

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, 6-7, 12-14, 16-17

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

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

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

CANEY'S FIVE THINGS
BY SARA FAUST

DISCOVERY
BY MICHAEL C. HALEY

1. How do you feel about the fact that the Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible that is named after a woman?
2. How do you feel about the fact that the Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible that is named after a woman?
3. How do you feel about the fact that the Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible that is named after a woman?
4. How do you feel about the fact that the Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible that is named after a woman?
5. How do you feel about the fact that the Song of Songs is the only book in the Bible that is named after a woman?

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

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

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

UNIT: Song of Songs

THEME: Speaking of Love

LESSON TEXT: Song of Songs 1:1-4, 12-14; 2:1, 3-7, 16-17

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Colossians 3:18; Ephesians 5:22-33;
Matthew 19:4-6

THE SHULAMMITE WOMAN SPEAKS

BY MARK SCOTT

It is a bit dangerous today to generalize concerning the desires of men and women as it relates to marital love. Are these stereotypes taught, innate, or unique to certain cultures? From the textual selections in today's lesson, it would seem that women desire to be desired. They evidently develop security and a sense of self-worth when they are valued and treasured. In these verses, Solomon's wife (referred to as the Shulammitte in 6:13) expressed several desires.

A key challenge to interpreting the Song of all Songs is determining who is speaking. Translations and commentaries that try to mark out who is speaking vary in their understanding. Since the chosen translation is the *New International Version*, we will follow its identifications.

She Desired Affection (*Song of Songs 1:2-3*)

Kissing is not lovemaking, though it can lead to that. But kissing is affectionate, and she says it is better than wine. This display of affection certainly is made more pleasant when the two people smell good, and thus the fragrance (nard) is mentioned. Touch may be one of her love languages.

She Desired Intimacy (*Song of Songs 1:4; 2:6-7*)

She also desired to be intimate with her husband, which has the propriety of being alone with him. She wanted her husband to whisk her away *into his chambers* (which may well be their place of intimacy). She longed for his *left arm* to be under her head, and his *right arm* to embrace her. In their book *The Act of Marriage*, Tim and Beverly LaHaye suggest that this is a "positional commentary" on intimacy. The woman called to the *Daughters of Jerusalem* (maybe the women attendants) and underlined it with some kind of animal oath (*by the gazelles and by the does of the field*)—indicating beauty and swiftness—to let intimacy have its full pleasure. In other words, "Don't interrupt lovemaking until it has left her fully satisfied."

She Desired to be Known by Her Husband (*Song of Songs 1:12-14; 2:1, 4*)

Women are not hood ornaments. But they may well take some of their self-esteem from their husbands being known in the village, culture, or nation. In the king's public setting (while he was *at his table*) she allowed her *fragrance* to waft over him. They no doubt exchanged

looks, and even though they were in public, they were thinking of private moments. His fragrance was likened to a *sachet* (bundle) of *myrrh*, which she could smell when he put his head between her breasts as they lay down together. Maybe scent is a love language all its own. She also likened his scent to a *cluster of henna blossoms* from that crevice near the Dead Sea known as *En Gedi* (where Solomon's father hid from King Saul). Sometimes secret nuances between a couple can occur during public moments.

When the king was entertaining guests in his *banquet hall*, the woman wanted to be known to everyone as his love (thus the phrase, "*let his banner over me be love*"). She was not content to be just a common flower (one of the other girls in the king's harem). She was the *rose of Sharon*, a beautiful flower like that of a crocus that grow along the west coast of Israel near the Mediterranean Sea. The *lily of the valleys* were common flowers, but she wanted to be known by her husband as that special flower, or blossom.

She Desired Protection and Provision (*Song of Songs 2:3, 5*)

An apple tree could be a messianic reference. Songs have been written in that regard. But an apple tree in a forest—to which she likened her beloved—would be odd. In other words, he would stand out among others. And saying she delighted to be in his shade probably is a reference to his protection of her.

Additionally, he would provide for her. She would need physical strength for lovemaking, so she desired *raisins* (probably raisin cakes of some kind, which remain a delicacy in the Ancient Near East). His protection of her and provision for her take her breath away (*faint with love*).

