

The King's Love Song



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Song of Solomon.

MEMORY VERSE: “Hold me close to your heart like the seal¹ around your neck. Keep me close to yourself like the ring on your finger. My love for you is so strong it won't [will not] let you go. Love is as powerful as death. Love's jealousy is as strong as the grave. Love is like a blazing [burning] fire. It [love] burns like a mighty [powerful] flame” (Song of Solomon 8:6, NlrV).

THE SONG OF SOLOMON PICTURES IN SENSITIVE WORDS THE ATTRACTION, the emotions, and the delights of sex. Certainly in these days, people are likely not to honor marriage and not to value love. But we can be thankful for the instruction and wisdom found in the Song of Solomon on marriage and love.

The Song of Solomon is an invitation to enter the private world of a married couple. They are not embarrassed to speak about their physical love. The Song of Solomon is a poem that uses clever symbols to show the delights of this physical love. The openness of the Song of Solomon follows the view of the Bible that sex is an important part of life. Christ saves the whole person. For this reason, we can trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we try to become more comfortable with this sensitive, but important topic.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Some people may find this shocking, but the Song of Solomon studies the beauty of sexual love within marriage.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 18.

¹seal—a signet ring. A signet ring is a ring someone in power would use to close an important letter with a lump of wax.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 12**UNDIVIDED LIFE
(Psalm 139:13-16).**

What is the Bible's view of the human body? Genesis 2:7; Psalm 139:13-16; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.



Our bodies are the Holy Spirit's temple.

Some religions believe in dualism. Dualism is a philosophy that believes the human body creates problems for the spiritual life. But in the Bible, the human body, including its sexual parts, is an important part of the whole person. Life is “body” and “spirit” (Genesis 2:7). The writer of Psalms gives the whole of himself in worship to God (Psalm 63:1; Psalm 84:2). The total person is to be made holy. The whole person is to be set apart for the holy purposes God planned.

This positive view of the whole body, including sexual relations, is shown in the Song of Solomon. How do the following verses show this positive view of the whole body? Song of Solomon 1:2, 13; Song of Solomon 2:6; Song of Solomon 5:10-16; Song of Solomon 7:1-9.

These verses admire the body. The physical parts of married love are not to be an embarrassment. All emotions are openly shown.

Toward greater comfort with the topic of sex: Powerful sexual rules usually control many cultures. For this reason, married couples often find it difficult to talk in healthy ways about their sexual life. In the same way, children often do not have the chance to learn about sex in the setting of a Christian home. This is where godly values can be put together with the right information. The Bible's openness about sex should help God's people be more comfortable with this topic. Then this important part of life can be treated with respect as a great gift from the Creator.

Some cultural ideas turn sex into passion only. Some moral² rules turn sex into something shameful. How can we protect ourselves against these cultural and moral ideas? How does the Bible show us that sex is more than passion and that sex is not shameful?

²moral—having to do with knowing what is right or wrong.

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 13**THE LOVES OF THE LOVE SONG
(Song of Solomon 8:6, 7).**

Describe three different types of love that the Song of Solomon presents. (1) Song of Solomon 2:10-13; Song of Solomon 5:16; (2) Song of Solomon 1:2, 13; Song of Solomon 2:5; Song of Solomon 4:1-7; Song of Solomon 6:6; Song of Solomon 7:1-9; (3) Song of Solomon 2:16; Song of Solomon 6:3; Song of Solomon 3:11; Song of Solomon 8:6, 7.

Friendship love: The Song of Solomon shows how friends spend time together, communicate openly, and care about each other. In the Song of Solomon, two good friends become married partners. The wife announces, "This is my friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16). The word "friend" suggests companionship and friendship without taking part in sex. Happy is the husband or wife whose spouse³ is a dear friend.



Be a friend to your spouse.

³spouse—a husband or a wife.

In the Song of Solomon, compliments and loving deeds show that the male and female are very close to each other physically and emotionally. The natural closeness of romantic love is a gift from God to help partners bond (join) closely to each other in marriage. Then they become open to the work of God's love in their hearts. And their human love is made holy, pure, and noble. (Read Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 99.)

These verses also carry the highest thoughts about love. True love is not natural to the human heart. True love is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Such love bonds husband and wife in a lasting union. It is the same kind of faithful love needed between parents and children. This kind of love builds a sense of trust in children. It also is the self-giving love that joins believers together in the church. The Song of Solomon calls us to make this love an active power in all our relationships.

How does love in a marriage show the kind of love we can have with God? For example, what does love in a marriage teach us about spending time with God and giving ourselves completely to Him?

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 14**A LOVING KNOWLEDGE
(Song of Solomon 4:7–5:1).**

Many have seen a "return to Eden"

theme in the Song of Solomon. The couple described in the Song of Solomon are not Adam and Eve. But the poem brings us back to the Garden of Eden. God's plan that husband and wife be "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24, 25) is pictured in the Song of Solomon through beautiful symbols.

How does the Song of Solomon show faithfulness in the closeness of the married couple? Song of Solomon 4:7–5:1. How is Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 7:3–5 almost the same?



**"Let my beloved come into his garden"
(Song of Solomon 4:16).**

Solomon invites his bride, "Come with me" (Song of Solomon 4:8). His bride says, "Yes!" Later she invites him, "Let my beloved come into his garden" (Song of Solomon 4:16). He says, "Yes!" (Song of Solomon 5:1). The Bible teaches here that husbands and wives are not to force one another to have sex. Both partners are to love each other freely. My garden is his garden.

