

Love Song

Song of Songs
1:5-2:7

*Solomon's Song of Songs
and The Hope of Love*



She

⁵ I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

⁶ Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!

⁷ Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

Solomon and His Bride Delight in Each Other

He

⁸ If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents.

⁹ I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

¹⁰ Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

Others

¹¹ We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.

She

¹² While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance.

¹³ My beloved is to me a satchet of myrrh

that lies between my breasts.

¹⁴ My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.

He

¹⁵ Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

She

¹⁶ Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.

Our couch is green;

¹⁷ the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine.

*Love bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.*

- 1 Corinthians 13:7

² I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

He

² As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.

She

³ As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

⁵ Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love.

⁶ His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!

⁷ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

- Song of Songs 1:5-2:7

Notes on Song of Songs 1:5-2:7

Summary... This section of the Song of Songs contains songs 2, 3 and 4 according to the structure we are following (see previous guide): *the Virgin's Education I* (vv.5-6), *Finding the Beloved* (vv.7-8) and *First Song of Mutual Love* (vv. 1:9-2:7).

(1) The female sings (5-6) of her concern that love may elude her because she does not measure up to her culture's standards of feminine beauty (see below). At the same time she affirms her own deeper beauty and value. A play on words--"gaze" and "looked upon" are similar sounding words in Hebrew and "anger" is literally "burned with

anger"--indicates that the heroine is subject to three burnings: the dismissive or condescending stares of other women, the rays of the sun and the controlling animosity of her brothers. In her culture, because she is a daughter destined to be married into another family, she is treated to some degree like an outsider. The harsh treatment she decries, though, has benefits for her, as Dr. Garrett points out (p.134): Her "hard education composed of long hours working in the vineyard" (and restricting her from tending "her own vineyard" = her body/her interests/her self) has "made her strong and mature, and it has given her an appreciation of the benefits of freedom and adulthood. She will enjoy these to the maximum when she can take care of her own vineyard" (see Song 8:12). She yearns for the ideal that transcends all times and all cultures, for this she hopes and her hope will motivate her action: love and true freedom in the holy bond of marriage.

(2) The female and the chorus (the ESV interprets this to be the male) sing (7-8) of her desperate search for her beloved who is compared to a shepherd. She expresses concern that searching for him means risk, she will be vulnerable, she leaves the shelter of her own family (where she cannot have the "fruitful vineyard" life she desires) and enters into his world where she is truly an "outsider" unless/until he welcomes her in (and makes her the place of vital love and full-bodied joy and fruitful living she longs to be). The chorus says, in effect, that she cannot be joined to her lover without entering into his world. She must overcome her fears (of the unknown, of the male culture/temperament/body) and, filled with hope, move toward the man she will claim as her own.

(3) "She" and "He" sing (1:9-2:7) of their love for one another using rich symbolic language. The tension between the "glory of the wedding and the glory of the marriage" is expressed. "The glory of the wedding is in ceremony and elaborate costuming. The glory of the marriage is in the love of a man and woman" (Garrett, p.153). In the end, the bride affirms that her beauty is enhanced most by the love of her lover--whom she calls her "king"--and that her real adornment is her groom and the love she has for him.

Verse 5 - **very dark**... thin and tan was not the feminine ideal in this culture (and many others throughout history) as it is in ours. Thin meant food was scarce and tan meant you worked in the sun... Such an appearance marked you as a peasant, a commoner, rather than royalty. Yet the woman claims she is still **lovely** and resemble the tents of **Kedar**... a powerful nomadic northern Arabian Bedouin tribe whose black goat-hair tents were known to be of highest quality, sturdy and reliable... **curtains of Solomon**... These would be as beautiful as you could find... This woman is strong and beautiful...

v.6 - **gaze... looked upon... angry**... (see above)... **my own vineyard**... symbol for the woman's body, her own interests, her very self...

v.7 - **one who veils herself**... she is afraid she might look like "a widow" or some other type of "veiled woman" if she goes out looking for her beloved among his male

companions... could also mean "one who snatches at" like picking at fleas or lice (something common among shepherds out among the flocks)...

v.9 - **mare**... to our ears not the most flattering of comparisons, but if it were among **Pharaoh's chariots** it would have been magnificent to look at. And a *mare* among his mighty male war horses might have caused quite a stir!...

v.11 - **ornaments**... the universal desire to see our brides decked out in the finery prescribed by one's culture is proclaimed in this interjection by the chorus

vv.12-14 - **nard** (expensive perfume)... **myrrh** (aromatic resin, like what the Wise Men brought to Jesus)... **henna blossoms** (which smell like roses)... the intoxicating wonder of hoped for physical love is expressed through our sense of smell... **My beloved**... the most common way for the woman to refer to her man (31 times in 8 chapters)... **Engedi**... an oasis of streams and waterfalls in the canyons above the dry desolation around the Dead Sea

v.15 - **doves**... a symbol for sexuality common in ancient eastern Mediterranean cultures... probably code for "sexually attractive"

vv.16-17 - **our couch is green**... the bride describes their bed as verdant, alive, fruitful... their time of their union is soon to come and their hope for highest mutual pleasure, blessed and beautiful, will be realized

