

ABIDE

DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



A PLAY ON LOVE

SONG OF SOLOMON

This is probably a book you have heard of, but have never learned about. The Song of Solomon is probably one of the more neglected books in the Bible in both the preaching world and in the realm of personal Bible study. There are probably a few reasons for this: First, it is hard to understand. There is so much poetic language and the book moves so fast without hard clarification that it is just hard for the mind to process. The confusion even carries over into the understanding of Theologians. For instance, there are several schools of thought regarding the interpretation of this book. Let's look at the main Views:

The Allegorical Method of Interpretation (Old Testament Emphasis): This view holds that the whole of this book is a dedicated allegory of God's love for His people Israel, and His peoples' love for their God. Now, this is a beautiful picture to be sure, but there is a little bit of a problem. The children of Israel have had a very long history of being an unfaithful spouse to God. This allegory would be untrue.

The Allegorical Method of Interpretation (New Testament Emphasis): This view holds that the entire book is an allegory picturing Christ and His Church. Once again, a beautiful picture, but we run into a problem. The picture of Christ and His church was a mystery not revealed until the New Testament. God gave fragments of pictures in the Old Testament, but never the full picture. The full plan of redemption was a secret until the appointed time.

The Literal Method of Interpretation (Solomon Emphasis): This view holds that the Song of Solomon is a love story about king Solomon attempting to steal away a "shepherd lover." In other words, the view holds that this book becomes a "How To" manual about stealing the wife of someone else.

The Literal Method of Interpretation (Marriage Emphasis): Here we have a view that the whole of this book is given to the ebb and flow of the marital relationship, including the sexual aspects of that relationship for God's people. At the same time, it is also believed that as well that this book is a picture of the love that grows hotter and colder from God's people toward Him.

This last view is the one that I personally hold to because I think it makes the most sense.

A second reason this book is avoided is because it is a little embarrassing to talk about. As stated before, because this book involves marital relations, it also the sexual nature of that relationship. But we need to understand that what is described here is the spiritual nature of that sexual gift God has given and that is absolutely not anything to be ashamed of in regard to that context.

Now, what the world has done in dismantling the spiritual nature of sex and reducing it down to a base animal instinct, that is something to be ashamed of in the context of sex. This opinion that sex cannot be helped, it must be given into at all costs and we should just accept that as fact is every reason to be ashamed of this topic.

All sex is a choice. And we should choose God's way. That the spiritual covenant relationship between a man and a woman in the confines of marriage is the only place sex should exist.

The Song of Solomon, at its most fundamental level, is a Marital Help Book that will guide you through relationship ups and downs, how a man should approach his wife, and how a wife should approach her husband.

How to Think About Song of Solomon

It is believed that king Solomon wrote this book when he was a young king and in love. And what you will see is the entire process of Genesis 2:26 come to life as this man and this woman are joined together, cleave together, and become one flesh together. This book comes at the end of the poetical books. The previous four have to do with the deep needs and desires of the soul, and this last book describes the deep need and desires of the physical, love and intimacy. What we are doing when we are reading the Song of Solomon is we are following a storyline of a couple, but entrenched below the surface is a great deal of symbolism to sift through as well.

Understand also, that this book is written like a musical play. In this story there are obviously points of drama in this plot and different characters you read of, namely that of the man and woman who find each other.

As we have seen, Solomon had written over a thousand songs because of the wisdom that God had given him, but this was his greatest hit. This is the one that topped the charts. Let's find out why.

I Think I Love You (Song of Solomon 1:2-3:5): This is the beginning stages of the relationship. It's actually a bit of fun reading for those that are married and can look back and see the same kinds of similarities on how their relationship came together.

The main woman of the story had just moved into Jerusalem after her family was able to gain a piece of land there. Some have called this young lady, the "Shulamite Woman" in the story, a Cinderella of sorts. Though she was very beautiful, she was sent outside daily to work the fields and keep the flocks.

She continues on watching all of the pomp and fanfare of the palace, wishing somehow she could be a part of that life, but quietly willing to work where she is.

However, one day, she finds a young, good looking man just staring at her. He appears to her to be a young shepherd. From here a tug and pull relationship begins to take place and they grow more fond of one another as the shepherd pursues this beautiful woman.

