

Marriage Lessons

Song of Songs (or Solomon) is certainly a poem, but it is not *just* poetic. As with the other books in this section of the Old Testament, it is also a book of wisdom. Particularly, this book provides wisdom concerning the topics of love and marriage. If there's an area where wisdom is needed, surely it's here! The secular world has very twisted ideas about love and marriage, and those views threaten to permeate even the thinking of Christians. Instead, we should seek counsel from God's Word. There are many places we can find such counsel, but we shouldn't shy away from the wisdom contained within this great song.

Intimacy: This song praises the gift of love in its many aspects. Love is not just a physical thing, but there is an intimate and physical side to love. This is not wicked—it is within God's design when that intimacy is enjoyed solely in the bonds of marriage. While Song of Songs praises this intimacy, it also warns multiple times, *"do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases"* (2:7, 3:5, 8:4)

Kindness: One of the outstanding features of this song is the kindness displayed between the Shulamite and her beloved. Each of them shower the other with praise and affection. While this may describe the early stages of love, for most people it wears off too soon. Husbands and wives get to a point where they rarely lavish one another with affectionate words, and sometimes are flat-out unkind. We could learn from the example of the Shulamite and her beloved. What if we always treated our spouses the way the characters in this song treated one another?

Importance of Love: Some view love as weak or soft. Never make light of its importance. Consider this: of everything that was taken away after Adam and Eve's sin, marriage and love remained. Remember that, and appreciate love for what it is. Let this Song remind you of love's great worth.



“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Song of Solomon The Greatest Song

Overview

This week we turn back to the poetic literature of the Old Testament. The reading will cover the last of the books of poetry and wisdom—the book known as The Song of Solomon. Aside from Revelation, Song of Solomon may be the most debated book in the Bible when it comes to its story and interpretation. Many have treated the book as a mere allegorical story. Others believe it is simply a collection of intimate love-poems. Still others believe it is a poetic retelling of an actual romance. For those who agree on the latter option, who the characters in

the story are turns out to be another point of much debate. It truly is a difficult book in many ways, and yet it is a simple book in another. It is a poem about one of God's greatest gifts—the gift of love. While many have struggled with this book, there are surely lessons contained within that can help Christians, even now, learn more about and appreciate the blessing of love.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Song of Sol. 1
Tuesday: Song of Sol 2-3
Wednesday: Song of Sol. 4-5
Thursday: Song of Sol. 6-7
Friday: Song of Sol. 8

Leaving a Shepherd; Returning a King

In Song of Songs 1:7, it appears that the Shulamite believes her beloved is a simple shepherd, for she asks him where he pastures his flock. At some point towards the end of chapter two, the beloved has to leave. When he returns in chapter three, he does not return as a simple shepherd—he returns as king Solomon in all his regal glory! Over the centuries, there have been many who interpreted Song of Songs allegorically.

Ancient Jews often viewed it as a description of the love of God for His people Israel. Early Christian writers often viewed it as a picture of Christ's love for the church. While it seems best to interpret the story as a true story and not a mere allegory, there is a striking picture that points us to Christ (as is true in all the Old Testament books). This is especially true of the shepherd king! When Jesus first came, He came clothed in human flesh, just like you and me. As the man Christ Jesus, He lived a perfect, sinless life. He then gave His life on the cross for our sins. While He rose from the dead, He also ascended back to the Father. While He is gone, His bride (the church) earnestly awaits His return, just as the Shulamite was distressed to be apart from her beloved (3:1-6). There is coming a time when Jesus will return though. When He does, He will not come again in mortal flesh. He will not return as a simple carpenter from Nazareth. He will return in all of His heavenly and kingly glory. He will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! When He does, He will take His bride home, where the saved will live with Him in glory forevermore!



The Characters

Song of Solomon reads like a discourse (or a play) spoken between just a few characters. Sometimes it is difficult to tell exactly who is speaking (some Bible translations will provide headings to attempt to help out in this regard). The primary characters are as follows though:

The Shulamite: The woman of the story. She is a common laborer in a vineyard, forced to work there by her brothers (1:6). She catches the eyes of another, however, who loves her deeply and truly. Many have speculated who this Shulamite is, but it is probably best to simply recognize we don't know.

The Beloved: The man whom the Shulamite loves. She first thinks him to be a shepherd (1:7) but in chapter three he turns out to be none other than Solomon! *(There are other interpretations as to the man's identity, but this one seems to be the best).*

Daughters of Jerusalem: Throughout the book, these women either sing out a chorus or are spoken to by the Shulamite. They are likely the Shulamite's handmaidens.

What's the Title?

In most (if not all) English Bible translations, we read the title “Song of Solomon.” The Hebrew title of the book, however, is “Song of Songs.” This comes from the first verse of the book which says, *“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.”* So which title best describes the book? First, why is it Solomon's? Some believe this was viewed as Solomon's greatest song he wrote. Others believe it is because the song is about him and one of his brides. Other believe it was merely written for or about Solomon. Taking the view that Solomon is the author, could it be that Solomon has experienced “The Song of Songs?” The repetition adds force which essentially means “the greatest.” Thus, the song of songs is the greatest song. So what is the greatest song? According to the book, it would seem to be the song of true love. Love has existed from the dawn of creation, and it will last into the unending reaches of eternity. We experience the love of God and we have been given the ability to love by God. Thus, it seems most fitting, that this is not just Solomon's song, but this is truly about the greatest song—the Song of Songs!

