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“Courtship Love”

Song of Solomon 1-2

Pastor Gary Hamrick

The book of Song of Solomon or Song of Songs, is a love story. It’s about the romance between a young man and young woman, set to music that describes their courtship, marriage, and the sexual consummation of their relationship. This book can be interpreted allegorically (it is not a factual relationship, but a story that symbolized God’s love for Israel or Christ’s love for the Church), but a better way to interpret the book is to see it as a real, historical, love relationship between a man and a woman, which also parallels the love of God for us. God has given the gift of sex to be celebrated between a man and woman in a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. In part one of Pastor Gary’s series in this book, he teaches on the subject of courtship love, and the biblical guidelines the Word of God shares regarding “dating” relationships in preparation for marriage.

Historical Background

1. The NIV Bible is the only translation that uses this title; all others use Song of Solomon.
2. In the Hebrew Bible, the title of this book is Song of Songs.
 - a. In a manner of speaking, this song was #1 on the Hit Parade.
 - b. [Song of Songs 1:1](#) - *“Solomon’s Song of Songs.”*
 - c. [1 Kings 4:32](#) - *“[Solomon] spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.”*
3. Solomon wrote this book as a musical drama or poetry put to music.
4. Almost all of the Bible scholars and Reformers of the first 18 centuries of Church history interpreted this book as an allegory, because they wanted to avoid the explicit sexual language Solomon wrote about.

5. There are three ways to interpret this book:
 - a. Allegorical
 - i. Those who interpret the book this way see it as the story of Christ's love for the Church.
 - ii. Some examples of those who interpret the book this way include:
 1. Jerome and Augustine (5th century)
 2. John Wesley and Matthew Henry (18th century)
 3. Jews view the book as an allegory of God's love for Israel.
 - b. Literal
 - i. Pastor Gary said: "This is really [the] best way to [understand] this book as a literal, powerful description of romantic love between a man and woman, that begins with their courtship, [and] quickly progresses to their marriage, where they enjoy passionate, sexual fulfillment.
 - c. Typological
 - i. This view is a combination of the allegorical and literal understand of this book.
 - ii. This perspective includes the understanding that this is a real love story about a man and woman, plus the understanding that there is also an underlying picture of God's love for the Church.

6. The Cast
 - a. The Shulamite Woman - "*Beloved*" or "*She*"
 - i. She was a peasant girl who lived in the countryside.
 - b. Solomon - "*Lover*" or "*He*"
 - i. Solomon was the rich king who swept her off her feet, so to speak.
 - c. The "*Friends*" ("*Others*")
 - i. Pastor Gary described the young woman's friends as the backup singers!

7. Pastor Gary said: "What in the world [did] Solomon know about exclusive love and devotion to one woman? ... [Solomon loved] women! So much so that he married 700 and [he] had 300 concubines on the side. So, the answer to [this] question is that it is believed that Solomon wrote [this book as a] love story about his first and true love. [He wrote this] before he got all tangled up with all of [the] other women; who were [pagan] and led his heart away into idolatry. This is probably, most scholars believe, a reflection of a love story that is his true love, and his first love."

8. The Purpose
 - a. Pastor Gary said: "Why is it that God would include such a book in the Canon of Scripture? Well, [the reason is] to illustrate and celebrate the

sexual relationship between a husband and a wife in a God-honoring marriage. God created sex as a gift to be enjoyed between a husband and a wife in a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. And, secondary to [this it's] is an illustration of God's love."

Courtship Love – Physical Beauty

9. It's important to be physically attracted to a person, and it's also important to remember that beauty really is in the eye of the beholder.
10. She was intoxicated by his love!
 - a. **Song of Songs 1:2** - *"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth - for your love is ore delightful than wine."*
11. She was concerned about her physical appearance.
 - a. **Song of Songs 1:6** - *"Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun. my mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected."*
 - b. The word, "vineyard," is often used as a euphemism for the body.
 - c. The word, "dark," is not a reference to her race; it's meant to indicate that her skin is dark because she's been out in the sun working in the vineyard.
 - d. Solomon wasn't troubled by her concerns about her appearance.
 - i. **Song of Songs 1:15** - *"How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!"*
 - ii. Solomon commented on her beauty 14 times in this book!
12. She commented on Solomon's handsome appearance in response.
 - a. **Song of Songs 1:16** - *"How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming!"*
 - b. Pastor Gary said poetic language was used to indicate that they were outside enjoying "a picnic."
 - i. **Song of Songs 1:16-17** - *"And our bed is [green]. The beams of our house are cedars; our rafters are firs."*

Courtship Love – Spiritual Integrity

13. It's important to be attracted to the spiritual integrity of a person.
14. **Song of Songs 1:3** - *"Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you!"*

