

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Adult Sabbath School Lesson
Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

The Royal Love Song

2019, Quarter 2, Lesson 6

Sabbath (May 4): The Royal Love Song

The Song of Solomon is probably one of the least read and studied books in the Bible. Yet it contains a beautiful, and at times very suggestive, glimpse into the intimate experiences of marriage. The title in Latin is *Canticum Canticorum*, from which is derived the title “Canticles.” The Hebrew title is *Shir Hashshirim*, or “song of songs,” perhaps indicating that this is “the best of Solomon’s many songs.” This would indicate a song of great artistry indeed, for Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary discusses the historical setting for *The Song of Solomon*:

The song has its setting in the golden age of the Hebrew monarchy. It appears that the king wrote of his own love. The question naturally arises, Concerning which of his many wives did he compose this love song? Solomon loved many strange women (1 Kings 11:1), including 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). The number given us in Cant. 6:8 is decidedly less—only 60 queens and 80 concubines. Assuming that Solomon’s song is a unity and that the marriage that it celebrates is his own marriage, it would thus seem that he wrote the song in his youthful days. The bride is described as a Shulamite country girl. An attachment to one of this class would be a real “love marriage,” with no political or other reason of expediency, as was the case with many of Solomon’s marriages. This type of relationship would make this story of Solomon’s marriage a more appropriate illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church, since parts of the song, at least, have been considered illustrative of such an association. (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1100-1.)

Discussion Questions:

- Read Isaiah 54:4,5; Jeremiah 3:14; and 2 Corinthians 11:2. What do these passages reveal to us regarding Christ’s love for His church, and for the individual people that make up His church? (Answers will vary.)
- For what reasons might God have included a poem such as this in the Bible? (Answers will vary.) What benefits from its study might be expected for those who are single? For those who are married? For the church as a whole? (Answers will vary.)

Sunday (May 5): Indivisible Life

The Bible consistently presents the human being as a multi-faceted, yet unified creature (see, for example, Genesis 2:7; Psalm 63:1; 84:2). This is in contrast to dualism, a philosophy that views

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human beings as a combination of two distinct and separate elements—spirit and body—with the two being in conflict and tension.

Discussion Questions:

- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23. How much of each of us does God want to sanctify and “preserve blameless?” (Our “whole spirit and soul and body.”) What does this mean practically for each one of us? (God desires that His work of sanctification impact every aspect of our lives.)
- Read John 10:10. In what ways does the fulfillment of Christ’s stated mission speak to the integrated and unified nature of man? (Christ is concerned about every aspect of our lives, not just the spiritual. True Christianity will elevate every aspect of a person’s life, including the spiritual, the physical, the mental, and the relational.)
- Read 1 Corinthians 3:16,17. What additional reason is given here for the importance of recognizing man’s unified nature? (God wants to dwell within people, but this body “temple” can be defiled spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally, and/or relationally.)
- Read Song of Solomon 1:2, 13; 2:6; 5:10-16; 7:1-9. In what ways do these texts reflect the Bible’s positive view of the human body, as opposed to the negative view promoted by dualistic philosophy? (The body is admired and praised as something that is good.)

Monday (May 6): The Loves of the Love Song

Some years ago a popular book titled *The Five Love Languages* discussed various ways in which human love is typically expressed and received. The book identified these common types of “love-making” as physical touch, time, words of affirmation, acts of service, and gift giving. The *Song of Solomon* describes many of these aspects of healthy love in a marriage.

Discussion Questions:

- Read the following passages from *The Song of Solomon* and discuss what language or languages of love are expressed in each:
 - Song of Sol. 1:2,13 (Physical touch)
 - Song of Sol. 2:10-13 (Time)
 - Song of Sol. 4:1-7; 7:1-9 (words of affirmation)
 - Song of Sol. 4:16 (gift giving)
- In what ways do the following Bible verses describe God’s love and work of salvation for man in these same “love languages?”
 - John 3:16 (gift giving)
 - John 1:14 (touch)
 - Exodus 25:8; Matthew 1:23; Revelation 21:3 (time)
 - Romans 5:8-11 (acts of service)
 - Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 41:10 (words of affirmation)

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Tuesday (May 7): A Loving Knowledge

The Bible frequently refers to the intimacy of marriage as “knowing” each other. Thus we read, “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived” (Genesis 4:1). The intimacy made possible by the marriage relationship extends, of course, beyond the mere physical and includes other aspects such as emotional and spiritual closeness. God designed this intimate marital relationship to be mutual and reciprocal, for at marriage a man and woman become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:23):

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided “an help meet for him”—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” Ephesians 5:29. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one.” {PP 46.2}

Discussion Questions:

- Read Song of Sol. 2:16. In what ways should this sentiment, “My beloved is mine, and I am his,” be true in a marriage? (Answers will vary.) Why is this principle so important for a happy marriage? (Any kind of force or manipulation in marriage is really an expression of selfishness, the opposite of love.)
- Read John 17:3. This verse reveals that eternal life depends on us “knowing” God. Except for the obvious physical aspects of “knowing” that are reserved for marriage, in what ways should we seek to “know” God? (Answers will vary.)
- Read John 17:21; Colossians 1:27; 2 Peter 1:4. What incredible promises about “knowing” God are given in these verses? (It is possible to become united with God as Christ dwells within us.)