Marriage Lessons

Song of Songs (or Solomon) is certainly a poem, but it is not *just* poetic. As with the other books in this section of the Old Testament, it is also a book of wisdom. Particularly, this book provides wisdom concerning the topics of love and marriage. If there's an area where wisdom is needed, surely it's here! The secular world has very twisted ideas about love and marriage, and those views threaten to permeate even the thinking of Christians. Instead, we should seek counsel from God's Word. There are many places we can find such counsel, but we shouldn't shy away from the wisdom contained within this great song.

Intimacy: This song praises the gift of love in its many aspects. Love is not just a physical thing, but there is an intimate and physical side to love. This is not wicked—it is within God's design when that intimacy is enjoyed solely in the bonds of marriage. While Song of Songs praises this intimacy, it also warns multiple times, *"do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases"* (2:7, 3:5, 8:4)

Kindness: One of the outstanding features of this song is the kindness displayed between the Shulamite and her beloved. Each of them shower the other with praise and affection. While this may describe the early stages of love, for most people it wears off too soon. Husbands and wives get to a point where they rarely lavish one another with affectionate words, and sometimes are flat-out unkind. We could learn from the example of the Shulamite and her beloved. What if we always treated our spouses the way the characters in this song treated one another?

Importance of Love: Some view love as weak or soft. Never make light of its importance. Consider this: of everything that was taken away after Adam and Eve's sin, marriage and love remained. Remember that, and appreciate love for what it is. Let this Song remind you of love's great worth.



“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Song of Solomon The Greatest Song

Overview

This week we turn back to the poetic literature of the Old Testament. The reading will cover the last of the books of poetry and wisdom—the book known as The Song of Solomon. Aside from Revelation, Song of Solomon may be the most debated book in the Bible when it comes to its story and interpretation. Many have treated the book as a mere allegorical story. Others believe it is simply a collection of intimate love-poems. Still others believe it is a poetic retelling of an actual romance. For those who agree on the latter option, who the characters in the story are turns out to be another point of much debate. It truly is a difficult book in many ways, and yet it is a simple book in another. It is a poem about one of God's greatest gifts—the gift of love. While many have struggled with this book, there are surely lessons contained within that can help Christians, even now, learn more about and appreciate the blessing of love.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Song of Sol. 1
Tuesday: Song of Sol 2-3
Wednesday: Song of Sol. 4-5
Thursday: Song of Sol. 6-7
Friday: Song of Sol. 8

Leaving a Shepherd; Returning a King

In Song of Songs 1:7, it appears that the Shulamite believes her beloved is a simple shepherd, for she asks him where he pastures his flock. At some point towards the end of chapter two, the beloved has to leave. When he returns in chapter three, he does not return as a simple shepherd—he returns as king Solomon in all his regal glory! Over the centuries, there have been many who interpreted Song of Songs allegorically.

Ancient Jews often viewed it as a description of the love of God for His people Israel. Early Christian writers often viewed it as a picture of Christ's love for the church. While it seems best to interpret the story as a true story and not a mere allegory, there is a striking picture that points us to Christ (as is true in all the Old Testament books). This is especially true of the shepherd king! When Jesus first came, He came clothed in human flesh, just like you and me. As the man Christ Jesus, He lived a perfect, sinless life. He then gave His life on the cross for our sins. While He rose from the dead, He also ascended back to the Father. While He is gone, His bride (the church) earnestly awaits His return, just as the Shulamite was distressed to be apart from her beloved (3:1-6). There is coming a time when Jesus will return though. When He does, He will not come again in mortal flesh. He will not return as a simple carpenter from Nazareth. He will return in all of His heavenly and kingly glory. He will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! When He does, He will take His bride home, where the saved will live with Him in glory forevermore!



The Characters

Song of Solomon reads like a discourse (or a play) spoken between just a few characters. Sometimes it is difficult to tell exactly who is speaking (some Bible translations will provide headings to attempt to help out in this regard). The primary characters are as follows though:

The Shulamite: The woman of the story. She is a common laborer in a vineyard, forced to work there by her brothers (1:6). She catches the eyes of another, however, who loves her deeply and truly. Many have speculated who this Shulamite is, but it is probably best to simply recognize we don't know.

The Beloved: The man whom the Shulamite loves. She first thinks him to be a shepherd (1:7) but in chapter three he turns out to be none other than Solomon! *(There are other interpretations as to the man's identity, but this one seems to be the best).*

Daughters of Jerusalem: Throughout the book, these women either sing out a chorus or are spoken to by the Shulamite. They are likely the Shulamite's handmaidens.

What's the Title?

In most (if not all) English Bible translations, we read the title “Song of Solomon.” The Hebrew title of the book, however, is “Song of Songs.” This comes from the first verse of the book which says, *“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.”* So which title best describes the book? First, why is it Solomon's? Some believe this was viewed as Solomon's greatest song he wrote. Others believe it is because the song is about him and one of his brides. Other believe it was merely written for or about Solomon. Taking the view that Solomon is the author, could it be that Solomon has experienced “The Song of Songs?” The repetition adds force which essentially means “the greatest.” Thus, the song of songs is the greatest song. So what is the greatest song? According to the book, it would seem to be the song of true love. Love has existed from the dawn of creation, and it will last into the unending reaches of eternity. We experience the love of God and we have been given the ability to love by God. Thus, it seems most fitting, that this is not just Solomon's song, but this is truly about the greatest song—the Song of Songs!