

Sex In the Song
Week 3: Last Name Basis

I. We're continuing our series today Sex In the Song as we've been journeying through the Song of Songs or Song of Solomon. (Same book of the Bible but it's gone through a name change through different periods of Church history.) It's an awesome book but difficult book to understand because it's a:

[Slide]: Song.

- A. The Bible isn't all narrative literature and a big part of understanding a text of Scripture is understanding what type of literature we're dealing with. God is magnificent and it comes across in reading His Word. While all 66 books are the inspired, inherent Word, we get a wide range of human authors and differing genres. Scripture is truly God breathed and dynamic. It's the Living Word!
- B. My approach to the Song of Songs (and there are godly people who have other views) is that the Song is an anthology of poems. I see 6 total and they are cyclical in nature. This isn't a linear narrative plot about Solomon or an historical account like we'd read a biography. This is an album of love perhaps written by Solomon or dedicated to Solomon about a young man and young lady and their explorations of romantic love WHILE honoring God.

[Slide]: Both can be done!

1. Romantic love (including sexual intercourse) is a gift from God that should be enjoyed and celebrated within the proper boundaries God has set forth for our GOOD! There's also the aspect of procreation, but apart from that it's still a gift. The Church has allowed the world to dominate the conversation on sex and as a result the gift of sex, which was a part of God's original design from the beginning, has been degraded and cheapened. Christians have often bought into the lie that sex isn't to be discussed, is embarrassing, or something God turns a blind eye toward. That is false!
2. The Song provides us with a very candid look at the progression of romantic love and the joy and pleasure that is available when we honor God! How do we honor God? By obeying His parameters set forth for our protection and enjoyment. Here's the parameter:

Genesis 2:24-25 (CSB) [Slide]: 24 This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

- a. Intimacy is a desirable thing. The physical act of sex is a wonderful gift and catalyst for intimacy when we honor God's parameters. Sex is a physical act but so much more. It's the conduit by which:

[Slide]: 2 Me's become 1 We!

- b. It is a powerful bond that signifies a covenant of lifelong union between the physical, emotional, and the spiritual. It's an amazing gift but it's potent! God is a God of grace, and redemption is available over our sexual brokenness, but because sex is the union of body, emotion, and spirit, it can create deep wounds when we don't honor God's design. That's why we're taking 6 weeks to talk about it.
3. If you're tuning in for the first time today, I invite you to go back and catch up through the Podcast or website. We've experienced the engagement process of the ancient world through the eyes of our couple. They were committed to one another upon their engagement, followed by 6 months to one year period in which they cultivated friendship and romantic love apart from having sex. This approach is different from what our cultural expectations are from a Hollywood or pop cultural perspective, but we don't have a stellar record on marriages in our culture either. When sex is treated like a consumer product it easily clouds our judgement and stunts the overall growth of a relationship.
4. No matter what our relationship status is currently from single to married to widowed, we honor God by allowing the:
[Slide]: Spiritual to lead the physical.
 - a. If the physical is given precedent, it can easily lead us off a relational cliff.

5. In Song of Songs 2-3 from last week the 2nd cycle of the poem was heating up like hot sauce! The couple almost reached the brink of letting the physical overtake them, but the poem ended like the week before with an abrupt close and warning:

Song of Songs 3:5 (CSB) [Slide]: 5 Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and the wild does of the field, do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time.

II. The best way I can sum up Song of Songs 3:6-5:1, the 3rd cycle of our anthology of poems, is like this:

[Slide]: Have fun covering the bases if you're on a last name basis!

A. Today it's time for the wedding!

This poem is notoriously difficult for determining who is speaking and what exactly is occurring. Here's the great news, the difficulties are down in the details, and they don't impact our overall interpretation or application. I've prayed, studied, and sought the Lord's wisdom and I am giving you my humble take.

1. 3:6-11 could either be the perspective of a 3rd party or the young lady. There's also a possibility of 3:6 being about the lady from the perspective of the young man followed by a return to the young lady's perspective in 3:7. Regardless of how we identify the dialogue this section is a:

[Slide]: Wedding Song!

a. You get the drift! There's a similar rendition in Psalm 45 and I invite us to look later. If we take Song of Songs as a narrative of Solomon, the argument will hinge here. Over half the references to Solomon in the entire book are found in these brief verses. It's a bit jarring to me to do so though. The young man and lady have both been portrayed as the All American (in this case All Israeli) boy and girl. He's a shepherd and she's a country girl.

We're now going to have this infusion of an opulent and royal wedding.

b. Yes! This is a poem or a song. It's oozing with allusion and metaphor. Every girl throughout history dreams of being a queen on their wedding day and they are! Weddings are a "royal" affair in which every extravagance that can be afforded generally is! Solomon gave plenty examples of a royal wedding for the people of Israel. He had about 700 of them! I don't take this to be Solomon's actual wedding but a way to adequately describe the extravagant day. Since the Song was either commissioned for Solomon or written by Solomon it makes sense that one of his weddings would serve as the gold standard.

The ceremony crescendos in 3:11:

Song of Songs 3:11 (CSB) [Slide]: 11 Go out, young women of Zion, and gaze at King Solomon, wearing the crown his mother placed on him on the day of his wedding- the day of his heart's rejoicing.

c. The betrothed couple is betrothed no longer! They're now on a last name basis! I'm not sure if this is how surnames worked in the ancient world but let's go with it.

If this was a Hollywood movie verse 3:11 would be the final scene.

Once a couple is married that's the end of the story, right? Not according to the Song of Songs!

B. The couple has done the challenging work of cultivating their relationship over the course of their engagement. These are two young lovers who are now married under a covenant bond.

In verse 4:1 we are brought tastefully and with reserve, but nonetheless into:

[Slide]: The Honeymoon.