She Desired Attachment (*Song of Songs 2:16-17*)

Perhaps more than anything, she just wanted to be "with" her husband. She belonged to him, and he belonged to her. When affection wanes, when intimacy is no longer possible, when being known "in the gates" is no longer necessary, and when all one's needs are met, there still is the desire to be together. Even the prospect of such makes her heart beat faster. From morning (*day break*) until evening (*shadows flee*) the prospect of her husband coming to see her like a *gazelle* or a *young stag* gives her unspeakable joy. ■

APPLICATION

CANDY'S FIVE THINGS

BY DAVID FAUST

What makes someone a good marriage partner? It's natural to consider physical attractiveness, similar interests, and compatible personalities as desirable qualities in a mate. An article in *Psychology Today* called "What to Look for in a Potential Spouse" suggests looking for characteristics like confidence, generosity, humility, and loyalty.

I remember having an awkward conversation with my future father-in-law nearly half a century ago. Candy and I had set our wedding date, and her dad asked me a direct question: "Why do you want to marry my daughter?"

I stammered nervously, "Because I love her." (I know, that's profound!) Not satisfied, he pressed deeper and asked, "What does love mean to you?" I struggled to answer his question that day, but he graciously accepted me as his son-in-law anyway, and we enjoyed a good relationship to the day he died.

Candy and I are not expert counselors, but during our 48 years of marriage, many couples have sought our advice prior to their wedding or during rough patches in their relationship. During these conversations I usually gesture toward my wife and tell the couple, "You need to hear 'Candy's Five Things.'" Her marriage advice boils down to five key factors.

1. Shared Faith. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). A shared commitment to Christ shapes the way couples prioritize their goals, handle conflicts, make financial decisions and career choices, endure hardships, build friendships, and pass along important values to their children. That's why Scripture counsels us, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

2. Open Communication. Healthy marriages require transparency, vulnerability, and self-disclosure. No dodging the tough topics. No lying or secret-keeping. No stuffing significant feelings inside. Couples need to practice good listening skills and

talk openly about their thoughts and emotions. Like a fresh breeze, honest communication keeps the air clear.

3. Complete Trust. In a relationship where two partners share their bucks, bodies, and beds, there is no room for dishonesty and emotional game-playing. Before deciding to marry, prospective spouses should honestly ask themselves, "Do I completely trust this person? Do I see any red flags—any signs he or she is untrustworthy? Am I confident my partner is being completely honest with me?"

4. Mutual Respect. "Marriage should be honored by all" (Hebrews 13:4). Couples need to hold one another in high esteem. You're asking for trouble if you marry someone whose behavior in any way makes you cringe. No one is perfect, but you should only marry someone you deeply respect. Disparaging comments and resentful attitudes poison a marriage, but mutual esteem and encouraging words nourish it. "The wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect" (1 Peter 3:7).

5. Shared Vision. Candy encourages couples considering marriage to imagine the long-term impact of their life together by asking two important questions:

- Will partnering with this person enhance my service to the Lord or detract from it?
- If I try to imagine my life without him or her, how does it make me feel?

I am thankful the Lord gave me a wise and godly wife. And just for the record, after all these years, I still have a lot to learn about what love means.

Personal Challenge: Think of a couple whose marriage you admire. Ask them to tell you what they have learned about marriage. What hardships have they endured? What makes their relationship strong? ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. Since the last time we met, with whom did you talk about the God who saved you, loves you, and takes great delight in you?
2. Choose one of these to answer:
 - What is your favorite love song?
 - What most makes you blush?

Ask two people to read aloud **Song of Songs 1:1-4, 12-14; 2:1, 3-7, 16-17** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passages.

3. How are the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch) used in these passages?
4. What do their pet names for each other (she calls him *beloved*, and he calls her *my darling*) tell you about how they feel for one another?
5. What kinds of things attracted her to him?
 - And him to her?
6. The Bible often addresses the importance of inward, not just outward, beauty (e.g., 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Peter 3:3-4). What makes a person beautiful on the inside?
7. What can you learn about God's intentions for marriage from these passages?
8. Why is it important—and not just in romantic relationships—to be seen, heard, noticed, and really known by others?
 - How can you improve at seeing, listening to, noticing, and knowing others around you? (*Note that you can answer only for yourself, not for others!*)
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. If you were to talk with God like the woman speaks to and about her beloved, what might that sound like? What would you say?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Song of Songs 1:15; 4:1-15**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