

THE LOOKOUT

SEPTEMBER 2023

Unit: Song of Songs Theme: Speaking of Love

Overview: Long before Gary Chapman’s book *The Five Love Languages* (words, time, gifts, service, and touch) from 1992, there was the Song of Songs (or literally, “The Finest Song”). It also is known as the Song of Solomon. This is sexual wisdom literature at its most holy eroticism. The book of romantic love poetry was placed in the Writings section of the Old Testament. It was written by Solomon or dedicated to him. It certainly is a strange book to be in the Bible unless God’s love for our souls is likened to the strong love between husband and wife. Students will learn of a woman’s love for her husband, the husband’s love for his wife, the watchful celebration of their love by the couple’s attendants, and the Lord of love whose love is the basis for all other loves.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

LESSON AIM: Wives pursue, admire, and delight in your husband and view yourself as his own.

LESSON TEXT: Song of Songs 1:1-2

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Colossians 3:14; Ephesians 5:22-33; Matthew 19:4-6

STUDY

THE DILYMMATIC WOMAN SPEAKS
BY GABRIEL SCOTT

In a 21st-century culture in general, women are often portrayed as the more powerful sex. This is not always true, especially in the context of marriage. The Song of Songs, however, is a book that celebrates the love of a woman for her husband. It is a book that is often overlooked, but it is one of the most beautiful and romantic books in the Bible. In this study, we will explore the love of a woman for her husband as depicted in the Song of Songs. We will look at the various metaphors and symbols used in the book and how they relate to the love of a woman for her husband. We will also look at the practical implications of this love for our own marriages and relationships.

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. HALEY

1. How do you feel about the love of a woman for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about the love of a man for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
3. How do you feel about the love of a husband for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
4. How do you feel about the love of a wife for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
5. How do you feel about the love of a man for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
6. How do you feel about the love of a woman for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
7. How do you feel about the love of a husband for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
8. How do you feel about the love of a wife for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
9. How do you feel about the love of a man for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
10. How do you feel about the love of a woman for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

APPLICATION

CANEY'S FIVE THINGS
BY DAVID ALBERT

What are the five things that a husband should do for his wife? This is a question that has been asked for centuries. In this application, we will look at five things that a husband should do for his wife. These are things that are often overlooked, but they are essential for a healthy marriage. We will look at each of these things and how they can be applied in our own marriages.

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. HALEY

1. How do you feel about the love of a woman for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about the love of a man for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
3. How do you feel about the love of a husband for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
4. How do you feel about the love of a wife for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
5. How do you feel about the love of a man for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
6. How do you feel about the love of a woman for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
7. How do you feel about the love of a husband for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
8. How do you feel about the love of a wife for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
9. How do you feel about the love of a man for his wife? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?
10. How do you feel about the love of a woman for her husband? Do you think it is a good thing? Why or why not?

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

LESSON AIM: **Husbands, treasure your wife's beauty and celebrate the joy and goodness of such a love.**

UNIT: Song of Songs

THEME: Speaking of Love

LESSON TEXT: Song of Songs 1:15; 4:1-15

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Proverbs 5:18-19; Ephesians 5:25

THE HUSBAND SPEAKS

BY MARK SCOTT

The woman in the Song of Songs took her sense of romance from the closeness and affection of her husband and being desired by him. The man took his romance from the sight, smell, and touch of his wife. While this theme will occur again in chapter 7, this lesson text is one of the most sexually descriptive.

Descriptive speech is used when normal language falls short. The text is filled with similes and metaphors. Similes are figures of speech saying something “is like” something else, while metaphors say something “is” something else. There are at least eight similes and nine metaphors in this text.

He Speaks of the Description of Her Beauty

Song of Songs 1:15; 4:1-5

The second time the husband spoke in the Song of Songs, he outright declared his wife’s beauty. He told her she was *beautiful* (i.e., fair—a quality to be desired in the Ancient Near East). He told her this four times in the text. Probably no woman tires of hearing that word.

He also used the tender expression *darling* (lover).

It is as if he literally scanned her body from top to bottom. Eight of her body parts are commented upon either by using a simile or a metaphor. He spoke of her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, mouth, temple, neck, and breasts. Since sight and touch seem to be the man’s means of arousal, these are highlighted. Her eyes are like *doves* (which indicated tranquility in his world). Later he will say that one look from her eyes all but robs him of willpower and causes him to not think clearly (4:9). Her hair is likened to the beautiful black goats that graze in the *hills of Gilead* east of the Jordan River. Her teeth are likened to newly shorn sheep (i.e., clean). Her teeth have symmetry (*each has its twin*).

Her lips are likened to *scarlet ribbon* (thread). To this he added a straightforward phrase, “*your mouth is lovely*.” Her *temples* are likened to the *halves of a pomegranate* (red and sweet). Her *neck* is likened to the *tower of David*, which was not a description of length but of majesty. The tower of David was decorated with his spoils of war.

They announced victory. Finally, her *breasts* are likened to *twin fawns* that *browse* among the lilies during the day. These descriptions all underlined a pastoral setting (fruit and husbandry).

He Speaks of the Delight of Her Beauty

Song of Songs 4:6-15

A man probably can *describe* things only so long. At some point he must act to consummate his love. He wanted to celebrate their intimacy. He goes to her and bids her come to him. In fact, he envisions loving her *until the day breaks and the shadows flee*. The *mountain of myrrh* and the *hill of incense* might still refer to her breasts. But the images might be broader than that by referring to her whole body. Myrrh and frankincense were expensive and not native to the land of Israel. They had to be imported, which underlined their value.