Then, the decision is made, they love each other.

Let's Get Married (Song of Solomon 3:6-5:1): As the story progresses, there is a large bit of commotion in the area because the king will be visiting. The woman is a little excited but she really is just love smitten and continues to tell her friends about this boy she loves. However, all of the sudden, she realizes that she has been called for by the king.

The Surprise Wedding (3:6-11)—Once the king arrives, she notices something strangely familiar about him! He is the shepherd whom she loves! He takes her to the palace and they will be married and joined together for life.

The Wedding Night (4:1-5:1a)— Here there is a long discourse of the pleasure experienced that very night.

The Honor of Intimacy (5:1b)— The end of this verse details the honor and fullness of satisfaction gained by this intimate union.

Note: If this sounds a little out there for you, remember that in Ecclesiastes Solomon, by his own report, stated that he would go out in disguise to see what the world was like around him. Apparently, that is how he found this young lady.

Let's Get Through This (Song of Solomon 5:2-8:14): They were married now, the king and his bride experienced very good times together as they enjoyed each other. But wouldn't you know... marriage is difficult sometimes.

The Spat (5:2-6:3)— In this section there was a dream that the young bride had about her husband leaving her. She moves through a suspicious discourse toward her husband. The husband obviously does not like this and he begins to question the commitment of his wife. Eventually he then reassures her of his love for her and tells her that he would never leave.

The Rekindling (6:4-8:4)—They then together work through their relationship problem and bear their soul to one another.

The Growth (8:5-14)— The wife asks her husband to take a trip back to her home country with her. The husband agrees, and on this trip they grow in a deeper relationship with each other.

What to Look for in Song of Solomon

Love Metaphors— I am quite sure that you would never want to use any of these compliments made by either the bride or the groom of this story. For instance you will find compliments paid such as:

- 1) "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!"
- 2) "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;"
- 3) "Thin eyes like the fish pools in Heshbon..."

But the point is, especially from the husband to the wife, compliments of honesty are flying left and right all throughout this book. It's advice from God that says, "If you feel it, speak it, don't just assume the other person knows it."

Characters— Since this is written as a historical musical, there are obviously several characters involved, and if you do not know who is talking, you will have a hard time understanding what is happening in this book.

King Solomon: Known in the story as the Shepherd, he is called by his bride "My Beloved".

Shulamite Woman: She eventually becomes Solomon's bride and she always is referred to by Solomon as "My Love".

Daughters of Jerusalem: These are unidentified virgin women who encouraged the Shulamite woman. It was these women she was speaking with when she wanted to do a little "guy talk."

Solomon's Friends: You find these fellows in chapter 3 as you witness a brief outside perspective of what is happening

The Shulamite's Brothers: Here again for an outward perspective, you see these individuals in chapter 8.

What to Gain from Song of Solomon

The High Place of Marriage: If it was not already obvious before, God holds marriage in very high esteem. There are some things that we have questions about in certain portions of the Bible, but what is amazing is that the things that God really wanted us to know— the things that really expand our quality of life and help us to understand those things that are essential to our faith— God gave us direct revelation so there would be no confusion. Marriage is one of those subjects God has given

us great detail about. However, many get into marriage and just make it up as they move along through life. This book tells us that we should hold a higher place for marriage than this. God honors it, and so should we. And the way we honor it is by conducting ourselves in marriage the way he designed it so that we can gain the greatest blessing and satisfaction that we can from it.

The High Calling of Marriage: In just a brief read, here we have a book from God that shows exactly what a Biblical marriage should look like. There are so many fine points of interest in this book that it is incredible. For instance, you only see dialog with other persons when there is a struggle in the marriage. You see this couple working out their problems, being completely honest with each other between themselves. They don't bring anyone else into the fray; it's just between the couple. However, when there is praise, they make it known.

You'll follow this kind of honor throughout all the book. You'll notice that they become old together, but the husband still comments on the beauty of his love. That's the high calling of marriage... a marriage that stays vibrant all the way to the end.

The High Example of Marriage: Once again, though you read of the husband and wife of the story, this book is also an expression of God's love for us. The marital relationship is made to reflect God's unity in the Trinity and is ultimately a picture of the Gospel.



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