

# ♥ **The Song of Solomon and the Bible View of Romantic Love** ♥

## Course Goals:

1. Understand the Bible teaching on romantic love in the husband-wife relationship, including its origin, purpose, development and preservation, based primarily on the Song of Solomon.
2. Gain an expository understanding of the Song of Solomon, based on: the text, the background of Bible (esp OT) teaching on romantic love, and a knowledge of Hebrew poetic devices.
3. Improve the romantic elements in relationship with our mates (or anticipated mates).

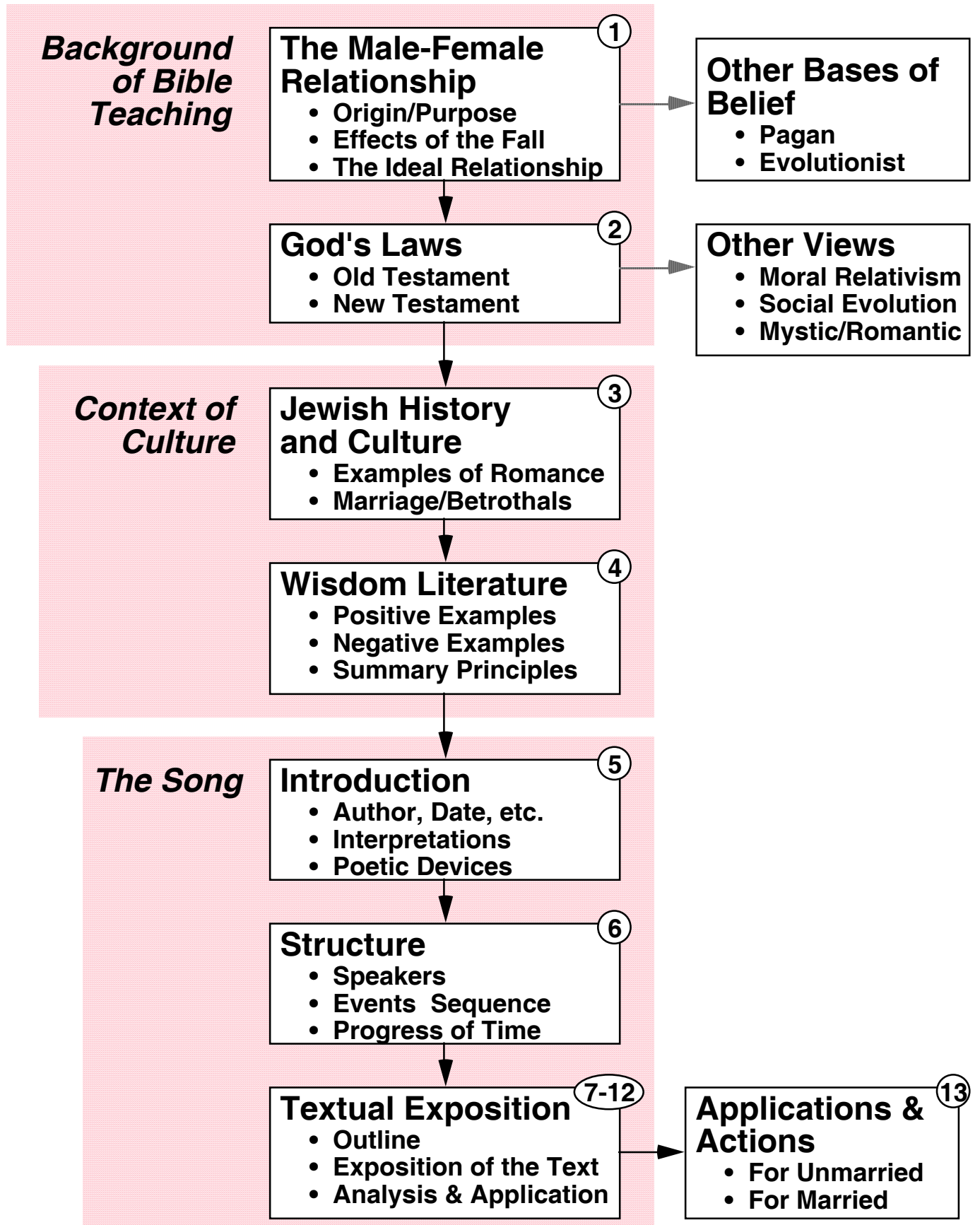
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# Course Roadmap



## Lesson 1 ♥ *The Male - Female Relationship*

### A. Course Introduction

1. The definition we will use for Romantic Love is: “The emotional phenomena that occurs between men and women that causes them to wish to devote themselves completely to each other.” (Critique this definition)
  - a. Is it always pleasant? Is it predictable, controllable, logical? Is there no controlling it?
  - b. Is it related to sexual desires? Is it the same as sexual desire? Does it always involve sex?
  - c. Is it always right to “be in love”? Is it always wrong to “be in love”?
2. Why is a study like this necessary or important? Is there much Bible Teaching on the subject of Romantic Love? Give Examples.
3. (Look at course roadmap)

### B. Basis of Beliefs

1. What are some of the common explanations for the origin of Male - Female Differences and Relationships?
  - a. Bible Creation Account (will study below)
  - b. Pagan Views
    - Male/Female Deities, often related to fertility, etc. were worshipped
    - How might these have begun? What would be their attraction?
  - c. Evolutionist-Animal Origin
    - Difference due to Natural Selection and Conditioning
    - Genetic-Chemical-Physical Causes for emotions and decisions
  - d. Various views from religions (asceticism, procreation only, mystical, etc.)
2. Would a different system of belief be significant in a romantic relationship? How?

### C. The Bible Creation Account. Purpose of the Man-Woman Relationship (Gen 1,2)

1. Were there personal relationships that existed before the beginning? (see Jno 17:24)
2. What special nature was given to man? (Gen 1:26) Were both men and women given this image? (v 27) Did they share some characteristics with the animals? How were they different?
3. Why was the woman created? Was there some special need that existed? (2:18-23) Were the man and woman different? (2:18,22,23)
4. Was there indications of hunger or other physical desire-pleasures before the fall (see 2:16; 3:6)
5. Did this relationship involve sexual relations? (1:28; 2:24) Was there more than procreation intended in the relationship? (2:18,24) Describe their personal relationship (see 2:24,25)
6. Were there any role differences before the fall? (see I Cor 11:8,9; I Tim 2:13)

### D. The Effects of the Fall. (See Figure: “Family Relationships Before & After the Fall”)

1. Describe the first sin. (Gen 3:1-6; 12,13, and II Cor 11:3) What caused each to sin? Was there a role reversal in the way the sin occurred? Why did Adam knowingly sin? (I Tim 2:14)
2. What additional differences between men and women are implied after the fall? (Gen 3:16-19)

3. What effect on the phenomena of romance would these curses have? Are some differences in the nature of men and women, with regard to romantic love likely based on these curses?
4. What was the effect of the curses on the natural desires, such as hunger? Would these desires be more frequent? Would they be stronger? Would they be more likely to cause sin?
5. Would there be more likely to be misuse or corruption of romantic love after the fall? Would there be more potential pain? Would there be occasions were it was needed but absent?

**E. The Ideal Relationship.** (Recreating the garden & overcoming the effects of the fall)

1. Can romantic love hinder faithfulness to God? (see I Cor 7:32-34) Can romantic love contribute to faithfulness to God? (see I Pet 3:7) Can godliness improve romantic love?
2. Explain how each of the following garden conditions is partly restored by godly romantic love:
  - a. perfectly suited companionship
  - b. no shame or embarrassment
  - c. no competition or jealousy
  - d. no pain, failure, or disappointment
  - e. no fear of separation or loss
  - f. perfect sense of value and purpose

**F. Summary of Points on Romance**

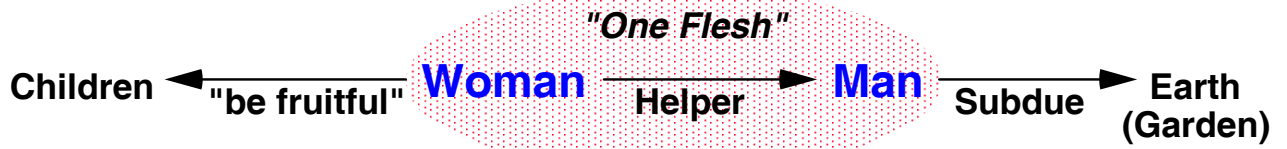
1. Romance is related to the man/woman creation in purpose and role.
2. Since men and women are different, their needs and wants in romance are different.
3. Romance is about companionship (the person), more than pleasure or gratification.
4. Romance was changed by the fall to be less perfect, and more a source of temptation.
5. Romance has some natural (e.g. like the animals) characteristics (e.g. related to sexual urge).
6. Romance, like other emotions, can be ruled by the moral/Intellectual aspect of man.
7. Romance can be improved/enhanced by compliance with God's word.

**G. Reports.** For the topic you are assigned, notice the use in the Song of Solomon, find any other Bible references that are helpful, use a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia to gather additional background details that will help in understanding either the meaning of the statement, the events of the story, or the imagery or symbolism intended. Be prepared during the textual study to explain the terms to the class.