1. Isn't that a funny word! Do you know why we call it a honeymoon? Because in the ancient world, following the marriage ceremony there would be a month-long period (based off the lunar cycle) in which the father of the bride would provide rare splurges such as honey and meat. The idea was that by providing delicious delicacies and a 4-week vacation perhaps there would be margin for "other things."

2. We're heading into a portion of the poem that is a tasteful expression of the sexual intimacy that happens with our newlyweds. There're 111 lines of poetry that lead up to Song of Songs 5:1 and 111 lines of poetry leading out of it. 5:1 is the moment they have sex.

Song of Songs 5:1 (CSB) [Slide]: 1 I have come to my garden- my sister, my bride. I gather my myrrh with my spices. I eat my honeycomb with my honey. I drink my wine with my milk.

3. I share that because in a book about romantic love so much more goes into the spiritual and emotional aspects of our young couple's relationship, even a romantic one, than the physical.
This couple has continued to put in the work on developing their relationship and the 2nd half of the Song there's going to be a different set of issues that the couple will have to resolve.
Pastor Ed is preaching next week, and he'll help us navigate through their first argument (fight) as a couple.
- a. Every season or stage of life has its challenges and benefits. Desiring a spouse is a wonderful thing but take note of the Song. Romantic love is made out to be a walk in the park and it's all too often not. It's hard taking two me's and turning them into a we. The reward is great, but it doesn't come naturally. Any couple that is experiencing a strong marriage would attest that it's because of God's grace and a willingness for both parties to work at it.
4. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. For now, we're back at the start of their honeymoon and the friendship they've developed over the past year is setting them up for really good sex. How? They're verbally communicating in the bedroom. This isn't a natural or easy thing and particularly for guys. This is a generalization, but we men aren't the best at communicating our desires. It's something that takes work and effort. This is the ideal though and just because we're not naturally good at communicating desires or our affection, doesn't mean we can't develop in this area.
5. Song of Songs 4:1-5 is what's formally known as a:

[Slide]: Wasf

It's a metaphorical depiction of a human body in a descending progression. There are 3 in the Song, and this is the first one. It's from the perspective of the man as he views his wife.

Some of the descriptions are unusual to us but it's because we're trying to close a large cultural gap.

Verse 2 is relatively safe so let's use that as an example:

Song of Songs 4:2 (CSB) [Slide]: 2 Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn sheep coming up from washing, each one bearing twins and none has lost is young.

- a. Romantic ah? What's he saying about his young lady?

[Slide]: Her teeth are clean, and she has them all!

Sounds like a winner to me! The young man is expressing the beauty of his wife and verbally sharing how much he enjoys her. For guys, we just tend to focus on the physical.

It's how most of us are wired but here's a principle to good sex:

[Slide]: It starts in the kitchen.

- (1) Hear me out. If you're married, your spouse isn't there to meet your sexual needs alone. That turns sex back into a consumer product. I don't want to over dramatize things. Sometimes one or the other partner will not be in the mood, but you still love your spouse and participate. But the real joy and pleasure of sex according to the Song is when the physical is the result of a spiritual and emotional connectedness. Married men, our sex lives would probably radically improve if our wives had a little energy left at the end of the day. How does that happen? When we suggest that our spouse go and sit for a minute after dinner, and we change out the dishwasher. Most homes have 2 working adults or if your wife is at home and especially if you have kids, she's really exhausted by the end of the day. Our willingness to serve one another has an impact on our sex life.

- (2) If you're not married, but want to be, then take note! A servant heart is the call for all who name Christ and start developing that now. Ladies, I would challenge you to look for a gentleman when considering a future spouse. Guys, I would challenge us whether we're married or not to form the habit of opening doors for ladies. If there are no chairs left in a room and a lady walks in, get up! You're training yourself and developing habits for your future spouse.

- b. The young man has been vocal about the delight he has in his young lady and as they are about to have sex for the first time, he expresses his love one final time before their marriage is consummated. He praises her virginity.

Song of Songs 4:12-15 (CSB) [Slide]: 12 My sister, my bride, you are a locked garden- a locked garden and a sealed spring. 13 Your branches are a paradise of pomegranates with choicest fruits; henna with nard, 14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the best spices. 15 You are a garden spring, a well of flowing water streaming from Lebanon.

- (1) The majority or cultural view on sex can't compete with God's design! The world mocks virginity as old fashioned or something laughable but it's not. When 2 people save themselves for marriage it's a beautiful gift to give to your spouse. I included that large section of the Song because look at the imagery the Word provides! God's way is the pathway to abundant life! We can laugh, but I wouldn't! The testimony of Scripture is that when we bend our lives to the Book God honors that! When we adhere to God's design:

sex between one man and one woman in a covenant bond sex is likened to a:

[Slide]: Garden Spring

or

[Slide]: A Well

- (2) Within God's boundaries, sex is a healthy aspect of a flourishing bond between two people. Outside of that it depletes our soul and diminishes life.

C. As the young couple consummates their vows it is a moment of celebration within the poem.

[Slide]: It was worth the wait!

1. Have fun covering the bases if you're on a last name basis!

D. No matter our age or stage of life we all have to choose to honor God sexually.

1. If you're a teenager or young adult and you're feeling pressure to have sex, please know it is worth honoring God's design and waiting. He'll reward that choice.
2. I also realize that we've all fallen short in this area to some degree. God isn't focused on our past. We have a Core Value that says:

[Slide]: We inspire through grace!

- a. Why? Because God's grace is powerful and we're all at a grace party where we don't deserve to be. Whatever our past mistakes are sexually, God can and will forgive us and His Spirit will meet us and enable us to bring this area of our lives into alignment with His Word.
If we'll make that commitment, it will have a profound impact on our marriage or future marriage.