Verse 2:1-2 - **Sharon**... refers to the western coastal plain in the north of Israel... **rose**... **lily of the valleys**... common flowers (most likely bulbs)... the force of these metaphors is that the woman claims to be "just one of many girls" but at the same time very special indeed: "She does not claim that she is unique in all the world, but she does claim that her role as woman is beautiful and powerful" (Garrett, p.149)... **among brambles**... **among the young women**... The man responds that she is, in fact, unique, *the one*, his one-and-

only... the implications regarding monogamy are clear...

v.3 - **apple tree**... the woman responds in kind... trees of the forest do not bear fruit, the apple tree does...

v.4 - **his banner over me is love**... her beloved is like a king who comes as an ally and not an enemy, coming in peace and not to conquer... "a veiled anticipation of the metaphor of the woman as a walled city that the man takes without combat or violence" (Garrett, p.150)

v.5-6 - **raisins**... **apples**... foods believed to be mild aphrodisiacs... **sick with love**... her conflicted desire, the love she desires and the risks it entails, must be solved by her lover's love and affection... **left hand**... **right hand**... **embraces**... anticipated love play is in view here...

v.7 - **not stir up or awaken love until it pleases**... an important phrase that is repeated two more time (3:5 & 8:4)... this is a metaphor for becoming sexually active for the first time in one's life... the strong admonition (in the midst of all this frankly expressed hoped for longing for this very thing!) is simply this: Avoid promiscuity and save your virginity for marriage. wait until you find and marry the man/woman you love... *Because her man tenderly sustains her, she is at peace about "awakening love" with him. A woman who awakens love with a man who is not giving of himself or prepared to sustain her will find herself bitter & desolate* (Garrett, p.155).



Read & Reflect - 1:5-2:7

First Reading/A Flood of Images: *Rugged desert tents, delicate palace decorations, grape vines, green pastures full of sheep & goats, horses & chariots, sparkling silver & gold & jewels, royal couches, bags of perfume, pretty birds, rooms of cedar & pine where the deer & the antelope play, fruit & flowers everywhere...* Which of these images do you find most beautiful & meaningful? Which most confusing?

Search & Consider - *The Virgin's Education I* (1:5-6)

Where do you see the following in the Maiden's assessment of herself and her situation?

Confidence:	Discontent:
Fear/Concern:	Hope:

How is her inability to "tend her own vineyard" symbolic of her basic dilemma? (What situation does she desire? How will she get there?)

Search & Consider - *Finding the Beloved* (1:7-8)

What information does the Young Woman seek? How might possessing directions to her Beloved protect her from appearing to be "just another girl"?

Why do you think the Man (or Chorus) tells her, in essence, to go and look rather than simply giving her directions?

What does all of this suggest about the relationship between love and risk and hope?

Search & Consider - *First Song of Mutual Love* (1:9-2:6)

In trying to express their love and desire for each other, what kinds of comparative images do they use? Which would you like someone to use in describing you?

v. 2:7 - What does it mean to "awaken love" before "it pleases?" Why is it so important not to do this?

Apply

"Real love involves real risk and real hope... How and when have you seen this truth worked out in your own life?

Marriage Builder's Corner

Questions for Couples to Share: 1. What risks were involved in the drama of your discovery of each other, courtship & marriage? How & why did you continue to pursue each other?...
2. What is your favorite "pet name" or "pet image" your beloved uses for you? Why do you like it?

Prayer: *God of Love, Giver of every good and perfect gift, I thank You so much for my husband/wife [insert pet name here]. Help me to keep/renew/acquire the habit of reminding him/her how special he/she is to me by the loving affirmations and flattering comparisons I say out loud about him/her and especially to him/her. May You, Lord, be honored by the praise I give my beloved spouse like you are by the Lovers' praise in the Song of Songs. Amen.*

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history's great Christian apologists, wrote a wonderful little book about these words and the "loves" they signify which he entitled *The Four Loves*. In it he explores the subtleties of these different ways of understanding and experiencing the deep relational realities of "love" so easily missed in a language like ours that attempts to deliver the cargo of so many meanings in one big ship. The "Love" boat lands, and English-speaking people aren't sure what it contains. So it is good to have the Word of God, the Greeks and Dr. Lewis and his book here at the Harbor of Truth helping us carefully to unload and rightly to apply this most important of words, "Love."

Storge can be called "family love" or "clan love." It is I've-got-your-back love. Lewis suggests the word *Affection*, and notes that this is the most "natural" of loves for it is related to species survival. It is somewhat instinctual. Mothers love their children. Fathers and uncles and cousins protect their own. You may think your sister is a selfish pig, but woe betide any outsider who messes with her.