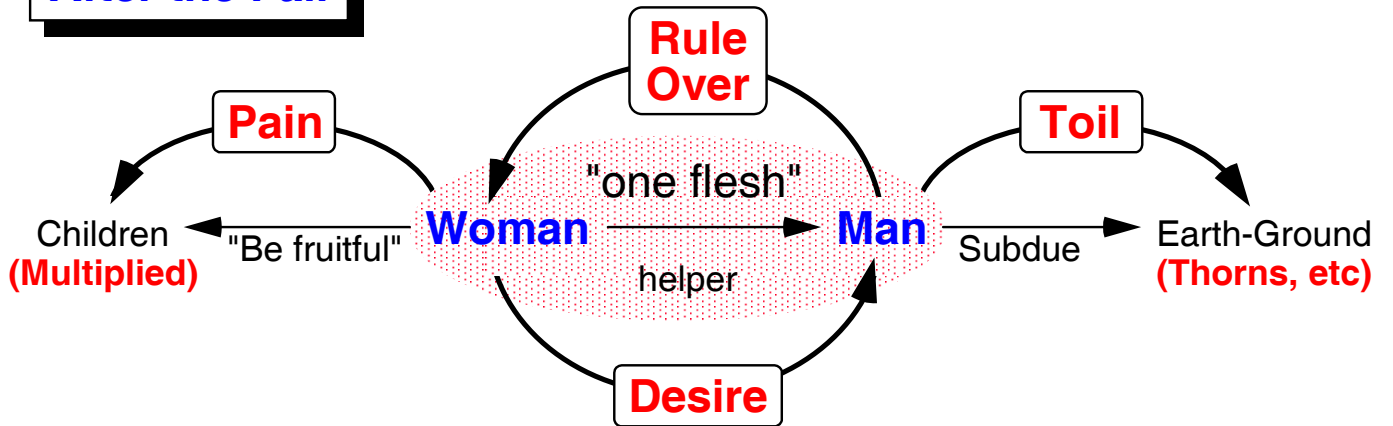
	<u>for lesson #</u>
1. Locations: (with references in Song of Solomon)	
a. En Gedi (1:14); Sharon (2:1); Lebanon (3:9; 4:8, 15; 5:15; 7:4)	7
b. Amana, Senir, Hermon (4:8); Carmel (7:5); Gilead (4:1; 6:5)	9
c. Tirzah (6:4); Heshbon (7:4); Baal Hamon (8:11)	11
2. Gardens/Vineyards in Solomon's time (1:6; 4:12, 15,16; 5:1, 6:2; 8:11, 12)	9
3. Gazelles, Does, Stags, Fawns (2:7,9,17; 3:5; 4:5; 7:3; 8:14)	8
4. Plants:	
a. Lilies (2:1; 6:2; 5:13); Pomegranates (6:11; 4:13; 7:12; 8:2)	11
b. Mandrakes (7:17); Henna (1:14; 4:13)	11
c. Fig (2:13); palm (7:7,8); apple (2:3, 8:5); nut (6:11)	8
5. Spices (3:6; 4:13,14; 6:2) - esp. myrrh (1:13, 3:6, 4:6, 4:14, 4:14, 5:1, 5, 13)	9
6. The Betrothal and Marriage Process.	3

# Family Relationships Before & After the Fall

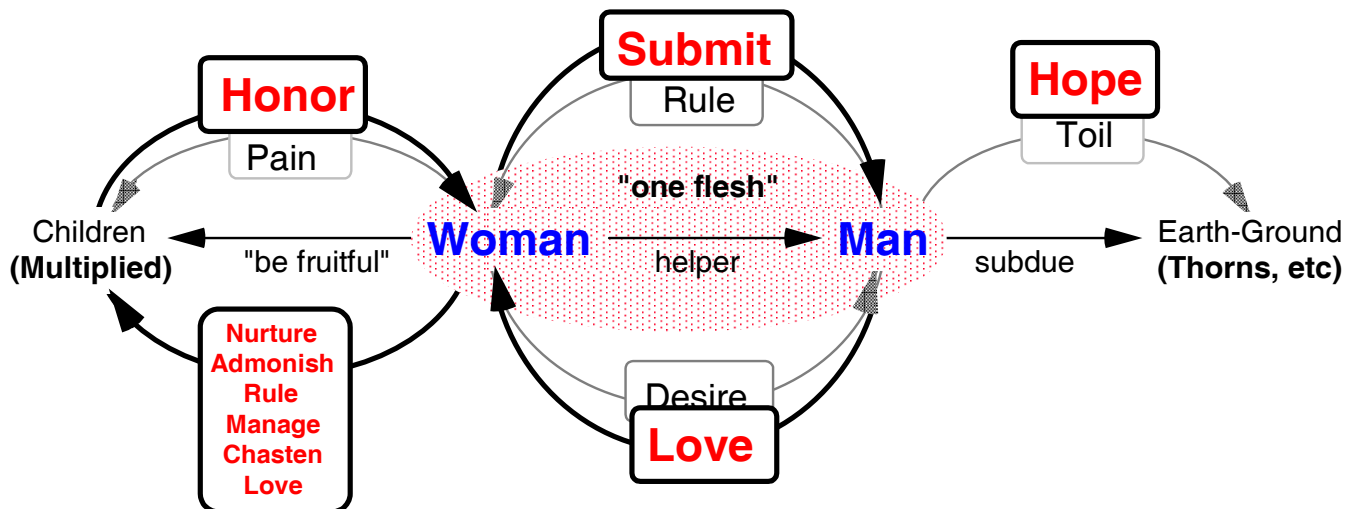
## Before the Fall



## After the Fall



## Perfected in Christ



## Lesson 2 ♥ *The Context of God's Laws*

**A. Introduction.** The Song of Solomon has been difficult to interpret and apply for all Bible scholars through the centuries. A belief in inspiration and harmony of Scripture will cause us to choose the interpretation of the Song that is consistent with the other teaching of the Bible--especially the histories and laws that are easier to interpret. In addition, whatever application we make for personal behavior will also be consistent with all other Bible teaching about the man-woman relationship.

### **B. Old Testament History & Law.**

1. Associates romantic love with marriage (related to "cleave" in Gen 2:24).
2. Indicates that romantic love may or may not be present (Gen 29:20; Gen 24:67; Dt 21:15) in a marriage. It's presence was not required for marriage.
3. Made the first year of marriage special--perhaps to promote adjustment to one another. (Dt 24:5)
4. Associates all proper sexual activities in the man-woman, marriage relationship (Gen 2:24; Ex 21:10). Sexual union was the sign of the consummation of marriage. (Gen 29:23,30)
5. Forbids sexual activity outside marriage, and called for severe penalties.
  - a. A woman not found to be a virgin at marriage was to be stoned (Dt 22:13-21)
  - b. Adulterers were to be stoned (Ex 20:14; Dt 22:22)
  - c. Fornication with a woman betrothed to another was punishable by death (Dt 22:23,24)
  - d. A man who committed fornication with an unmarried girl was obligated to pay her father and marry her. (Ex 22:16; Dt 22:28,29)
  - e. Sexual activity other than between a man and woman was an abomination (Lev 18:22,23)
6. Nakedness was a shame (Gen 9:23; Ex 20:26), and was associated with prostitution and lewdness (Ezek 16:36,37). It was also a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Lev 18:6-23).
7. Betrothal was as binding as marriage. (Dt 22:23,24)
8. Jealousy for unfaithfulness was an approved emotion. (Num 5:1-30)

### **B. New Testament Teaching.**

1. Asserts the equality of men and women with respect to salvation (Gal 3:28; I Pet 3:7).
2. Basis specific teaching on the concept of "one flesh" in the creation account.
  - a. the reason for the permanence of marriage (Matt 19:5,6)
  - b. the reason a husband should love (agape) his wife sacrificially (Eph 5:28-31)
  - c. the reason fornication is wrong: it is a joining in purpose and spirit (I Cor 6:16)
3. Gives specific, challenging instructions are given to men and women who are married.
  - a. Emphasis for men is on sacrificial love, protection, honor (Eph 5:25-28; I Pet 3:7,8)
  - b. Emphasis for women is on submission, (Titus 2:4,5; Eph 5:21-24; I Pet 3:1-6)
4. Fully sanctions the sexual relationship in marriage (Heb 13:4; I Cor 7:1-5)
5. Does not allow the possibility of polygamy.
6. Is even more restrictive with respect to the behavior of men and women.
  - a. Emphasis for men is on thought controlling eyes and thought (Matt 5:27-30)
  - b. Emphasis for women is on seemingly behavior and modest dress (I Tim 2:9,10; I Pet 3:3-5)
  - c. Self-control and avoiding temptation are required. (II Tim 2:22; I Thes 4:3,4; I Cor 6:18)
  - d. Lewdness, and other suggestive behaviors are forbidden (I Pet 4:3; Gal 5:19, etc.)

### C. Male-Female Love in the Bible (Summary)

1. Romantic love is recognized in the Bible as a real emotion/desire, which serves as a motivation to marry (or to other actions), but can be a source of temptation to violate God's Laws.
2. Romantic love (as a part of "companionship" between man and wife) was associated with marriage as an ideal (that is it is used as the basis for teaching on the behaviors of marriage).
3. Romantic love is not, however, always present in marriage, and may occur outside marriage.
4. God's laws for the behavior of men and women do not change based on the presence or absence of romantic love.
5. Care must be exercised to avoid sin in connection with male-female relationships.

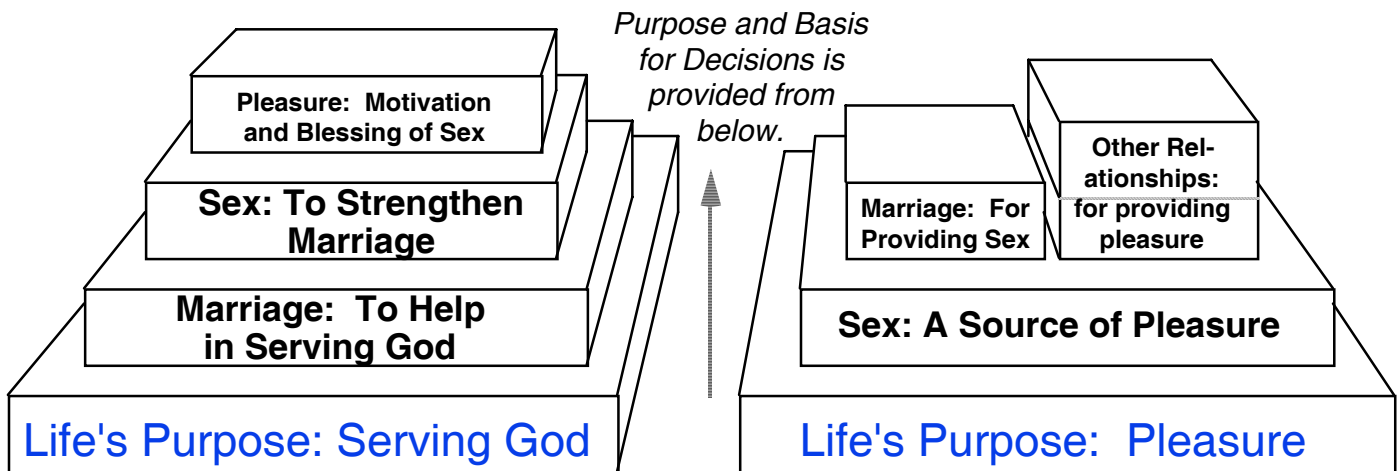
### D. Other Views of Morality

1. Moral Relativism: Based on a self-determined sense of what's "best".
  - "It's the best for all concerned."
  - "It is an expression of love."
  - "As long as no one is hurt..." "Two consenting adults..." "It's the loving thing to do"
  - "Strict religious teaching has just caused lots of guilt and harm."
2. Social Evolution: new (and better) ways of relating to each other are always being discovered.
  - "The old morality isn't relevant anymore."
  - "Must redefine the family."
3. Mystic/Romantic: Romance justifies anything.
  - "If you're in love its ok."
  - "All's fair in love and war."
  - "But I just couldn't live without him."
  - "But I just don't love her anymore."

