Explore the Bible Lesson Preview
August 30, 2020
“Relational Investments”
Background: Song of Songs 5:2-8:14

Lesson: Song of Songs 5:6-16
Motivation: HCSB, p. 1115: 5:2-7:9 “This is the lengthiest section of the Song. This night of relative apathy (5:2a) following the wedding night is structurally opposite the night of anxiety preceding the wedding day. As such this later section provides some obvious contrasts, but it also more broadly captures common romantic sequences within marriage that compare and contrast with the wedding night and all that precedes it. This section is also distinguished by the most developed internal chiasm in the Song. Despite its length, its beginning with Shulamith sleeping alone (5:2a) and conclusion with her sleeping romantically with Solomon (7:9), artistically maintains it chiastic balance with the corresponding section, 3:1-5. The outline of events is evident in the outline of the book. In addition, the two questions posed by the women of Jerusalem (5:9, 6:1) are poetic guides to the movement of the lyrics. After the problem created by Shulamith’s reluctance (5:2), the first question (5:9) introduces her tenfold praise of Solomon (5:10-16) and the second question (6:1) introduces the reconciliation (6:1-13) that leads to Solomon’s tenfold praise of her (7:1-5).”

Examination:

I. orElse’s Loneliness (5:2-5)

Following the wedding and honeymoon, this section, rather jarringly, focuses on loneliness and hurt. As one commentator said, “There are only two kinds of marriages: those who admit problems and address them and those who lie.”

A. orElse Good Intentions “Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfect one...” (5:2). Whether this section is a dream or a real event, the point remains the same: Marriage involves low points of disappointment and feelings of abandonment. The opening expectations and excitement qualities descend to feelings of rejection and hurt. Solomon uses four terms of endearment together, the most of any address in the Song.
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Written by David Self
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B. Apathetic Response “I have taken off my clothing. How can I put it back on? I have washed my feet. How can I get them dirty?” (5:3). Later, when the “young women of Jerusalem” ask where Solomon is, his bride replies “My love has gone down to his garden” (6:2). So, perhaps, Solomon appeared at her bedchamber asking for a romantic midnight stroll, and she said, in effect, “go back to sleep.” Often in marriage, our first emotional response to our spouse is selfish, badly worded and immediately regretted.

II. The Cry for Companionship

“I opened to my love, but my love had turned and gone away. I was crushed that he had left. I sought him, but did not find him. I called him, but he did not answer.

7 The guards who go about the city found me. They beat and wounded me; they took my cloak from me—

the guardians of the walls.

8 Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you: if you find my love, tell him that I am lovesick.

” (5:6-8)

HCSB, p. 1115: 5:2-8 “The contrast with the night before the wedding is apparent. On that earlier night, Shulamith couldn’t sleep because of her anxiety over Solomon’s absence; here, sleep comes easily, and she wants continued slumber out of apathy from his presence, as evidenced by Solomon’s pleading to open to me. In 3:1-4 the watchmen of the walls assisted Shulamith to find him; here, they hinder her, mistaking her for a criminal. In 3:1-4 Shulamith’s night ended united with Solomon; here, lengthy anxiety and reconciliation precedes the night of reunion.”

III. The Call for Remembering (5:9)

“What makes the one you love better than another, most beautiful of women? What makes him better than another, that you would give us this charge?” (5:9) Following the rejection and hurt, is a lengthy praise of the virtues of Solomon. (10-16) Just as the groom lavished praise upon the bride, so the bride does also to the groom. “Security results when a
man and a woman say to each other, ‘You’re so valuable to me that no matter what happens in life, I’m going to commit myself to you. You’re so valuable, I’m going to spend the rest of my life proving to you my pledge to love you.’ In short, it’s a reflection of the kind of security we have in our relationship with Christ.” (Gary Smalley, *Love is a Decision*, p.108) Hindsight is often 20/20. If her current approach had been her previous approach, the intervening isolation, confusion, hurt and despair could have been avoided. However, Solomon is not blameless; if his romantic persistence of the first three chapters had continued here, the unpleasant scene would not have unfolded.

IV. The Crux for Celebration (5:10-16)

“"My love is fit and strong, notable among ten thousand. 11 His head is purest gold. His hair is wavy and black as a raven. 12 His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, washed in milk and set like jewels. 13 His cheeks are like beds of spice, towers of perfume. His lips are lilies, dripping with flowing myrrh. 14 His arms are rods of gold set with topaz. His body is an ivory panel covered with sapphires. 15 His legs are alabaster pillars set on pedestals of pure gold. His presence is like Lebanon, as majestic as the cedars. 16 His mouth is sweetness. He is absolutely desirable. This is my love, and this is my friend."