Lebanon plays a significant role in the last section of the lesson text. Lebanon is at the northern tip of Israel. It had the greatest trees (they later were used for building the temple) and the best scents. Verses 8-15 function like a chiasmus. Lebanon is mentioned in verses 8, 11, and 15. Going south from Lebanon (which involves moving up in elevation) is a beautiful trip—similar to the husband delighting in his *bride* (mentioned five times in the text). He thought of descending from *the crest of Amanah* (the eastern part of the mountain range near Damascus). *Senir* is a twin peak near Mount Hermon. Even though dangers such as *lions* and leopards may be lurking, he will protect his *sister* (a Middle Eastern term of affection for wife).

His delight in his wife is likened to the many scents from the north. Fragrance, perfume, spice, honeycombs, pomegranates, choice fruits, henna (white-blossomed flowers), nard, saffron, calamus (sweet cane), cinnamon, myrrh, and aloes are all mentioned. The scents would be part of the husband’s delight in their intimacy. One other thing should be noticed. This delight of lovemaking should never be shared except between the two of them. The man said she was a *locked garden*, a *spring enclosed*, and a *sealed fountain*. These images all mean that the most fulfilling delight was for one man and one woman in holy matrimony. ■

APPLICATION

TELL HER

BY DAVID FAUST

A marriage counselor questioned a man about his wife. "Why don't you buy her flowers?" The man's response: "I didn't know she sold flowers."

OK, most of us husbands aren't *that* bad. But when it comes to emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication, we still have room for improvement.

It happened over 40 years ago, but I cringe when I remember the first Mother's Day after the arrival of our firstborn child. That evening my wife, Candy, became very quiet. When I asked what was wrong, she said, "It's my first Mother's Day as a mother, and you didn't acknowledge it." My reasoning? She was not my mother! I had sent a card to my own mom, and I looked forward to the day when our son himself would be old enough to wish Candy a happy Mother's Day. That all made sense to me, so it never occurred to me that I should have made her day special.

Without intentional effort, married couples often slip into bad habits and our conversations become drab and superficial. Someone quipped, "70 percent of marriage is yelling 'What?' from a different room."

James A. Garfield was a lawyer, a preacher in Restoration Movement churches, a Union Army officer during the Civil War, and he was elected to Congress. On June 8, 1880, after the Republican National Convention nominated him for president of the United States, he sent a rather blunt, unemotional telegram to his wife:

TO: MRS. J.A. GARFIELD MENTOR, OHIO

DEAR WIFE: IF THE RESULT MEETS YOUR APPROVAL, I SHALL BE CONTENT. LOVE TO ALL THE HOUSEHOLD.

J.A. GARFIELD

Evidently Mr. Garfield liked to keep his messages short and to the point.

Verbalize Your Affection

Solomon's Song of Songs, written by King David's son, celebrates God's gift of sexuality within the context of marriage, illustrates the Father's love for his covenant people and Christ's love for the church, and demonstrates how to express love with words of affirmation. Over and over again throughout the book, the husband tells his wife how beautiful she is.

Admittedly, some of the Song's colorful poetry sounds strange to us. It's a compliment if I compare my wife's eyes to doves (Song of Songs 1:15; 4:1) and her lips to a scarlet ribbon (4:3), but she won't consider it romantic if I compare her hair to a flock of goats and her teeth to a flock of sheep (4:1-2). And I'm certain she won't appreciate it if I compare her neck to a tower of stones big enough to hold a thousand shields (4:4).

But whatever our personality types, and even if we sometimes struggle to express our emotions, husbands should "be considerate" toward our wives (1 Peter 3:7) and love them "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Christ honors his bride by loving her sacrificially, listening intently to her questions and concerns, and referring to her with affectionate terms like "beloved" and "radiant" and "chosen." According to Proverbs 31, a wife of noble character is hard to find and worth more than rubies. "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all'" (Proverbs 31:28-29).

If God has blessed you with a noble wife, thank him—and tell her.

Personal Challenge: Has the Lord put a godly woman in your life? Perhaps a wife, a daughter, a faithful friend, a helpful neighbor, a wise sister in Christ, or someone who has been a spiritual mother to you? Let these godly women know how much you appreciate them. Send them a card or tell them face-to-face. ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How did you do over the past week at seeing, listening to, noticing, and knowing others around you?
2. What expression of love do you prefer to receive from others?

Ask two people to read aloud **Song of Songs 1:15; 4:1-15** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passages.

3. What do the metaphors and similes in these passages tell you about how the man thought and felt about his wife?
4. Note the senses (sight, touch, smell, taste) involved in the man's descriptions and which ones are used more often. What do you learn about the man (and perhaps men in general) from these descriptions (especially as compared to the woman's descriptions from the previous lesson)?
5. What do his names for her tell you about his relationship with her?
6. Some Bible commentators suggest the man's words in this Song illustrate the love of Jesus, the Bridegroom (see *Luke 5:34-35; John 3:27-30; Ephesians 5:25-33*), for us. What can you learn about the Lord's love from these passages?
7. Look again at Song of Songs 4:12. What do the three phases—"a garden locked up," "a spring enclosed," and "a sealed fountain"—tell you about the man and woman's exclusive commitment to each other—and to the sanctity of marriage between a man and woman?
8. How will you seek to love others more like the husband in these passages (and like the Bridegroom Jesus)?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. If God were to talk with you like the man speaks to and about his wife, what might he say to you?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Song of Songs 1:4b-8; 3:1-11**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■