### E. Bible Teaching on Other Views.

1. All of these are the result of a wrong world view: Carnally mindedness
  - a. Based on an world view that excludes God (Rom 1:25)
  - b. God is their belly (Phil 3:19, and see I Cor 6:13 "meats for the belly")
  - c. Leads to lusts, perversions, and finally a depraved mind (Rom 1:25ff)
2. Eventually do not satisfy, lead to need for different, stronger gratification.
3. Actually work to spoil relationships, since they seek the sensation, not oneness with the person. (see Rom 1:26 and II Tim 3:2-4 - "without natural affection," and "lovers of self")
4. See Figure: "Contrasting Organization of the Man-Woman Relationship..."

# Contrasting Organization of the Man-Woman Relationship in Different Value Systems



- Ultimate values determined by a higher, more stable standard than our ever-changing desires.
- Provides a reason for life and relationships apart from the ability to achieve pleasure.
- Provides a permanence to marriage apart from the success of the physical relationship.
- Envelopes the most sensitive and powerful influences on our physical and emotional well-being within the protection of stable convictions.

• ***There is a Strong Basis to Verify the Worth of this Approach:***

- It has been the norm in most successful societies in history.
- It is taught as morally right in the Bible.

- No values or standards for one's behavior apart from the moment's expected "feelings".
- Life's meaning is as fragile as one's ability to succeed at pleasure-seeking.
- Marriage is only as permanent as the pleasures that motivated its formation. Provides no motive for unrewarded care for spouse.
- Leaves the deep emotional and physical effects of sexual intercourse unprotected by any sense of permanence or commitment.

• ***No Basis Exists to Verify The Worth of this Approach:***

- Its Long Term Effect on Society is not known.
- Its Effect on the Individual is not known.

## Lesson 3 ♥ *The Context of Jewish History and Culture*

### A. Examples of Romantic Love in Old Testament History

1. Isaac & Rebekah (Gen 24:67) How did the arrangement for this relationship take place? Why was Isaac not allowed to choose his own wife from among women he already knew? What event (roughly) coincided with the coming of Rebekah into Isaac's life? Did Isaac remain monogamous? Did they have a romantic relationship (Gen 26:7-9) How did Isaac and Rebekah feel about finding wives for their own sons? (Gen 26:34,35; and Gen 27:46-28:1,6-9) Were there any problems in their relationship? (Gen 27)
2. Jacob and Leah, Rachel (Gen 29:20) Describe the meeting of Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29:1-10). Was Rachel attractive (see 29:18); Was Leah? How deep was his love for Rachel? (Gen 29:20). How did he react when she died? (Gen 35:18; 48:7) What troubles existed in their relationship?
3. Shechem & Dinah (Gen 34) How did the relationship between Shechem and Dinah begin? Who was at fault? (see vs 1&2 and see vs 31) Did this unseemly beginning spoil his feeling for her? How did her family feel about it? How did the relationship turn out? Does this suggest a cultural double standard for men and women among these characters? (contrast to Judah's behavior with Tamar - Gen 38:11-26)
4. Samson and the Philistine Women - (Jud 14:1-3; 16:4) Was Samson "falling in love"? Was he willing to marry these women? Did he have other sexual encounters? Did he act wisely and rightly in these situations?
5. Elkanah and Hannah (I Sam 1:5) Did Elkanah have a "special feeling" for Hannah? Did the presence of another wife cause trouble in the relationship?
6. David & Michal (I Sam 18:20-29) - What might have attracted Michal to David? Was David willing to earn her hand in marriage? What might have attracted David to the relationship? Was Michal willing to stand with David against her father? (I Sam 19:11-17) Did the marriage last? (I Sam 25:44) Did David's loyalty endure her remarriage? (II Sam 3:13-16) Did hers? (II Sam 6:16-23) How did the relationship end?
7. David & Abigail (I Sam 25:3,32,33,39-42) What was Abigail like? (v 3) How did she demonstrate her character? Was David impressed? (vs 32,33) How was the marriage arranged? (39-42) Did she accept willingly?
8. Amnon & Tamar (II Sam 13:1,4,15) Was Amnon "in love"? What kind of love was it? What was the end result of his pursuit of Tamar on his love for her?
9. Solomon and his Foreign Wives (I Kings 11:1-4; and see Ex 34:16) Did Solomon really "love" these women? In what sense did he love them? Did they influence his life? (*Remember this is the precise context of the Song of Solomon.*)
10. Jehovah and Israel (Ezek 16; Hos 2:14-23) Are these pictures of Jehovah and his people describing a monogamous relationship? Is it a picture (in the ideal) of a devotion of one to the other? (Remember our definition of romantic love from Lesson 1) Does the relationship improve the status of the woman? (Ezek 16:1-14).

## B. Marriage and Betrothal Arrangements (from Report)

1. Old Testament words used: pledged (Ex 22:16; Dt 22:23); assigned or promised (Lev 19:20); designated or selected (Ex 21:8).
2. New Testament words used: betrothed (Mat 1:18); espoused (II Cor 11:2)
3. Sometimes could involve cohabitation (disapproved by Rabbis: Mishna, Ketuboth 4:4).
4. Gifts both ways: (Gen 34:12; I Sam 18:25; Gen 24:51-53)
5. A strong relationship (stronger than engagement today).
  - Called “wife” (Gen 29:21; Matt 1:18:20)
  - Laws against immorality the same as for married (Dt 22:23,24, and cf II Cor 11:2)
  - Required a divorce, even though not “consummated” (Matt 1:19)
6. Notes from report:

## C. About Polygamy

1. List as many of the patriarchs and other major characters of the Old Testament as you can who (seemed to) have only one wife.
2. How is the ideal presented with regard to the number of men and women in one marriage? (Gen 2:24 and Mal 2:14,15) Does this image span the entire Old Testament?
3. In whose lineage is the first polygamy reported? (Gen 4:19) What kind of character is Lamech (Gen 4:23,24)
4. What were some of the ways in which polygamy occurred (i.e. what caused it?)
  - Dt 25:5-10 -
  - Dt 21:10-14 -
  - Gen 29:16-30 -
5. Did Old Testament Law regulate polygamy? (see Dt 21:15-18)
6. The Wisdom Literature (see Lesson 4) indicates ideal is only one wife (and also does not deal with matters pertaining to more than one (with one possible exception: Eccl 7:28).

## D. Summary

1. Romantic love was sometimes created in the arranged marriages (even between strangers).
2. Romantic love sometimes led to the arranging of marriages.
3. Romantic love did not guarantee the success of the relationship or the marriage.
4. Romantic love sometimes led to sexual immorality, and other evil acts.
5. Romantic love sometimes existed in polygamous marriages (and often created problems).
6. Romantic love existed outside the marriage relationships (and often led to immorality)
7. Some of the best relationships were monogamous (Adam, Noah, Isaac, Joseph)
8. Monogamy is presented as the ideal from the beginning to the end of the Old Testament.
9. Monogamy is used as a picture of the relationship between God and His people.
10. Polygamy began in the lineage of Cain, and is neither commanded nor condoned by Old Testament Law. It was, however regulated by the Old Testament Law.

## Lesson 4 ♥ *The Context of the Wisdom Literature*

### A. The Nature of the Wisdom Literature

1. What was the purpose of the Wisdom writings, especially Proverbs and Ecclesiastes? (see Prov 1:5 and Eccl 12:9,10) What are the types topics covered? (codified law? messianic prophecies? warnings against apostasy? worship/praise to God? or everyday practical advice and a practical picture of how to live each day?) Give examples of the topics discussed.
2. Who is credited with these writings? (see Song of Sol 1:1; Eccl 1:1; Prov 1:1; 25:1) In what ways are they similar? How are they different? Do they share a similar literary style? Describe this style.
3. How might one have used the books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs in religious discussions?
4. Does the book of Proverbs appear to be written for a son or a daughter? (Prov 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; etc....10:1; 31:1) What topics covered in the Proverbs are specifically intended for a young man (see chap 5, 7, 31, etc.)?