(5:10-16)

HCSB, p. 1115, 5:10-16 "This section contains tenfold praise that moves downward from head to feet, enclosed by comprehensive summary praise in verse 10 and verse 16b. The praise of Solomon’s mouth in vs. 16 is not likely an interruption of the movement since it is apparently a praise of his speech and not his literal lips that are praised in verse 13. This section is in chiastic balance with the tenfold praise of Shulamith that moves upward from feet to head." pp. 1115-16, 5:12 “Eyes… like doves is the only identical praise of each by the other (1:15; 4:1). Each had eyes expressing love. Whereas the other aspects of Shulamith’s praise are expanded at most by one phrase, this simile is expanded by three:

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(lit “perched over a pool”). The phrases contribute to imagery of happy, loving eyes. They also possibly allude to the power of love that triumphs over waters of chaos (8:6-7). Doves looking at rushing streams become doves perched over still water, with reflections of doves looking back to their source (Glickman, pp. 101, 151, 212).

V. Love’s Restoration (6:1-8:4)

A. Results “My love has gone down to his garden, to beds of spice, to feed in the gardens and gather lilies. I am my love’s and my love is mine; he feeds among the lilies.” (6:2-3)

B. Reconciliation (6:4-13) HCSB, p. 1116: 6:4-10 “This section consists of praise designed to reconcile. Although on the wedding night one glance of Shulamith’s eyes aroused Solomon (4:9), here Solomon asked that she turn her eyes from him because they captivated (lit. “aroused”) him. He did not want to express his love physically until they reunited emotionally, which the praise was designed to achieve. He avoided the most erotic of lovemaking praise. He emphasized instead that Shulamith was God’s gift for whom his love was unchanged from the wedding night. His comparison of her to the beauty of Israel (6:4, 10) implies she was as wonderful a gift to him as the land was to God’s people.

Solomon’s comparison of Shulamith to Tirzah and Jerusalem (v. 4), Israel’s most prominent cities in the south and the north, appears to be in chiastic balance with the description of her as beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awe-inspiring as an army with banners.

“An army with banners” may also be translated “banded hosts” (i.e., “of heaven,” which would be “stars,” or “of armies,” depending on the context). So Solomon compared Shulamith to the cities and military of Israel, which were like the moon, the sun, and the stars – perhaps recalling the imagery of Israel as the sun, moon, and stars in Joseph’s dream (Gn 37:9).”

C. Reconsideration (7:1-9) Solomon praises his wife literally from toe to head. It’s instructive that he uses words of praise and encouragement following a time of conflict.

D. Recommitment (7:10 – 8:3) “I belong to my love, and his desire is for me.” (7:10) the
joys of rekindled romance are apparent in private
“let’s spend the night”
(7:11) and in public,
“I would find you in public and kiss you and no one would scorn me”
(8:1).

E. Release “Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you: do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time.” (8:4) Whereas the previous statement in 2:6 encouraged patience, the context is to affirm that marriage is “the appropriate time.”

VI. Love’s Affirmation (8:5-14)

A. Preparation “Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on the one she loves? I awakened you under the apricot tree. There your mother conceived you: there she conceived and gave you birth.” (8:5) in words identical to those announcing the wedding procession in 3:6, the married couple leaves the wilderness to enter the paradise of committed love.

B. Proclamation “Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death; ardent love is as unrelenting as Sheol. Love’s flames are fiery flames – the fiercest of all.” (8:6) HCSB, p. 1117: 8:6-7 “The seal is the valuable possession, by which all of a person’s possessions are identified. Strong as death is a stark metaphor, showing that just as death conquers, so does love. But perhaps it implies love has the last word. If death conquers morality, then love may as well. Unrelenting as Sheol extends this image, showing that as the grave pursues all mortals, so love pursues the beloved. The ardent love is often attributed to God, who expresses it in fiery concern for those whom He loves (Dt 4:24; 32:21-22). Since its fiery flames are the blaze of the Lord, it cannot be extinguished. Any improper attempts to attain love are scorned.

C. Permanence “Mighty waters cannot extinguish love; rivers cannot sweep it away.”
If a man were to give all his wealth for love, it would be utterly scorned.” (8:7) the love described here is permanent and beyond value. It describes the agape love of God. (1 Cor 13:4-6)

D. Peace “So in his eyes I have become like one who finds peace.” (8:10b) in the final stanza of the Song, Shulamith remembers the harsh days when her brothers had her work in the vineyards (1:6). But she pays tribute to them for protecting her and perhaps like the story of Ruth and Boaz, placing her for Solomon to discover. Discipline in her younger days produce freedom and peace in married life.

Application:

1. Every marriage has relational highs and lows.

2. Conflict resolution is a key to permanence.

3. The only perfect model for lasting love is God’s love.

Leader Pack Item 14 Handout: Interpreting Song of Songs

Illustrator: no Illustrator article this week.

Notes: **You may access David’s Lesson Preview in MP3 format at: www.hfcbiblestudy.org**

Dates: **In light of recent COVID spikes, calendared events continue to be under review**