Phileo is "friendship love." It is side-by-side love. It happens when people find common interests and activities and attractions that draw them together and give them a shared identity. Lewis says this is the least "natural" (because unlike *Eros* and *Storge* it has little or no utilitarian value for the survival of our species) and the least jealous (It is easily shared with an expanding group) of the loves. In this kind of love *Do you love me?* means *Do you see the same truth?*—or at least, do you *care about* the same truth?" (p.97)

Eros is "possessive love." It is face-to-face love. It is this-is-mine-and-I-must-keep-it love. So a man loves his wife. So a woman loves her husband. So they both love their home. This type of love is what Solomon's *Song of Songs* expresses and celebrates, and it is greatly misunderstood because it is so powerful and is fueled too often and to its own destruction by the foolish impulses of sin (Just as *storge* love and *phileo* love are, but perhaps less dramatically). In our sexually-explicit, sexually-fearful and sexually-confused culture, we think of a word like *erotic* and we think it is synonymous with "bad," "nasty" or "evil." It is not. It is a beautiful and noble part of God's creation which gets bent and twisted in the hands of sinful humanity. Lewis says *Eros* is "that state which we call 'being in love'" or "that kind of love which lovers are 'in'" (p. 131). Noting that sexuality may operate without *Eros* or as part of *Eros*, he salutes the nobility of this type of love when he says this: "Without *Eros*, sexual desire, like every other desire, is a fact about ourselves. Within *Eros* it is rather about the Beloved... *Eros*, though the king of pleasures, always (at its height) has the air of regarding pleasure as a by-product. To think about it would plunge us back in ourselves, in our own nervous system. It would kill *Eros*, as you can 'kill' the finest mountain prospect by locating it all in your own retina and optic nerves. Anyway, whose pleasure? For one of the first things *Eros* does is to obliterate the distinction between giving and receiving" (p.136). Then, finally, Lewis warns: "We must not give unconditional obedience to the voice of *Eros* when he speaks most like a god. Neither must we ignore or attempt to deny the god-like quality. This love is really and truly like Love Himself. In it there is a real nearness to God (by Resemblance); but not, therefore and necessarily, a nearness of Approach. *Eros*, honoured so far as love of God and charity to our fellows will allow, may become for us a means of Approach. His total commitment is a paradigm or example, built into our natures, of the love we ought to exercise towards God and Man. As nature, for the nature-lover, gives a content to the word *glory*, so this gives a content to the word *Charity*. It is as if Christ said to us through *Eros*, 'Thus—just like this—with this prodigality—not counting the cost—you are to love me & the least of my brethren'" (p.153).

Agape is "divine love." It is disinterested (no concern about what's in it for me), unconditional, self-sacrificing "gift love." It is I-will-give-so-you-will-have, I-will-die-so-you-will-live love. The word according to historians was borrowed by the early Christians and then infused with their own meaning conveyed to them through the teaching and life of Jesus Christ. *Agape* is who God is and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. *Agape* is the creative reason for Creation. *Agape* is the redemptive reason for Redemption. *Agape* is the life-giving reason for Life. Lewis calls this kind of love *Charity*, and he notes that it always involves great risk: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell" (p.169). He also suggests, brilliantly, that it is this *agape Charity* "love" that gives rise to and sustains all the others. "Every human love," Lewis says, "at its height has a tendency to claim for itself a divine authority. Its voice tends to sound as if it were the will of God Himself. It tells us not to count the cost, it demands of us a total commitment, it attempts to over-ride all other claims and insinuates that any action which is sincerely done 'for love's sake' is thereby lawful and even meritorious. That erotic love and loves of one's country may thus attempt to 'become gods' is generally recognized. But family affection may do the same. So in a different way, may friendship... We may give our human loves the unconditional allegiance which we owe only to God. Then they become gods: then they become demons. They will destroy us, and also destroy themselves. For natural loves that are allowed to become gods do not remain loves. They are still called so, but can become in fact complicated forms of hatred... The loves prove that they are unworthy to take the place of God by the fact that they cannot even remain themselves and do what they promise to do without God's help." (pp.18, 19, 166). Without *agape*, the other "loves"—*storge*, *phileo* and *eros*—will collapse and crush themselves and cease to function in the healthy, life-giving way they are meant to do. Lewis gives us wisdom we may not want to hear when he adds this thought: "The invitation to turn our natural loves into Charity is never lacking. It is provided by those frictions and frustrations that meet us in all of them; unmistakable evidence that (natural) love is not going to be 'enough'—unmistakable, unless we are blinded by egotism" (p.186).

The real love expressed by the Greek word *Eros* is wondrous and eternal, a glorious and satisfying window to the nature and character and purposes of God, when fueled by supernatural *Agape* rather than by sin and our natural selfishness. It is so good for a husband to be jealously possessive of his wife. It honors God for a woman to say of her husband, "You are mine!" It is marvelous wisdom for married couples, with the support of their community, to guard the boundaries of their marriage bed with untiring seriousness, dogged determination and death-defying courage. It is a blessing beyond our imagining to have a Heavenly Father whose possession of us is a non-negotiable death-defying part of his eternal "You Are Mine!" will for us. And so He gives us the *Song of Songs* in His Word so we will know His love for us, and for us to share, in greater fullness.