### B. Practical Teaching on Marriage

1. Notice how the ideal marriage relationship is pictured in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. (see Prov 18:22; 19:14)
  - a. Prov 5:15-20 - What imagery is used to describe the satisfaction a man gains from his wife? (vs 15) Is the relationship private and special (vs 17)? (See also 2:17, where the husband and wife are called “friends” and cf to 6:28; Psalm 55:13) Is it fun? (vs 18) Does it have a physical (natural) side? [notice the animal imagery] Is it logical, calm, and controlled? (vs 19) With what is it contrasted (vs 16, 20)
  - b. Prov 31:10-31 - Is the worthy woman described as hard to be or hard to find? (vs 10) If a man finds a worthy woman, how is his condition described? (11,12) How does the husband treat her? (vs 28-30) Are the strength of the relationship and her good qualities publicly known? (31)
  - c. Eccl 9:7-10 - Despite the vanity of all of life’s endeavors (see 10), what are we admonished to do with respect to food, wine, dress, and health? (vs 7,8) In this context what other source of enjoyment is listed? (vs 9) Is the implication
  - d. Summary points:
    - Polygamy is not mentioned.
    - The marriage relationship is a potential source of friendship, happiness, and enjoyment.
    - It is a private relationship.
    - Its success should be publicly acknowledged.
    - Its duration is for this life only. (cf to Matt 22:30)

2. Two key problems that might arise are unfaithfulness and an unpleasant marriage.
  - a. The “foreign woman” ruins both her own relationship and that of her lovers (Prov 2:16-19). One of the blessings of wisdom (humble attention to what God has revealed and what one can learn from the world, including wise people around him) prevent the disaster of being seduced by a harlot (Prov 6:24-35) What are some consequences of his foolishness?
  - b. The story of the seduction in Proverbs 7:5-23 gives some insight not only into the way sexual temptation works, but about the sexual attraction of a woman in general. List all of the things that the harlot uses to entrap the young man. [Are these kinds of behavior out of place within the marriage--might there be a lesson for wives here?]
  - c. A bad marriage relationship is as unpleasant as a good one is pleasant. (Note the implication of “being stuck in a bad situation”)
    - Prov 30:23
    - Prov 12:4
    - Prov 27:15,16
    - Prov 21:9,19
    - Eccl 7:28 (?)
  - d. Summary points
    - Wisdom protects from the seduction of the harlot and the associated consequences.
    - The sexual attraction (good or bad) can involve all of the senses, as well as words.
    - The proverbs suggests that a marriage can turn out very bad or very good, primarily based on the character of the wife.

### C. From the Psalms

1. Note the picture of the ideal, blessed follower of Jehovah (Ps 128).
2. The wedding scene from Psalm 45.
  - The Psalm is messianic (see vs 6,7 and Heb 1:8,9), anticipating the church-bride imagery of the New Testament (see Eph 5:25-33; II Cor 11:2; Rev 21:2)
  - Describe the character of the King-groom: (vs 2, 4, 7)
  - Describe the physical beauty of the King-groom (vs 2, 3, 8)
  - Describe the physical beauty of the Queen-bride (vs 9, 11, 13, 14)
  - Describe her character (vs 11)
  - What has the relationship done for the bride (vs 9, 10, 16,17)
  - Is this a happy picture of a wedding? (Note that a wedding is a celebratory event.)

## Lesson 5 ♥ *Introduction to the Song of Solomon*

### A. **Place of the Song in Wisdom Writings**

1. Deals with a Subject which is at the Center of Much of Our Thoughts and Activities
2. Expands on Themes in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
3. Perhaps written as a complement to the Proverbs addressed to a "Son".

### B. **Authorship**

1. Solomon is the obvious answer.
  - a. Ascribed directly (1:1)
  - b. Other references (1:5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11-12)
  - c. References to the King (1:4,12; 7:5)
  - d. A prolific writer (I Kings 4:32-34)
2. Other Ideas (must reject the verbal inspiration and providential preservation of scripture)
  - a. An Anthology of [Canaanite?] Love Songs
  - b. Someone else (later in time?)
3. Date (based on choice of author) - 10th century BC
  - a. Time of Solomon's reign
  - b. References to Jerusalem and other geographical settings indicates a time after David, and before the divided kingdom.

### C. **Difficulties in Interpretation and Application**

1. Why has it been Difficult to Agree on the Authorship and Interpretation of the Song?
  - a. Surprising frankness, and deals with sexuality
  - b. Setting in Solomon's life (beginning of idolatry and decline of Israel)
  - c. No other spiritual references or lessons
2. Potential Uses and Applications
  - a. Enjoyment (including a marriage celebration. (see Jer 33:11).. as discussed in Ps 45)
  - b. As a stimulant for Romantic Love
  - c. Instructional: Lessons about Romantic Love (see esp 8:8,9)

### D. **Interpretations**

1. First, at face-value: Clearly Romantic Poetry
  - a. Many Typical Hebrew Poetic Devices (See below)
  - b. Repetitive events, themes, refrains
    - "arousing love" (2:7; 3:5; 8:4)
    - other appearances of "daughters of Jerusalem" (1:5; 5:8,16)
    - "lost and found" dream sequences (3:1-56; 5:2-8)
    - "ownership statements" (2:16; 6:3; 7:11)
    - "praise poems" (4:1-7; 5:10-16; 6:4-10; 7:1-10)
  - c. Symbolic terms & references
  - d. Thoughts vs actions sometimes difficult to distinguish
2. Various Interpretation Approaches
  - a. Allegorical: Yahweh and Israel, or Christ and the Church
  - b. Dramatic: Two or Three Character view (acts, scenes, speeches reflecting action)
  - c. Secular Love Song (or Anthology of Love Songs)
  - d. Literal [didactic]: Teaching about man-woman relationships and marital concerns (two or three character view)

3. The Three Character view
  - a. Brief History of the Three Character View
    - First proposed as a allegorical interpretation in 12th Century: Ibn Ezra [Jewish]
    - First proposed as a literal interpretation in 1771: Jacobi [Christian]
    - First adopted by Jewish interpreter in 1816: S Lowesohn.
    - Adopted by S. R. Driver [Christian] in 1891 O.T. Introduction, which popularized it.
    - Taught by Hailey in 1960's-70's OT Wisdom Lit. Courses at F. C., quoting S. R. Driver.
  - b. Brief Outline for reading the Song (3 character interpretation)
    - The Shulamite girl among the harem in the Palace (1:1-8)
    - The king tries to woo the girl with flatter the girl (1:9-11)
    - The girl dreams of her real love: a shepherd boy (1:12-2:7)
    - A morning visit of her real love (2:8-17)
    - Night escape of the girl, who finds her lover (3:1-5)
    - The [near] wedding scene (3:6-4:7)
    - Girl dreams of her lover's praise and [eventual?] union in marriage (4:9-5:1)
    - Another troubling dream about her real lover (related to harem?) (5:2-8)
    - Girl Describes her shepherd lover (5:10-6:3)
    - The king returns and tries again (6:4-10)
    - The girl explains how she got there (and doesn't want to be) (6:11-13)
    - The king keeps trying (7:1-9)
    - The girl reaffirms her love for her shepherd boy (7:10-8:7)
    - The girl recalls her former state, and her family's discussion (8:8-10)
    - The girl makes a final repudiation of the king's love (8:11,12)
  - c. Pros & Cons (See Figure: "Major Arguments for the Three Character View")
    - + Helps deal with the "overly-explicit" language (as inappropriate?)
    - + Solomon was not a shepherd (1:7)
    - + Consistent with character of Solomon, as described in history
    - + Can use 8:7b as the moral of the Song
    - Many contradictory passages (e.g. 1:4)
    - No direct evidence in the speakers of two different men
    - Difficult to sort out speeches
    - Doesn't explain the statement of authorship or the clear wedding scene (to the king)
4. The Two Character View (More Detail in Lesson 6)
  - a. Two Character View is consistent with the literal-didactic approach
  - b. It is structurally consistent with the oldest interpretations (including allegorical)
  - c. Pros & Cons
    - + Easiest to read/understand (especially in the original language)
    - + Fits with total Bible picture of marriage relationships (e.g. Prov 5, etc.)
    - Still some difficulty in dealing with intimacy "before" marriage.
    - Difficult to reconcile with assumed character of Solomon's marriages.
  - d. *How would you explain the presence of the explicit language in the Song?*

## E. Poetic Devices

1. Thought Rhyme (Parallelism).
  - a. synonymous parallelism, or restatement (e.g. 1:10; 2:4)
  - c. synthetic parallelism (completed though or "stair step") (e.g. 5:5; 6:11)
  - b. comparison (e.g. 1:5)
  - c. antiphonal parallelism (1:15-2:3)
2. Imagery and Metaphor (e.g. 5:1)
3. Dream-sequences (e.g. 5:2)

# The Major Arguments for the Three Character View

<i>Arguments</i>	<i>Possible Answers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solomon not a Shepherd (1:7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solomon did own flocks (Eccl 2:7)</li> <li>• Bride described both as a humble girl (1:6) and a princess (7:2)</li> <li>• Could be a "role play"</li> <li>• Messiah (King) pictured as shepherd (Ezek 34)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with character of Solomon described in history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would have been early in Solomon's life</li> <li>• Could still have been true romantic love (see I Kings 11:1-4)</li> <li>• Consistent with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes pictures of Romantic Love (e.g. Prov 5:15-20 and Eccl 9:7-10)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps deal with "overly explicit" language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The girl's speeches are just as explicit (ct 4:1-7 to 4:10,11)</li> <li>• Appropriate in the context of married love</li> <li>• Consistent with Language in Prov 5:15-20)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8:7b is the moral of the Song: "Money Can't Buy Love."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Likely Moral is 8:6,7: "True Love Endures Forever."</li> </ul>

## Lesson 6 ♥ *The Structure of the Song of Solomon*

A. **Introduction.** The approach to interpretation comes primarily from S Craig Glickman, *A Song for Lovers*, Intervarsity Press, 1976. Here are the basic assumptions and steps of an approach to assign speakers, events, and sequence to the poem, as a basis to understand and apply it.

### 1. Assumptions

- a. The poem was understandable (as a standalone product) in the original language.
- b. The song has survived intact as originally written.
- c. Whether the song is allegory or literal, it has a logical face-value meaning.

### 2. Steps of the Approach

- a. Use the Hebrew noun and pronoun genders (not obvious in English) to determine speakers.
- b. Find Obvious (non-symbolic, non-metaphor, non-dream-like) Events as Anchor Points
- c. Look for repeated phrases, events, in the song as key points (e.g. daughters of Jerusalem..)
- d. Look for breaks in setting, scenery, season, mood to segregate "Scenes".
- e. Look for sequences of development in the events or relationships (e.g. growing terms of endearment) that might indicate the flow of time, or the placement in time.
- f. Interpret each passage in the context of the constructed "scenes" and flow of the story.

## B. Repeated Phrases, or Similar Sections

### 1. "Daughters of Jerusalem...Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires"

- a. Found in 1:7; 3:5; 8:4
- b. In each case it concludes an emotional build-up in language.
- c. An obvious break in the scene (camera fades, and a wide angle shot of scenery follows...)