Solomon and Shulamith are names that come from the Hebrew *shalom*,

peace or wholeness. They both admire each other (Song of Solomon 4:1-5; 5:10-16). The balance in their relationship is shown in the poetic style of two lines and verses each: (1) "My beloved is mine, and (2) I am his" (Song of Solomon 2:16). Song of Solomon 2:16 also shows the language of Eden: (1) "This is now bone of my bones, and (2) flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23).

What does the description of sex in marriage as "knowing" (KJV) teach us about our relationship with God? Genesis 4:1, 25; 1 Samuel 1:19; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:3.

The Bible uses the word "know" for the close union of husband and wife. In this loving knowledge, they share with each other their most hidden and deepest feelings. Not only two bodies but also two hearts are joined in one flesh. "Know" also describes the relationship between individuals and God. The special and tender knowledge of marriage symbolizes the special union of Christ and the church.

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 15

LOVE AT THE RIGHT TIME (Proverbs 5).

Think about the following verses and the comments after them. How do they add to the Bible teaching that sexual closeness is for marriage only? Genesis 39:7-9; Proverbs 5; Song of Solomon 8:8-10.

“Wall” or “door”? (*Song of Solomon 8:8-10*): During her childhood, Shulamith's brothers wondered if she would open herself to others like a door. Or would she guard her purity as a wall? Both before and within marriage, Shulamith decided to be a wall. She kept herself only for her husband. Such a decision helped her to be “as one who found peace” (*Song of Solomon 8:10, NKJV*). *Shalom* is the Hebrew word for peace. *Shalom* even sounds like his name (Solomon) and her name (Shulamith). Peace means wholeness or completeness.



Keep yourself only for your spouse.

A locked garden (*Song of Solomon 4:8-12, 16; Song of Solomon 5:1*): A fertile⁴ garden symbolizes Shulamith. On their wedding night, her husband

praises her for being “a garden enclosed . . . , a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (*Song of Solomon 4:12, NKJV*). “The idea of the garden behind its walls and with the gate locked means that no one can reach the area except those who belong in the garden . . . A fountain sealed and garden locked describes virginity.”—Adapted from G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 123.

Guarding one's affections (love): “Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases” (*Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4, NKJV*). This warning means: Do not make love until the right time. These verses ask young and old people to guard against both sex before marriage and adultery.

What good news is there for people who are sorry for making wrong choices in sex? Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 55:7; John 8:3-11; 1 John 1:9.

What steps can be taken by those who are single to guard against having sex? What steps can be taken by married people to prevent adultery?

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 16

KEEPING GOD'S GIFT SAFE (Romans 8:1-14).

God had a special reason for creating people as male and female

⁴fertile—able to produce many flowers, vegetables, and fruit.

(Genesis 1:26-28). Both male and female have God's image. But the joining of male and female in the one flesh of marriage shows the unity within the Godhead in a special way. The joining of male and female also makes it possible for the creation of new life. This is the first human example of being made in God's image.

How does the Bible judge sexual practices that do not follow God's plan? Leviticus 20:7-21; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

The Bible does not support anything that changes or destroys God's image in people. So God does not permit certain sexual practices. By not permitting these practices, He leads us toward the right purposes of sexuality. When we rebel against God's law, we are guilty of sin.

What guidance does the Bible give about sex in a sinful world? Romans 8:1-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 3:3-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24.

We wait to be freed from sin at Christ's return. We wait in faith. We think of ourselves dead to sin through Christ's death on the cross. We think of ourselves alive in Him through His

resurrection.⁵ Through prayer, watchfulness, and the Holy Spirit, we "crucify" our sinful nature and want to obey Christ through our thoughts. We accept God as Owner of our bodies and our sexuality. We use our bodies and sexuality according to His plan.

Surrendering our sexuality to God: God forgives those who repent⁶ of sin (1 John 1:9). The gospel makes it possible for people who have done sinful sexual deeds to be part of the church. Sin has changed sexuality among people. For this reason, some people may not be able to have sexual relationships⁷ the way God wants such relationships to be. So they might choose not to have any sex rather than get involved in the kinds of sex the Bible forbids.

How should we as a church treat homosexuals? How should their own attitudes (feelings) about themselves influence how we treat them?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, "Love and Sexuality in the Human Experience," *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 218–239.

True love: "True love is a high and holy principle.⁸ True love may be dif-

⁵resurrection—return to life after dying.

⁶repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from sin with the help of the Holy Spirit.

⁷relationships—the connections we have with other people.

⁸principle—basic rule.

ferent in character from that love which is awakened and which suddenly dies when put under a great test. Faithfulness to duty among parents helps young people prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let parents practice self-denial and show kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy. Then love will be kept warm in the heart. When he who goes out from such a home to stand at the head of his own family, he will know how to protect the happiness of his wife. Then instead of being the end of love, marriage will be only its beginning.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 176.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important to have Christian sex education? How can parents and teachers best fulfill their responsibility to guide youth in following what the Bible says about sex?
2. Unwed mothers, AIDS, broken homes . . . the list goes on because of the influence of sinful sexual practices. How can you as a class help those who have suffered from making these wrong choices?

SUMMARY: There are many lessons about close relationships in the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon is full of advice for friendship, and especially for marriage. The successful end of the royal couple's love in the poem encourages married couples toward deeper levels of knowing each other. The Song of Solomon also invites each human heart to have greater closeness with God.