through*. Don't engage in heavy petting, and rev up the hormones, knowing it will lead to a moral, and spiritual physical dead end. It's naïve for Christian young people to agree with God that premarital sex is wrong, then "make-out" with their sweetheart knowing they are kindling a fire that could burn out of control, and take them in the wrong direction.

God isn't being a killjoy He's just trying to shelter you from harm, and preserve for your marriage the highest and holiest joys. Sex is a fire. In the fireplace of marriage it warms, but outside that fireplace it destroys.

The Shulamite wants her maidens to set their standards high. Not only should they remain virgins, they shouldn't even toy with sexual temptation - don't even rev up the engines. Do nothing to "stir up nor awaken love until it pleases" God.

A GARDEN ENCLOSED

Understand, oriental gardens were more than a couple of rows of vegetables. They were large, walled enclosures. Inside were springs and waterfalls - trees, flowers, aromatic blossoms. Paths weaved their way through the garden. Along the paths were private coves where you could relax and enjoy the shade, the scents, the sights. These gardens were exclusive and only for the very rich.

On occasion though, desert winds would blow through the garden, lift the scents beyond the walls, and make the garden accessible and enjoyable to those outside.

Prior to her wedding the Shulamite had been a garden enclosed. But that night she invites her new husband to arouse her passions, and enjoy what's previously been enclosed and inaccessible to anyone else. She gives him a valuable gift, reserved only for the very rich! I hope every single person desires to give the same special treasure to their future spouse. *Make sure you remain a garden enclosed.*

THE POWER OF HOLY SEX

The book ends with the couple at it again. In the final verse the Shulamite uses more poetic symbolism to invite her husband to make love to her. "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices." She doesn't want to wait.

Catch on to the symbolism of this book and it gets too hot to handle.

I'll never forget the woman who approached me after a study on the Song of Solomon. She was appalled I had discussed sexual intimacy in the sanctuary. Her face was beat red. She was obviously offended. But in my discussion with her, the point she missed was that all I'd done was teach the biblical text. I'm sure this woman had watched television, and managed to endure it's sexual innuendos, but she was offended by God's version of sex.

Then it hit me - sexual intimacy according to God's design - is so lavish it makes secular versions of sex seem tame. If sex is just another bodily function then it conjures up no more excitement than a glass of water on a hot day. It's no big deal. But make sex holy - see it as a gift from God - the crown of commitment - the mysterious intertwining of two souls - and sex regains it's sizzle. Restore to sex its holiness - rediscover its spiritual component - and sex will gain in intensity. It'll become downright explosive.

Devotion Box - Unquenchable Love

Chapter 8:7 packs a powerful message. "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it." Solomon and the Shulamite may've had a marriage made in heaven, but that marriage had to be lived out on earth - and there were problems.

Guys, every couple has rough waters to navigate. Difficulties to work through. But real love endures. In the end the Shulamite concludes, "Many waters cannot quench love..." Always remember I Corinthians 13:8, "Love never fails."