### 2. Two Dream Sequences

- a. Found in 3:2ff and 5:2ff
- b. Similar in what occurs (she rushes out in a panic, finds the watchmen, etc.)
- c. Difference: First is a longing for her lover; second is a [regretted] rejection of him.
- d. Both are followed questions which direct the attention to the her lover. (3:6 and 5:9)

## C. Building the Event Sequence

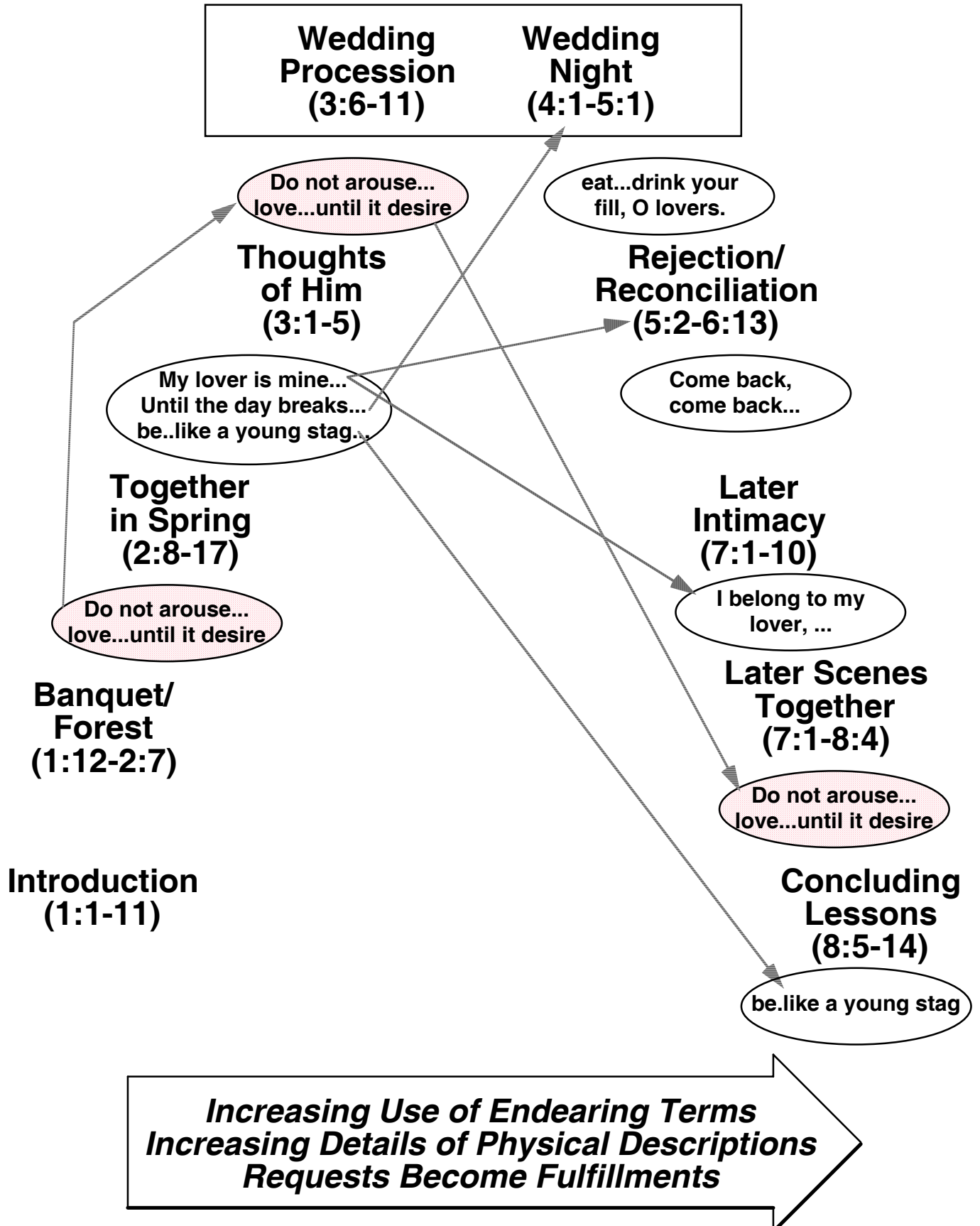
### 1. Key Anchor Point: The Wedding Scene (See Figure: "Building an Event Sequence")

- a. Clearly stated as a Wedding day (day of his "espousals") - 5:11
- b. Follows a Break Point (3:5) and change of scene (3:6)
- c. Solomon specifically named, and the events of a wedding procession are literal.

### 2. Building Events Forward from the Wedding Scene

- a. The wedding night (4:1-5:1)
  - The first intimate description (4:1-5) concludes with an invitations by both (4:8,16)
  - Her garden is locked, then opened for him to enter (4:12, 16)
  - The scene ends in satisfaction and the approval of God
- b. His Rejected Visit at Night, and her dream (5:2-8)
  - Seems to indicate their cohabitation
  - Ends in apparent reconciliation (4:9-6:13), with reference to "visiting his garden" (6:2).
- c. The Later Scenes in which they are together, traveling, and discussing things (ch 7,8)
  - Similar love making to the wedding night, but more detail (7:1-10)
  - Travel to the countryside and appearances in public (7:11-8:5)
- d. The concluding lessons (conversations?) at the end of the book (8:6-14)

# Building an Event Sequence



3. Building Events Backward from the Wedding Scene
  - a. Her thoughts of him, while alone at night (3:1-5)
    - A longing (almost insecurity or nervousness) for him.
    - Ends with the warning statement about awakening love... (3:5)
  - b. Time together, outdoors, in the spring (2:8-17)
    - Romantic, but does not contain the personal descriptions that follow the wedding.
  - c. A banquet and/or forest setting (1:12-2:7)
    - Much antiphonal parallelism; More about emotions than physical descriptions (e.g. 2:5)
    - Concludes with the "do not arouse ..." phrase (2:7)
  - d. The Beginning verses of the Song (1:1-1:11)
    - Seems to introduce the situation (1:2,4), characters (1:4,5), and mood (1:4b,c)

**D. Other Suggestions of "Sequence" (or Progression in Time & Relationship)**

1. Belonging and ownership:

2:16

6:3

7:10

2. Request and Fulfillment:

Request

Fulfillment

1:1

7:9

2:17

4:6

2:13

7:11, 12

8:5

3. The intimacy of descriptions

1:9-11

4:1-7

7:1-7

4. Terms for Each other...

Hers for Him

His for Her

1:4, 12

1:8

1:13, 2:3,8,9,10,16,17

1:9,15, 2:10,13

3:1-4

2:14

3:7, 9, 11

4:1, 7

4:16 - 5:10

4:9,11,12, 5:1

5:16

5:2

6:2,3 - 7:13

6:4

8:12

6:9

7:1

7:6

## Lesson 7 ♥ *The Setting* (Song 1:1 - 2:7)

### A. Reports

1. Report # 1a from Lesson 1: En Gedi, Sharon, Lebanon

### B. Outline

1. Introduction of Lovers (1:1-4)
2. A Meeting and Introduction (1:5-11)
3. A Banquet with the King (1:12-14)
4. Romance in the Forest (1:15-2:7)

### C. Questions on the Text

1. Who is the stated author of the Song? Is he mentioned other places in the Song?

Who is the first speaker? What is her request? From the context, is she speak directly to her boyfriend, or is she speaking to herself (perhaps also imagining a conversation)? [Note that the word for "love" in vs 2 is the same as that used in Prov 7:18.]

Besides the physical fragrance, what other *figurative* fragrance impresses the girl? Do others share her opinion of her lover? (vs 3 and 4c)

What other name is used for her lover? (v 4a) What is her hope and request? (v 4)

2. To whom does the attention turn in vs 5? How does the girl describe herself? Is she completely secure in her appearance and worthiness?

What is the source of her "darkness"? What does that suggest about her background?

What does she ask about the king? (vs 7) Why would she want to know precisely where to go to find him at midday? What does that suggest about her character? What does it suggest about the how well she knows him at this point?

How does the king address the girl in vs 9? Is this something new? How does he compliment her (v 9)? Does the king make a point to compliment her on an item that she is insecure about? What can be done with the beauty of her cheeks and neck? (vs 11)

3. At the banquet there are again literal and figurative fragrances. Identify these (vs 12,13). What other fragrance-producing effect is present (vs 14)? What does the girl call the king? (vs 13,14)
4. The two lovers speak together in this section. Mark in your text the parallelism that flows between their speeches. What specifically does he compliment about her appearance in vs 15?

Describe their imaginary house (v 16,17). Does this suggest a location for this scene?

How does the woman describe herself (2:1) Is this meant to be boasting? (cf to 1:5,6) How does her lover turn this description around to be a compliment (2:2)

To what is the king compared? (v 3) Explain this compliment. (see vs 3b, 5a)

What emotional effect does the thought of "tasting his fruit" have on the girl? (v 5) Verse 6 is a reference to specific physical contact, and seems to bring the thoughts of this scene to a climax. How does the scene conclude? (2:7) In this context, does this seem to be an encouragement to proceed with love-making or to control it carefully? (see also 3:5)

## D. Analysis & Applications

1. Is sexual attraction, even in the beginning stages of a relationship, likely? Is it wrong? What other considerations must also play a role? Can physical attraction mask other important concerns? How can that be prevented? Reconcile the commands not to lust in your heart (Matt 5:28) with the obvious longing for physical activity implied in these verses.
2. Is it true that in the early stages of a relationship external appearance is the major contributor to impressions of each other? Does that fact often result in insecurity about appearance? How can emphasis on appearance be lessened? How can over-emphasis on appearance be overcome?

What motivated the girl's concern about how she searched for her lover? How can a dating couple take the same kinds of precautions about the appearance of their relationship?

Is it appropriate for a dating couple to be together every minute? Is there value in time alone?

3. How does "being in love" change the behavior, outlook, and even appearance of those in love? Why does this happen? Does it also change one's appreciation for nature, etc.
4. Does the girl's picture of her lover as an apple tree suggest more than just physical attraction? Can a young man begin to take a protective, leadership role, even in a dating relationship? Explain ways in which this should happen. What should a young woman look for (and encourage) in a young man during dating and/or engagement?