Wednesday (May 8): Love at the Right Time

From the Bible’s perspective, any study of “love at the right time” presupposes that physical intimacy is reserved until after marriage. The pain and degradation resulting in our world from ignoring this biblical principal will never be fully known. But the timing of marriage in a person’s life is also very important. Consider the following counsel from the book *The Adventist Home*:

Early marriages are not to be encouraged. A relation so important as marriage and so far-reaching in its results should not be entered upon hastily, without sufficient preparation, and before the mental and physical powers are well developed (AH 79).

Boys and girls enter upon the marriage relation with unripe love, immature judgment, without noble, elevated feelings, and take upon themselves the marriage vows, wholly led by their boyish, girlish passions... (AH 79).

Some basic principles derived from these statements can provide general guidance to anyone considering marriage, regardless of their age. The important point is that the consummation of

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marriage—physical and sexual intimacy—should be just that, a “seal” placed upon a unification of hearts and minds that has already occurred.

Discussion Questions:

- What might be included in “sufficient preparation” for marriage? (Answers will vary, but could include: knowing the personality, background, goals and aspirations, and values of the other person; making sure that the new family will be financially stable; dealing with any known “emotional baggage” from earlier experiences or relationship with life, etc.)
- What is “unripe love?” (Love that has not withstood trials, disagreements, or other “storms of life.” Unripe fruit is hard [without feeling], without flavor [sweetness], and is firmly attached to the vine or branch [not yet ready to separate from relationships or influences that could be detrimental to marriage].)
- In what ways could even “seasoned” adults be misled by “immature judgment” when considering marriage? (It takes time to learn who somebody really is. We all learn how to hide certain aspects of ourselves from other people, and usually quite a bit of time is required for a mature decision to be reached about the compatibility between two people.)
- Why is it so important for “noble, elevated feelings” to develop in a relationship before marriage is entered? (Infatuation is not restricted to young people, and it is important to give time for the “emotional high” that so often accompanies a new relationship to develop into “ripe love.”)

Thursday (May 9): Safeguarding the Creator’s Gift

Human sexuality is one of the many gifts that God has given to human beings. It is also, of course, one of the things that Satan has attacked more consistently and effectively than anything else. In today’s lesson we look briefly at God’s purpose for this gift, and also at how it can best be protected from the enemy’s attacks.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Genesis 1:26. How did God create man? (In His own image.)
- Read Genesis 1:27. How is God’s image expressed among human beings? (We are created as males or females.)
- Read Genesis 1:28. What are some reasons that God created humans as male and female? (Biologically speaking, God’s purpose for uniting male and female in marriage was to provide for procreation and the multiplying of the human race on this earth. Emotionally, God also approves of the pleasure derived from the marriage relationship. Spiritually, the oneness experienced in marriage can help us understand, in a limited way, the closeness and personal relationship that God desires with each person.)
- Read Genesis 1:26. For what additional reason did God create male and female? (The combination of man and woman combine in marriage reflects, to some degree at least, the combining of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in the Godhead. If God designed marriage simply for procreation, one could almost be excused for looking for a “simpler” way of having children than getting married. But marriage also reflects, in a very incomplete way, the nature, character, and holiness of God. The sanctity of marriage and the sexual intimacy God has assigned to it is just as much spiritual as it is

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physical. Since man is not merely a combination of spirit and body, but rather a unified whole, the miracle of procreation is also designed to be a spiritual, not just a physical, experience.)

- Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. What principles are outlined here that can help both men and women maintain the Creator's gift of sexuality? (Christ has power to direct and hold captive the thoughts in our minds, which is where sin begins.)
- Read Philippians 4:8. What principles are given here that can help both men and women remain sexually pure and faithful to God and (if married) their spouse?

Friday (May 10): A Sacred Institution

God gave marriage to humanity in Eden at Creation. Along with the Sabbath, it is one of the two institutions we have today that survives from a perfect, sinless world. It should not surprise us, then, that marriage (and the Sabbath) have both been, and continue to be, so heavily attacked by Satan. Yet God's blessing remains on the gift of marriage:

Marriage has received Christ's blessing, and it is to be regarded as a sacred institution. True religion is not to counterwork the Lord's plans. God ordained that man and woman should be united in holy wedlock, to raise up families that, crowned with honor, would be symbols of the family in heaven. And at the beginning of His public ministry Christ gave His decided sanction to the institution that had been sanctioned in Eden. Thus He declared to all that He will not refuse His presence on marriage occasions, and that marriage, when joined with purity and holiness, truth and righteousness, is one of the greatest blessings ever given to the human family. (Ellen White, *Daughters of God*, pp. 180,181)

Discussion Questions:

- What do the phrases "sacred institution" and "holy wedlock" signify? What do they preclude from the marriage relationship and experience? (Answers will vary.)
- What does a family "crowned with honor" refer to? What does that kind of family look like in the world today? (Answers will vary.)
- According to the quote above, families on earth should be "symbols of the family in heaven." Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, and discuss in what ways this prayer can and should guide the relationships in a Christian family that is "crowned with honor." (Possible answers are provided below.)
 - "Hallowed be Thy name..." (Family members should respect each other.)
 - "Thy will be done..." (Family members should give preferential treatment to each other and seek to make each other happy.)
 - "Give us this day our daily bread..." (The specific needs of family members may vary from day to day, but attentive parents and spouses will recognize these needs and do their best to meet them.)
 - "Forgive us our debts..." (Family members should be quick to confess and quick to forgive each other of wrongs. Ideally, this should happen daily during morning and/or evening worship.)
 - "Lead us not into temptation..." (Family members should, with a godly jealousy, protect each other from sinful and harmful influences.)

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- “Deliver us from evil...” (Family members should be prepared to prayerfully and wisely do whatever is necessary to help each other out of compromising or dangerous situations.)