15. [Proverbs 22:1](#) – *“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”*
16. Pastor Gary said: “It’s not all about the outside; it’s also about the inside. But it takes time to assess someone’s character, [integrity, and virtue]. [A person] should ask questions, like: What’s their relationship with God? Do they love Jesus? Do they want to pray with you? Are they growing in their faith? Do they go to church? Do they read their Bible? [A person should] be concerned about things like honesty, [sincerity, loyalty, truthfulness, faithfulness, and does this person] have a servant’s heart?”
17. The Greek word for character describes a chiseling tool that etches metal.
18. Pastor Gary said: “Character is that which is etched on your soul. It’s the uncompromising virtues of your life. Your character is the principles that don’t change just because circumstances change.”
19. This young woman’s friends helped her see the depth of his character, and Pastor Gary encouraged us to consider the opinion of close friends.
 - a. [Song of Songs 1:3](#) – *“No wonder the maidens love you!”*
20. Character counts!
 - a. [Ruth 3:11c](#) – *“All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.”* (Boaz commented on the character of Ruth)

Courtship Love – Moral Purity

21. Pastor Gary said: “It is normal and [to be expected] to have sexual desire for someone you have fallen in love with. God wired [us] that way. But, if you have sexual desires for someone in a courtship and you’re not married to them yet, you have one of two ways of dealing with that sexual desire: [restrain yourselves or you get married]. That’s it! [God intended sex to be a gift to be enjoyed in marriage between a man and a woman. I know that that’s [counter to the culture we live in]. ... Sex outside of marriage has baggage [that comes] with it. I wish I had time to tell you [about the] people I’ve counseled over the years of pastoral ministry, who have experienced deep rejection, betrayal, unplanned pregnancies, [sexually transmitted diseases, and] all kinds of emptiness.”
22. The Hebrew word for love is ahava, which means to give.
23. Pastor Gary said: “Real biblical love is about giving, [serving, and thinking about] the other person. Our culture has made love about getting. It’s really a lustful approach, [which] is outside of the understanding of marriage. Sex has become

something that people just want to get. [Men] and women approach the idea of sexual intimacy in very different ways, but the only way that [we] will ever truly understand and experience the greatest satisfaction of sexual fulfillment is [when we] experience the gift that God gave, God's way, which is in a monogamous heterosexual marriage."

24. She demonstrated moral purity in that she wanted their relationship to be open and beyond reproach, which is why she wanted to meet at midday.
 - a. [Song of Songs 1:4, 7](#) - *"Take me away with you - let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. ... Tell me, you whom I love, where you graze your flock and where you rest your sheep at midday. Why should I be like a veiled woman [euphemism for prostitute] beside the flocks of your friends?"*
25. She encouraged her friends to be self-controlled until the appropriate time, which was when they were married.
 - a. [Song of Songs 2:7](#) - *"Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."*
 - i. She repeated this statement in [Song of Songs 3:5](#) and [Song of Songs 8:4](#).
26. Pastor Gary said: "[He spoke] of a warning that they were both aware of, [concerning the] little compromises that [would] lead [them] into sexual sin, [which would] dishonor God. [He said,] 'We've got to be very careful. We've got to examine all of [the] different ways in our relationship that we've allowed the "little foxes" to get in, and potentially ruin our relationship.' "
 - a. [Song of Songs 2:15](#) - *"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards [referring to their physical bodies] that are in bloom."*

God's Forgiveness

27. Pastor Gary said: "[You may say of moral purity], 'I've failed in this area, and now what [can I do]?' [God] is a forgiving God, and the important thing about recognizing sexual purity before the Lord is to confess it as sin, when [moral purity has] been violated. And, God forgives, and you start anew! I tell people all the time, when we get on topics of sexuality and [divorce], you can't roll back time. What you can decide [to do] is now, with either new information [or] new conviction, [that] from this point [forward, you're] going to live [your] life for the glory of God. If you have preserved your sexual purity and you're waiting for marriage, don't let anyone shame you [into thinking that] you are somehow

behind the times, and you need to get with it! Don't ever feel pressured to compromise virtue."

- a. **1 John 1:9** - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*
- b. **1 Corinthians 6:19b-20** - *"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."*
- c. **Romans 12:1** - *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship."*

Discussion Questions

1. Provide an overview of the three ways Bible scholars interpret this book. (See #5 above)
2. Spend time talking about the historical background of this book. (See #1 through #4 and #6 through #8 above)
3. Allow the people in your group to share their thoughts about the way our culture emphasizes physical beauty over spiritual integrity and moral purity. (See #9 through #12 above)
4. Read and discuss **Proverbs 22:1**.
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the importance of who a person is on the inside. (See #16 above)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about moral purity. (See #21 and #26 above)
7. Allow the people in your group to share their experience about God's forgiveness. (See #27 above)
8. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads, and encourage the people in your group to seek the Lord's forgiveness if they haven't already done so.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).