While it is not clear from the song what the exact form of physical contact is (or even if it is literal or imagined), there is a suggestion of physical contact before marriage. Is there a place for physical contact during courtship? Might the betrothal process make a difference in how it is exercised? What guidance should be exercised today?

## Lesson 8 ♥ *The Courtship (Song 2:8-3:5)*

### A. Reports

1. Report # 3 from Lesson 1: Gazelles, Does, Stags, Fawns
2. Report # 4c from Lesson 1: Fig, Palm, Apple, Nut

### B. Outline

1. A Reunion on a Spring Morning (2:8-17)
2. Thoughts Before the Wedding (3:1-5)

### C. Questions on the Text

1. After the break point in 2:7, how is the next scene introduced? What time of day is brought to mind? (see vs 10) What time of year? (vs 11-13) Is there something special about a spring morning? Is there something similar going on in their relationship? Does it seem that he has come to visit her (that is, they are not yet living together)?

How does the young man appear? How does the language move him closer to us in vs 8-10? What does she liken him to? How would this young man be like a gazelle or a young stag? What indications of playfulness are there in vs 9?

With what invitation does he call her (vs 12-14)? Is this a sexual invitation?

Does she seem to return his playfulness? (vs 14) What animal is she like to him? Why is this image appropriate to her and to the situation? What does he want her to do?

What do foxes do to vineyards? What do you think is meant by "our vineyards that are in bloom"? What could it mean to "catch the little foxes"?

Do vs 16-17 seem to be her private thoughts again? What expression of ownership is given first? What does she wish him to do (and at what time of day)? How does this tie back to the beginning of the scene (vs 8,9) How would he be like a gazelle on the mountains this time?

2. Is there a change of setting in 3:1? What is the time of day? Is the girl alone? Is she feeling ok? How does she refer to her lover? (vs 1,2,3,4) Does he speak in this scene? Does 3:1-5 seem real or dream-like? Explain. Why might she have this anxiety for her lover? (see Prov 13:12)

What could the searching through the city (in her dream?) represent in the relationship?

After the anxious searching she finds her lover (in her dream?). What does she want to do (4b)? Where (4c)? How does the repeated statement about "not arousing love" fit here?

### D. Analysis & Applications

1. Is it important for a young couple to share many kinds of experiences ("seasons") together? Why? How can this be accomplished?

Is playfulness in a relationship appropriate? What purposes does it serve? Are there dangers?

2. Are there emotional highs and lows during the dating process? Are there times of insecurity and longing? What creates these? Can a strong family environment help? Should this insecurity subside after marriage? Why? Would simply "living together" remove all these anxieties? Why? Can these times of insecurity create sexual temptations? How can they be avoided?

## Lesson 9 ♥ *The Wedding and Wedding Night (Song 3:6-5:1)*

### A. Reports

1. Report # 2 from Lesson 1: Gardens & Vineyards
2. Report # 4c from Lesson 1: Spices (esp Myrrh)
3. Report # 1b from Lesson 1: Amana, Senir, Hermon, Carmel, Gilead

### B. Outline

1. The Wedding Procession (3:6-11)
2. Song of Praise for the Bride (4:1-15)
3. The Consummation (4:16-5:1)

### C. Questions on the Text

1. Note how 3:6-11 brings the groom from a distance into view (again, as in 2:8,9). What is the first thing seen? (6a) Who, and what, is seen next? (vs 7,8) When the groom is finally seen, what is he wearing (vs 11)? How is the day identified? (vs 11)

Through whose eyes is the wedding procession seen? What are the two major themes suggested in the elements of the procession? (see 6b,9,10; and 7-8.)

2. How does the scene shift in 4:1? What is the most likely setting? Who is speaking? Is this a real or imagined encounter?

What items of the girl's appearance are described (& count how many)? Try to explain each image. Which items of her appearance have been complimented before? (see 1:10a, 1:10b, 1:15) What is the girl wearing? (vs 1b, 3b, 4b, 9c, 11c)

What time of day is suggested in 4:6? What will (future tense) the young man do? What previous request, made by the girl is alluded to (see 2:17)? What could the mountain of myrrh / hill of incense be (see vs 14)?

Verse 8 appears to be an invitation to the bride to come to her husband from "far away". What could these distant (and dangerous, vs 8c) mountains represent, besides literal locations?

What new terms does the young man use to address the girl? (vs 8, 9a, 10a) What new dimension do these terms add?

What insight into the young man's heart is given in 4:9? Have we seen this clearly into his heart before? In vs 10 he describes the effect of her "taste" and "fragrance" on him. Have we seen similar statements before? (see 1:12-14; 2:3) From whom?

The praise of the bride changes in 4:12 to a garden-orchard metaphor. What are the elements of this garden that are praiseworthy? (vs 12, 14b, 15) What do the locked garden and enclosed (protected) spring (vs 12, and see Prov 5:15-19) represent?

3. The bride uses the garden metaphor to invite her husband to come in. What ideas does wind blowing on a garden bring to mind? What does the metaphor of eating choice fruits represent?

The groom speaks in past tense in 5:1a. What does that represent? Is there any guilt or regret in his statements? What does the chorus imply about the appropriateness of these activities? (5:1b)

## D. Analysis & Applications

1. In the imagery of the wedding the themes of protection and provision are seen. Should the groom be able to provide these at the time of marriage. What problems may arise if he cannot?
2. Is there a place for appreciation and praise of appearance in marriage? What purpose does it serve? How can it be encouraged? How can it be abused? Are there particular parts of the body that hold a special attraction? (cf to Prov 5:19) Do these parts also require additional modesty outside the husband-wife setting (see I Cor 12:23)?

When an intimate relationship is begun, are there regions of fear (v 8) that must be left behind? Explain. How can this be encouraged? How was it encouraged in this part of the Song?

Is it appropriate for the husband to open his heart (as in 4:9) to his wife, and describe the effect she has on him? Is this usually easy for men to do? What advantages are there in doing this?

Does the metaphor of the locked garden and enclosed fountain suggest monogamy? What advantages are there in maintaining purity until marriage, and remaining faithful afterward?

3. The couples' conversation, the imagery, and the future/past tense all make it clear that a sexual union has occurred. Looking at the description of this very private event, characterize the Bible's treatment of it. Has it been explicit or offensive? Is it suitable for children?

What is the general mood of the section: frenzied or peaceful? self-centered or mutual activity? public or private? lewd or pure? Does it focus on the gratification of sexual desires or giving praise and pleasure to one's partner? Is it about the act or the relationship?

What did the groom do to bring his wife to the point of inviting him into her garden? Are there practical lessons about pre-lovemaking that could be learned by husbands from Solomon?

Some argue that sexual desires are just the same as other natural desires, such as eating and drinking, and should be gratified, as required, without regard to a formal relationship between partners ("consenting adults"). Do the images in this honeymoon scene confirm that the sexual desires are like eating and drinking? How would you answer this argument?

List at least three purposes for sexual intercourse between husband and wife (see Gen 1:28; I Cor 7:2; Prov 5:19) Does it appear from this section that God approves and encourages this kind of sexual activity, or does he merely allow it because of our human weaknesses or to accomplish other purposes? (see Dt 24:5 and Prov 30:19) Note that when sexual activity occurs within the marriage, by mutual consent, there is no need for guilt or regret, as there is when it occurs outside marriage.

## Lesson 10 ♥ *Married Life (Song 5:2-6:13)*

### A. Reports (Catch up on any that are past due.)

### B. Outline

1. Trouble (5:2-8)
2. Reconciliation (5:9-6:13)
  - a. First Question (5:9-16)
  - b. Second Question (5:17-6:9)
  - c. Third Question (6:10-13)

### C. Questions on the Text

1. At what time of day does this scene take place? (5:2,3) Who is at the door? (5:2) How is this like an earlier scene? (see 3:1-5) How does the man address the girl (and where were these terms used before (e.g. 4:9,10)? What does he want? Why does the girl not let him in? Does the girl change her mind? How does she feel at the moment she decides to let him in? How does she feel when she cannot find him? How did her husband handle the "rejection"?

What does she do to find her lover? Are the watchmen helpful this time? Verse 8 is a break-point where the daughters of Jerusalem are addressed at an emotional point in the story. What does the girl want when the scene ends? Is she still thinking primarily of her own feelings?

2. In the following scenes the relationship appears to be repaired. A series of three questions by the "friends" divides the speeches, and the king's voice returns in 6:4.
  - a. What is the first question asked by the friends of the girl? (5:9) To whom have they turned her attention with this question. Does she give a direct answer to their question (see v 10 & 16b)? What aspects of her lover's physical appearance does she describe? (How many things?)

Besides the colors and smells, what themes are there in these descriptions (e.g. water streams, rods, pillars, cedars, etc.)?

- b. What is the second question (6:1)? To whom is her attention directed here? Where does she say that her lover has gone? Is this a complimentary picture of him? Do you think this is a literal garden or a figurative garden? (compare to 4:5, 12-16; 5:1)

She repeats that they "own each other" (vs 3), how is the order different from her earlier statement? (See 2:16.)

When the king speaks, what name does he use? What about her appearance is mentioned? What has been mentioned before (and when)? (see 1:10; 1:15, 2:2; 4:2, 3) Is this description like his names and praises of her before or during the consummation scene?

- c. In the third question (6:10), to whom do the friends turn the girl's attention? She describes a past-tense story. What does it remind us of? (see 2:11-13) Where did she end up? If "Shulamith" is the feminine form for "Shalom=Solomon," what is her new identity? Verses 11 & 12 appear to be a brief autobiography of the girl. Has her life changed drastically and quickly? Is she better off? Is there an indication at the close of the scene that the girl is leaving? Where is she going, and what is about to happen (see 7:1-10)?

## D. Analysis & Applications

1. Are there times, even between married couples, when the desire for one another is weaker? Does it always happen to both partners at the same time? In this scene, the girl at first makes excuses for not letting her lover in. Whose interest is she concerned about in these excuses? What causes her to change her mind? What are things in our relationships that cause "coldness" of desire, or create feelings of separation or distance? How can we change those feelings?

What do you think is represented by the cruelty of the watchmen? Is it true that when there is trouble in the marriage relationship, other things seem to go wrong as well? Give examples.

