

Sermon Follow-up | February 2, 2020

5 Books of Wisdom and Poetry — “True Love”

Focus Passage: The Song of Solomon 2:16–3:5; 4:15–5:1; 8:6–7

Additional Context: Song of Solomon chapters 1 – 8

Corollary Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Other Passages Referenced: Mark 10:9; Ephesians 5:31–32

Sermon Recap: God gifted love and sex to human beings to be delightful, not shameful. God’s gifts of love and sex are powerful. As such, they are not to be taken lightly, but guarded, and used productively in their proper place. Before answering the question “When can I have sex?” we need to first understand the purpose for which God created sex: (1) Sex provides a means for humans to participate with God in creation. The first command given to humans to be fruitful and multiply requires sex (Gen 1:27–28). (2) Sex is meant to display God’s nature to the world. God is the union of three in one. The two uniting as one reflect that union (Gen 2:24). (3) Sex reminds us of experiencing God’s unconditional love in being naked and unashamed as before the fall caused by sin (Gen 2:25). Sex is just the temporary physical expression of the deeper union of a man and a woman in marriage. That deeper union calls spouses to speak, think, and act generously toward one another. It calls them to commit themselves to commitment to finish well in exclusive faithfulness to one another. Although sex initiates and displays the marriage union, that union is not necessarily dependent on sex to deepen and flourish.

Interpretive Comments:

- If after reading the Song of Solomon, you aren’t certain you grasp everything the author intended, you are in great company. The *New American Commentary* notes at least seven major approaches to interpreting the Song of Solomon, about which scholars have perennially disagreed: the allegorical interpretation, the dramatic interpretation, the historical interpretation, the cultic (religious) interpretation, the funerary interpretation, the wedding interpretation, and the love song interpretation.¹
- If your Bible has character parts such as “He,” “She,” and “Chorus” written between sections of the passage in the Song of Solomon (i.e. the ESV), note that these were not in the original but were added later by an editor with the intent of helping readers follow the passage. However, those headings do not carry the authority of Scripture and there is much disagreement about what any character headings should be and where they should be placed.
- One thing is certain, the Song of Solomon is not prudish in any way. It presents sexual relations within marriage as a good gift of God. There is no hint that sex is in any way sinful, in and of itself. Nor is sex merely “permissible” in marriage. On the contrary, it is a celebration that is intended to reflect God’s love. Even the repeated refrains of the song (2:5, 3:5; 8:4) do not warn people to refrain from sexual relations, only to wait for the proper time and context. Song of Solomon can actually be viewed as giving positive teaching to enjoy sexual relations within marriage.

Group Gathering

Connect: *Making Honest Connections with One Another (Pick one)*

1. How did God speak to you through the sermon or your Bible reading this week?
2. As a follow-up to last week’s message, were you able to share with someone struggling to find meaning in life?

¹ Duane A. Garrett, [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#), vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 378.

Grow: *Listening to and Learning from God's Word*

1. Read the three refrains to the Song of Songs in 2:5, 3:5; 8:4. The sermon suggested, "Before answering the question 'When can I have sex?' we need to first understand the purpose for which God created sex." Discuss that suggestion in light of the three refrains you just read.
2. Read the three Genesis passages found above in the Sermon Recap and discuss how the purpose of sex in Genesis compares to popular cultural ideas. Do you ever find yourself compromising the biblical purpose in favor of the cultural pressures?

Serve: *Serving King Jesus and Others, By Living Out and Letting Others Know God's Word*

1. Have you struggled or do you continue to struggle with shame for having gone outside God's timing and design for sexual relations? How do you see the message of the gospel addressing that shame?
2. The sermon stated that porn (frequently a greater problem for men) is a poor substitute for God's design of celebrating all of the senses in the sensual context of marriage. I might add that romance novels (frequently a greater problem for women) are also poor substitutes for God's design for sex. Do you have a testimony of how God has delivered you from either one of these fantasy-driven substitutes?
3. If you are single, how does the Song of Songs and Sunday's message apply to you? Is there anything you could share with married couples in the group that might help them understand and be more sensitive to singles?
4. If you are married, what do you sense the Spirit saying about speaking, thinking, and acting generously toward your spouse?
5. If you are aging, chances are that your sexual drive is not as powerful and sex is not as central to your relationship as it may have been when you were younger? How do you continue to grow the union of your marriage even stronger in that reality?

Further Resources

- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org