

Song of Solomon-by Tommy Lee

Chapter 1

Solomon (1.1,5; 3.7,9,11; 8.11-12) is the "He" identified throughout the book. The other main character is the Shulammitte girl (6.13), who is the "She." There are also "Others" identified, the various companions and community surrounding this relationship. The Bible's poetry can be confusing for us; some organization helps: 1.2-4: the girl's first days in the palace of the king. 1.5-2.17: a wonderful countryside scene. 3.1-5: she reflects upon him. 3.6-11: their wedding day. 4.1-5.1: their wedding night. 5.2-6.3: an interruption in the relationship. 6.4-13: they are reconciled. 7.1-10: marital love in the bedroom. 7.11-8.14: another delightful countryside scene. Yes, this is a powerful poem on marital love, including the physical / sexual, all of which God made as "very good" (Genesis 1.31; 2.20-25). But never forget that God designed marriage to beautifully picture Christ and the church (Ephesians 5.31-32).

Chapter 2

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." That refrain occurs three times in this book (2.7; 3.5; 8.4). One Bible teacher interprets it very simply: *"We must know God's timing in love-making. Love must not be aroused until it is ready. The world says, any time, any place. God says, my time, my place"* (John Balchin). Sex is a treasured gift of God within the boundaries and joys of marriage. Outside of marriage, it is one of the most destructive, degrading, and cheapening pursuits one can imagine. As my children have heard me say dozens of times, fire in the fireplace is wonderful! But when the fire gets out of the fireplace and runs up the drapes and across the ceiling and roars through the house trapping you in a room with no exit, it's dreadful. It's deadly. There is a right time and place for every good gift of God.

Chapter 3

Four times in the first four verses the Shulammitte girl describes Solomon as *"him whom my soul loves."* She is seeking him all *"about the city, in the streets and in the squares"* (v.2). This love is intense, and when she found him she *"held him, and would not let him go"* (v.4). And then in vv.6-11, we see Solomon *"on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart"* (v.11). It's a grand and impressive procession; when first seen from a distance the dust kicked up from the horses is *"like columns of smoke"* (v.6). Let everyone behold (v.7) and look (v.11) upon it; the splendor and majesty is breathtaking; no expense has been spared! When was the last time you saw a wedding with 60 best men, all dresses as regal warriors (vv.7,8)? Now... remember the reality to which this beautiful picture points: *"This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church"* (Ephesians 5.32).

Chapter 4

In yesterday's text, we saw their wedding day (vv.6-11, especially v.11). And now, from 4.1-5.1, the Bible celebrates their wedding night. Back in 1.1, this book said it is *"the Song of Songs"*—the greatest song on married love you will ever read. Our culture delights to describe the mechanics and techniques of love, often in ways that cheapen something very precious. The Bible delights to sing about love in poetry. But this poetry will not shy away from the physical; God made us to enjoy making love to our husbands and wives—the whole phenomenon is his idea, and he wants it celebrated in marriage. *"The more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild"* (G.K. Chesterton). Our God is a marvelous creator: eyes, hair, teeth, lips, mouth, cheeks, neck, breasts. *"Behold, you are beautiful, my love"* (v.1), *"my bride"* (v.8).

Chapter 5

In yesterday's text the king praised various parts of his bride's body (4.1-5) using descriptive language that we may find somewhat odd today, but in what must have been very impressive romantic language in that culture! (But then again, maybe we should be taking notes, rather than judging; maybe the husbands among us should try out some of these compliments?) In vv.10-16 of today's chapter, the wife returns the favor, expressing her admiration of her husband. But all of this happens after an interruption of sorts (vv.2-8) had caused a temporary breach in their relationship. (Anybody know anything about that?) Back in 2.15 we were warned about *"the little foxes that spoil the vineyards"*—that is, the small things that can spoil a relationship. No relationship is exempt from the little foxes. The little foxes have to be caught and dealt with, no matter how small and insignificant they may seem.

Chapter 6

In yesterday's chapter Solomon and his Shulammite bride had a temporary setback, as all marriages among Adam's wayward, unruly children in this fallen world will. But it's only a short-lived hindrance, not an inseparable break. Back in chapter 3 they had made life-long vows to one another, had they not? *"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."* (those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, in Matthew 19.4-6). In vv.4-13 husband and wife are beautifully reconciled. Again the bride is showered with praise and compliments. *"Lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners."* (v.4). Men, take notes!

Chapter 7

After the reconciliation described in the last chapter, *"the Song of Songs"* (1.1) now turns again to the sacred intimacy of the marital bedroom, in vv.1-10. This is a significant part of human life, isn't it? It is so powerful and meaningful that God has provided us with a whole book that honors and celebrates it. But, to keep things in balanced perspective, note that it's only one book among the 66 in our Bibles. Then, beginning in v.11 and continuing into the next chapter, we have another delightful countryside scene (as we did in 1.15-2.17). They head out to enjoy a date together! Observe Martin Luther's wisdom on marriage: *"There is no more lovely, friendly, and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage.... Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave.... The first love is drunken. When the intoxication wears off, then comes the real marriage love."*

Chapter 8

The final chapter of the song/story/poem again celebrates sexual imagery (v.3), but note that there was no sexual intimacy before the marriage, at the end of chapter 3. This is in great contrast to accepted sexual behavior in our culture today, and we must vigilantly guard our hearts and remain in close communion with the Lord Christ to find strength against temptation. *"The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the blameless, but destruction to evildoers"* (Proverbs 10.29). We read the refrain one last time, in 8.4, *"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases"* (earlier, see 2.7, 3.5). It is sin to stir up or awaken sexual love at the wrong time and place and with the wrong person—that is, any time and place and person outside the covenant of marriage. There is false and corrupting sex, and there is true and holy sex. This must be a crucial part of family training (8.8-10).

-Reflecting on Song of Solomon-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in The Song of Solomon. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish Song of Solomon before we move forward?

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son[a] from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1.14