2. What is the role of the questions of the friends in the reconciliation scenes? How might we apply this approach to handling problems in the marriage relationship?
  - a. In answer to "How is your beloved better than others?" the girl describes the things about her lover's physical appearance that make him "outstanding" (5:10). Does this suggest that she is aroused by his appearance (or the memory of it)?

Based on the themes that underlie these images, what else about him is attractive to her?

- b. In answer to the second question, "Where has your lover gone?" the girl may be remembering (or anticipating) lovemaking. Does this seem like an appropriate approach to solving their problems? In answering, does she think about his needs or hers? If the answer is literal, that is, "He has gone to take care of his gardens," is it appropriate for her to be considering his interests and activities?

Does her statement of ownership ("I belong to my beloved..") in 6:3 suggest permanence in the relationship? Will a sense of permanence help in overcoming problems? How? How does the changed in order from its earlier appearance reflect a maturing of the relationship?

When the king speaks in 6:4-9 his praises are not erotic, are more reflective of her comparative worth (v 8) and expressive of her affect on him (v 5a). Why might this kind of praise be more appropriate after a time of disagreement or trouble (including self-doubt on the part of the girl)?

- c. In answer to the third question, "Who is this...?" (6:10) the girl speaks of the past. Is there value in recalling past events in a relationship? What kinds of things would be good to recall?

Does it often happen that a girl or boy's economic or social situation changes drastically when he or she is married? Can that change (for better or for worse) create difficulties in adjusting to the relationship? What characteristics of the relationship will help to overcome those difficulties?

## Lesson 11 ♥ *The Mature Relationship (Song 7:1-8:4)*

### A. Reports

1. Report # 4b from Lesson 1: Mandrakes, Henna
2. Report # 1c from Lesson 1: Tirzah, Heshbon, Baal Hamon
3. Report # 4a from Lesson 1: Lilies, Pomegranates

### B. Outline

1. Later Lovemaking (7:1-10)
2. A Visit to the Country (7:11-8:4)

### C. Questions on the Text

1. What indicates a change of scene at the end of chapter 6 (see v 13)? What has happened in the previous scenes (chapters 5 & 6 - Lesson 10) In the king's previous speech (6:4-9), what has been the nature of his praise? How is it different from the praise in this section (7:1-10)? How many parts of her body are mentioned here? How does that compare, in number, content, and order, to the similar speech from the wedding night? (see 4:1-5) Try to interpret the meaning of the comparisons made. How does the king end the list-description of her (v 6, and compare to v 1 and 4:1a)? What indication of her clothing is found in these verses?

What does the imagery suggest is happening in vs 7-9a? How aggressive is he here in his statement of intent (v 8,9)? How is this different from the wedding night (cf 4:12)? Is she as fervent in her response? (vs 9b-10)?

How does her expression of ownership (v 10) differ from the two previous expressions in 2:16 and 6:3? What is the center of ownership in this expression?

2. What indications of a change of scene is there in 7:11? What time of year is it (v 12) Is this scene similar to another scene earlier in the song? (see 2:10-13) What is her (explicit) intent in the trip (vs 12c and 13)?

Who is making the travel plans this time? [Note that if a literal journey takes place, 8:5 may indicate their return.] Who is initiating the love-making plan here? Does she initiate these plans to benefit herself or give pleasure to him? What is the significance of mandrakes (see Gen 30: 13-16) What might be meant by the "delicacies at their door, both old and new"?

What is she wishing for by saying she wishes he was "like a brother"? (8:1) Has he made a similar statement about her (see 4:9 and 5:2b)? What advantage would there be in the brother-sister relationship? Who is expressing a desire to kiss whom here? Who is taking the lead role in the love-making plan? Notice the similarity in the pleasures she offers to previous speeches and events in the song. Could this help explain the old and new delicacies of v 13?

8: 1b	I would kiss you	1:2 (see also 4:11)
8:2	I would lead you to my mother's house	3:4b
8:2b	I would give you spiced wine	5:1c
8:2b	[I would give you] the nectar of my pomegranates	4:13
8:3	His left arm is under my head, etc.	2:6
8:4	Daughters of Jerusalem... Do not arouse, etc.	2:6, 3:5

How does the refrain "Do not arouse or awaken love..." fit with this scene, and with the likelihood that they are now married?

## D. Analysis & Applications

1. The king's praise of his bride is growing in detail and appreciation. Is that because she is really growing more beautiful or perhaps because he is noticing more? What other explanations could there be? Should the appreciation of her good qualities grow with the relationship? Could it also be that a couple can be conditioned by experiences to be aroused by each other, whether beauty is increasing or not?

If the sexual relationship is an expression of affection and commitment, and an opportunity for giving pleasure, when is the ideal time for it: when things are going the best in the relationship, or when there is unsettled disagreement or insecurity? How does the shorter expression of desire, consent, and belonging in 7-9a describe the nature of the maturing relationship (compare to I Cor 7:3,4). Does the increased stability and security in a mature relationship provide opportunity for heightened pleasure? Does the growing experience (practice) also provide that opportunity? Is the pleasure for both the man and the woman? Does a monogamous relationship increase these advantages?

Is there an indication of growing unselfishness in the expression of ownership in 7:10? Does it take a period of adjustment (and effort) to be able to think of one's self as primarily belonging to another?

2. Notice that the couple is still planning romantic trips, just as when they were (first?) dating (2:8-13). Is there a need for continued romantic experiences? Can they be made even more enjoyable and beneficial after marriage? Why?

Is it important to have both "old" and new" experiences in a marriage relationship? What are the advantages of each? Might this also include sexual activities (based on the context)?

She is confident to initiate both planning and love-making. What has happened in the relationship that makes her confident to volunteer these plans? Does her behavior seem like usurping his authority, or overly aggressive? Why or why not? (Would it have seemed this way back in chapter 2?) If she is confident to state her desires, does she use the opportunity for selfish purposes?

Chapter 8:1 seems to be referring to the desire to show affection in public. Are there times when sexual desires exist but cannot be fulfilled in a marriage? What makes a public display of affection inappropriate? Is it generally pleasant for those who observe it? Do you usually see this kind of behavior exhibited by married or unmarried couples? What may cause young unmarried couples to want to display affection in public? Do some of these causes go away when they are married?

## Lesson 12 ♥ *Conclusions (Song 8:5-14)*

A. **Reports** (Catch up on any that are past due.)

B. **Outline**

1. Strength of Love (8:5-9)
2. Protection of Purity (8:8,9)
3. Memory of the Relationship (8:10-14)

C. **Questions on the Text**

1. How does this scene open? If this is another wide-angle view, who is now seen in the distance? Is the king speaking in past, present or future tense in v 5b? What previous scenes might he be referring to (see 2:3; 7:8b, 8:2)?

What is the woman requesting from her lover in vs 6,7? Is this another playful love-making scene or is the tone more serious? Do some of the words and images startle the reader (especially after the previous section)? Give examples.

How are each of these metaphors (found twice each in the four couplets in vs 6-7a) used to describe characteristics of the romantic relationship?

- a seal
- death (two things are like it)
- fire
- floods.

In this context, what is the meaning of 7b: "If one were to give all the wealth...etc."?

2. A plural group speaks (chorus? daughters of Jerusalem? her brothers?) about a young sister. What question do they ask? What day are they preparing for? How are they hoping to prepare her (or protect her) for that day (see II Cor 11:2)? What two kinds of character might she have (v 9)? Is there a plan for both possibilities? What are the plans?
3. The girl speaks of herself as which type of character (v 10)? What was the consequence (to her husband) of her having this kind of character? Note that she became "in his eyes as one bringing *contentment*" (peace = shalom=Solomon=Shulammith?).

A comparison of what Solomon did with his (literal?) vineyards and what she did with her vineyard is given in vs 11 and 12? When he "let out" his vineyard, what did he expect in return? What is the girl's vineyard (see 1:6b and 4:12,16). To whom did she give it? Who also received the majority of the benefits? Who else received some of the profits? What might this mean?

Despite the seriousness of some of this section, how does the song end? Has this invitation been offered before (see 2:17) Once again, who is inviting whom?

## D. Analysis & Applications

1. The scene is set as two lovers coming up from the desert together and a retrospective statement by the king. Do a collection of good memories give strength and stability to a relationship?

Besides the pleasure and playfulness of romantic love is there a serious side? Are there risks to "being in love"? Can it be a source of extreme pain as well as pleasure? Are the sources of pain the result of the Fall? Are they also sometimes consequences of our own sins?

The girl requests of her husband that she become a permanent presence (and sign of ownership) on his heart and arm. Does the romantic relationship require permanent commitment to fully develop? Is strong, permanent commitment strengthened by romantic love? Can this commitment be worn both inside (in the heart) and outside (on the arm)? Explain. How are love and jealousy related? How are jealousy and ownership related?

Why is it that love can't be bought (vs 7b and 12)? Is romantic love something that must be offered and developed freely by both parties? Is it, in a sense, an expression of our free will (that is, part of our being in the image of God)?

2. What protection of young people is recommended by the story of the young girl in vs 8,9? Does the character of young people determine the kind of treatment they should receive?
3. What relationship is there between a wife remaining pure until marriage and her bringing contentment to her husband?

If the profits of the girl's vineyards are her affections and attentions to others, such as Solomon, who received the largest share? Should that be the goal of a wife in marriage? Who might be the others who receive the "200 shekels"?

## Lesson 13 ♥ *Review, Applications and Actions*

### A. "Big Picture" Lessons about Romantic Love

1. Romantic love exists for marriage.
  - a. It contributes to the primary purpose for marriage: companionship (Gen 2:18).
  - b. It can and should be developed between married couples.
  - c. But a marriage is neither validated by its presence or invalidated by its absence.
2. Romantic love seeks to possess the individual (and be possessed by that person), not the sensation. (see Song 2:16, 3:1, 4:9, 6:3, 6:5, 7:10, 8:6)
  - a. It is not fulfilled simply by gratifying sexual desires or building up one's ego.
  - b. It should be fulfilled in bringing pleasure to the other person.
  - c. It should grow to be less self-centered, until it finally becomes ownership by another.
3. Sexual attraction is much the same as every other physical appetite. (Song 5:1, 7:7-9)
  - a. It is God-given, not evil, and should be properly fulfilled without guilt or shame.
  - b. Its appearance or disappearance is not always convenient or appropriate.
  - c. It must be regulated by God's laws; a loss of self control or abuse of the appetite is sinful.
4. Sexual attraction is not a god.
  - a. It does not overrule God's laws.
  - b. It does not supply meaning to life.
  - c. It must not become the center of our lives.

### B. **Review.** Review these summary points from the background lessons (1-4) on romantic love.

#### Lesson 1 ♥ *The Male-Female Relationship*

1. Romantic love is related to the man/woman creation in purpose and role.
2. Since men and women are different, their needs and wants in romance are different.
3. Romance is about companionship (the person) more than pleasure or gratification.
4. Romantic love was changed by the fall to be less perfect and more a source of temptation.
5. Romantic love has natural (e.g. like the animals) characteristics (e.g. related to sexual urge).
6. Romantic love, like other emotions, can be ruled by the moral and intellectual aspect of man.
7. Romantic experiences can be improved and enhanced by compliance with God's word.

#### Lesson 2 ♥ *God's Laws*

1. Romantic love is recognized in the Bible as a real emotion/desire which serves as a motivation to marry (or to other actions), but it can also be a source of temptation to violate God's Laws.
2. Romantic love (as a part of "companionship" between man and wife) is connected with marriage as an ideal (that is it is used as the basis for teaching on the behaviors of marriage).
3. Romantic love is not always present in marriage, and sometimes occurs outside marriage.
4. God's laws about sex do not change based on the presence or absence of romantic love.
5. Care must be exercised to avoid sin in connection with male-female romantic relationships.

#### Lesson 3 ♥ *The Context of Jewish History and Culture*

1. Romantic love was sometimes developed in the arranged marriages (even between strangers).
2. Romantic love sometimes led to the arranging of marriages.
3. Romantic love did not guarantee the success of the relationship or the marriage.
3. Romantic love sometimes led to sexual immorality, and other evil acts.
4. Romantic love sometimes existed in polygamous marriages (and often created problems).
5. Romantic love existed outside the marriage relationships (and often led to immorality)
6. Polygamy began in the lineage of Cain, and is neither commanded nor encouraged by Old Testament Law. It was, however, regulated by the Old Testament Law.
7. Monogamy is presented as the ideal from the beginning to the end of the Old Testament.
8. A monogamous marriage is an image of the ideal relationship between God and His people.

#### Lesson 4 ♥ *The Context of the Wisdom Literature*

1. Polygamy is not addressed in Job, Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes.
2. The marriage relationship is a potential source of friendship, happiness, and enjoyment.
3. The marriage relationship is private, to be shared only with one's spouse.
4. A successful marriage and the good qualities of one's spouse should be publicly acknowledged.
5. The duration of marriage is until death (and for this life only: see Matt 22:30).
6. Wisdom protects one from the seduction of the harlot and the associated consequences.
7. Sexual attraction (proper or improper) can involve all of the senses, as well as spoken words.
8. A marriage can be very pleasant or unpleasant, primarily based on the character of the wife.

C. **Personal Applications.** The following are observations and recommendations from the Song of Solomon (Lessons 7-12) that might be applied to enhance romantic love and increase fulfillment and pleasure in a marriage relationship. Put a check beside the ones that apply to you personally.

#### Lesson 7 ♥ *The Setting (Song 1:1-2:7)*

1. In the early stages of a relationship, external beauty is a dominant factor in attraction, and care must be taken not to overemphasize or cause insecurity over physical appearance.
2. Physical attraction can mask other important concerns that should be a part of courtship (such as getting to know the person, evaluating his or her character, and concern for public appearance).
3. A couple should be aware that sexual attraction will be a strong force in the early stages of romance, but it should be controlled and not allowed to dominate the relationship.
4. Sexual desires should be present (and planned for) as a part of the anticipation of marriage.
5. A dating couple should take care about the impression left on others by their behavior.
6. A dating couple should take time apart to consider each other and think about the relationship.
7. A woman should look past a man's appearance and reputation and consider his character and his ability to protect and provide for her.
8. Involvement in a romantic relationship can affect the way a man or woman looks and feels.
9. Physical contact before marriage must be governed with great care and self-control.

#### Lesson 8 ♥ *The Courtship (Song 2:8-3:5)*

1. It is important for a dating couple to share many experiences and see one another in many different situations in order to know one another well.
2. Emotional highs and lows occur in courtship, mostly related to insecurity about the relationship.
3. These insecurities may cause an increase in sexual temptation, and require self control.
4. "Living together" may offer immediate gratification, but does not solve the problems of insecurity or provide the commitment required for complete romantic fulfillment.

#### Lesson 9 ♥ *The Wedding and Wedding Night (Song 3:6-5:1)*

1. The husband should be able to provide financial security and protection for his wife.
2. One should express appreciation for both the inner character and appearance of one's spouse.
3. There are particular parts of the body that have a special attraction for one's mate. These should be shared with one's mate, but be guarded with special modesty outside the marriage relationship.
4. The husband must help his wife leave her fears and insecurities behind to encouraged complete fulfillment in the marriage relationship.
5. Remaining pure until marriage, and then fully sharing oneself (only) with one's spouse, creates security and contentment in the relationship.
6. A couple should open their hearts to express the effect that each has on the other.
7. Expressions of praise, love, and commitment should accompany sexual activities.
8. Sexual activities in marriage are approved by God as a satisfaction of a legitimate appetite, and therefore should be neither a source of guilt nor a burdensome duty.

9. The satisfaction of sexual desires must be limited by God's laws in the same way that the satisfaction of any other desires are subject to His laws.

#### Lesson 10 ♥ *Married Life (Song 5:2-6:13)*

1. There are times in marriage when the desire of one partner for the other is weak or absent, and care should be taken (by both) to avoid self-centeredness during these times.
2. Self-centeredness often causes problems, and must be overcome to solve them.
3. Problems in a marriage relationship often are reflected in trouble in other activities as well.
4. Repairing a relationship can be encouraged by reviewing the good points of one's mate.
5. Unpleasant feelings toward a mate can be overcome by thinking of his/her needs and interests.
6. Romance can be renewed by remembering past pleasant experiences, reviewing the progress of the relationship, and recounting the benefits brought by one's mate.
7. In repairing a relationship, the husband should praise his wife: emphasizing her character and value to him and his commitment to her, more than her physical attraction to him.
8. Over time, the feeling of ownership **of** a spouse should change to possession **by** the spouse.
9. Marriage brings radical changes to one's life. Selflessness and security should be developed help to make the necessary adjustments.

#### Lesson 11 ♥ *The Mature Relationship (Song 7:1-8:4)*

1. As a marriage relationship grows, the appreciation (and expressions of it) for the other person should grow, both in the number of things noticed and the depth of the appreciation.
2. In a maturing relationship, one should become more conditioned to be attracted by one's mate, rather than to another standard of beauty or source of sexual appeal.
3. The pleasure in marriage should increase as the relationship becomes more stable and secure, and as each learns more, and is attentive to the needs and desires of the other.
4. Continued shared experiences together (dates, trips, etc.) are helpful to renew romance in the marriage relationship, and heighten the pleasure it affords.
5. Providing variety, including both new (settings, events, and experiences) and old (habitual, familiar, and even nostalgic activities), can increase the pleasure of the romance.
6. In a mature relationship, the wife should be confident and comfortable to plan and suggest activities, including the initiation of love-making.
7. In planning activities, the interest and enjoyment of the other should be a first priority.
8. Sexual desires must be controlled when, because of circumstances, they cannot be expressed.

#### Lesson 12 ♥ *Conclusions (Song 8:5-14)*

1. Building a wealth of experiences and memories strengthens the romantic relationship.
2. Commitment--felt within, and expressed to one's spouse and to others--is needed for security in the relationship (especially for the wife), and enables marriages to weather great difficulties.
3. Gifts and favors cannot replace genuine expressions of affection.
4. Romantic love is an expression of free will: it should be offered freely, and cannot be forced.
5. Unmarried people must provide self control or be protected by others from sexual temptation.
6. Remaining pure until marriage increases the likelihood of the success and pleasure of marriage.
7. The largest portion of our attention and affection (to people) should go to our spouses.

#### Other Lessons You Learned:

- 1.
- 2.

- D. **Personal Action Plan.** Number, in priority order, the top ten lessons that you checked in part C above. Now list below the personal actions you can take, and when you will start, to apply them.

(example)

Lesson: *(from lesson 11, # 4) Dates and trips helpful to renew romance.*

action: *Plan a Friday night date once a month - start on June 14.*

1. Lesson:

Action:

2. Lesson:

Action:

3. Lesson:

Action:

4. Lesson:

Action:

5. Lesson:

Action:

6. Lesson:

Action:

7. Lesson:

Action:

8. Lesson:

Action:

9. Lesson:

Action:

10. Lesson:

Action:

# Song of Songs

## (which is Solomon's)

### I. *Introduction*

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, is a series of verses spoken by different speakers (either masculine or feminine) revealing their thoughts and emotions, and also implying some actions. As the thoughts are expressed, they form a series of impressions that describe the progress of love in courtship and marriage. The Song should be read aloud by two or more readers to see the patterns of question and answer, desire and fulfillment, and thought and word repetition.

### II. *The Story*

Using the division suggested, the Song may be divided into three acts: Before the Wedding, The Wedding and Wedding Night, and After the Wedding. Further division into scenes may be done by noticing who is speaking and the content of their speech.

#### A. Before the Wedding

Scene 1	1:1–4	Scene 4	1:15–2:7
Scene 2	1:5–11	Scene 5	2:8–17
Scene 3	1:12–14	Scene 6	3:1–5

#### B. The Wedding and Wedding Night

Scene 1	3:6–11
Scene 2	4:1–15
Scene 3	4:16–5:1

#### C. After the Wedding

Scene 1	5:2–8
Scene 2	5:9–6:13a
Scene 3	6:13b–7:10
Scene 4	7:11–8:9
Scene 5	8:10–14

