

*Love Song*Song of Songs
5:2-6:10*Solomon's Song of Songs
and The Vindication of Love*The Vindication of LoveThe Bride Searches for Her Beloved

She

² I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

³ I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?

⁴ My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me.

⁵ I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt.

⁶ I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke.

I sought him, but found him not;

I called him, but he gave no answer.

⁷ The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls.

⁸ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

Others

⁹ What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?

The Bride Praises Her Beloved

She

¹⁰ My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.

¹¹ His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven.

¹² His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.

¹³ His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh.

¹⁴ His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires.

¹⁵ His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars.

¹⁶ His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Others

⁶ Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

Together in the Garden of Love

She

² My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies.

³ I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

Solomon and His Bride Delight in Each Other

He

⁴ You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.

⁵ Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me—Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.

⁶ Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young.

⁷ Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.

⁸ There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number.

⁹ My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

¹⁰ "Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?"

Notes on Song of Songs 5:2-6:10

Summary - This section, immediately following the hauntingly beautiful song of consummation (4:16-5:1), presents three post-consummation “wedding night songs” that mirror the three pre-consummation wedding night songs found in 3:1-4:15 (a section I entitled “The Risk of Love”).

The deed is done. The marriage of bride and groom has been emotionally, spiritually, physically, intimately and irreversibly consummated in the supreme act of human love. There is no going back.

Realizing the depth of her commitment, that her identity cannot now be separated from the will of her husband and the love he must choose to keep giving her, the bride expresses her fear and anxiety in the first song which could be entitled “The Bride’s Pain” (5:2-8). She has lost her virginity. Will her new husband now lose interest in her?

Then the Bride and Chorus sing of her recovery of her groom, first by remembering her love for him and celebrating his attributes and then by affirming his location with her rather than away from her (5:9-6:3)

Finally, the Groom, with an ending show of support from the Chorus, affirms his love for his Bride with a song (6:4-10) that is just like the one he sang immediately before their marriage was consummated (4:1-15). Thus, beautifully and powerfully, he assures her that her fears are unfounded. Her preciousness to him has not changed. She has not been duped into playing the prostitute. Her commitment to love him was an unavoidable risk, but she was not foolish to trust in him. She is his wife, and she can count on his love. So, we may call this series of songs “The Vindication of Love.”

v.5:2 - **I slept but my heart was awake...** may indicate that this is a kind of dream sequence, or at least a surreal expression rich in symbolism... **My beloved is knocking... Open to me...** with somewhat stereotypical male assertiveness, her groom is calling for sexual intimacy...

v.5:3 - **I had put off my garment, how could I put it on?...** This may be a symbolic expression of her caution concerning the loss of her virginity. Once “taken off” it cannot be put back on...

vv.5:4-5 - **...I arose to open to my beloved...** Slower in her arousal than her man and with deeper concerns about the act than his narrow focus on physical release allows, the Bride nevertheless gives herself to him and joins completely in the “thrill.”

v.5:6 - **...but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me... I sought him and found him not...** Basic male and female differences may be in view here, differences hard for new spouses to understand and appreciate... Having achieved physical release, the Groom’s interest in intimacy plunges toward zero while the Bride, slower to reach the plateau, remains on the heights and suddenly feels alone up there. “What has happened?,” she wonders, and her fears rise within her. Has she made a life-altering mistake?

5:7-8 - **The watchmen found me... beat me... bruised me... took away my veil...** The watchman of the city may be a metaphor for the Bride’s virginity, and the beating, bruising

and veil removal may be symbolic that it has now been lost... **...tell him I am sick with love...** She calls upon the Chorus of young women to help her find again her seemingly lost beloved, and this indicates that though her love-sick anxiety at this point is deep and real, she will not be debilitated by it: She will push through her confusion, continue her transition from girl to wife, and reclaim her life of love. *The final line, that she is wounded by love, repeats a line from Song 2:5. There her pain came from the fact that she was yearning for a sexual relationship with her lover but was at the same time filled with dread. Here, her hurt is more real, what she both wanted and dreaded has come to pass.* (Garrett, p.216)

v.5:9 - **What is your beloved more than another?...** The question of the Chorus forces the Bride in the midst of her anxiety to remember her Groom and why he is so special to her, to let her love for *Him* overshadow her fears. It is this love that will enable her to complete her transition from single girl to married wife.

vv.5:10-16 - Like 4:1-15, this section is a “Wasf” which is a middle-eastern poetic form in which the writer praises his beloved, typically describing parts of her body... In this case, it is the woman describing her man as the Bride remembers her beloved and sings his praise from his head down to his legs using highly symbolic language... **This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem...** Her final word in this song says in effect, “No wonder I love him!” It also affirms that she is no longer “one of the girls.” She belongs not to the “daughters of Jerusalem,” but to her husband who is now her friend/companion.

vv.6:1-3 - **Where has your beloved gone?... down to his garden...** The question and answer of this section counters the earlier expression of anxiety and loss when her beloved seemed to have “turned and gone.” Where is he? He is here

with me. I am his garden, and he is in it, in love, with me. I am the place where his love flourishes and grows... Her closing affirmation is a profound affirmation of the marriage union designed by God and enjoyed by men and women everywhere and in all times: **I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine!**

vv.6:4-10 - **You are beautiful... my love...** Now the Groom offers his own song of praise to his beloved bride. With

similar expressions and some identical phrases from his earlier “Wasf,” he reassures her that she is as beautiful and desirable to him on this side of their sexual union as she was before. She need not fear: She is, after giving herself completely and exclusively to him, his one-and-only companion, his one-and-only love... **lovely as Jerusalem... beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners...** in 4:1-15, the Bride was called a “locked garden” indicating her virginal inaccessibility. Now she is compared to awesome heavenly bodies and grand cities accessible except in times of war. He has come to her in love, in peace. And in taking her virginity he has not humiliated her or diminished her: To him she is nothing short of awesome! His urgent passion to have her is more than matched by his profound willingness to love her... The Vindication of Love!

By repeating his previous words of admiration for her, the man implies that his desire for the woman is undiminished by his having consummated the relationship with her.
- Duane Garrett, *Song of Songs*, p. 229

Read & Reflect - 5:2-6:10

First Reading: Which of these titles would you choose for this passage of The Song?

- After the Honeymoon.... Love Hurts... The Agony and the Ecstasy... Women are from Venus, Men are from Mars
 The Vindication of Love... Other _____

BECAUSE... _____

Search & Consider

5:2-8 - What kinds of anxieties accompany the thrill of the wedding night for the Bride? Why?

What are some ways a wife might “seek him, but find him not,” or “call him but hear no answer?”

Assuming that the Bride did not actually go outside and get attacked by city watchmen (a highly unlikely interpretation of this passage), what do the “watchmen” seem to symbolize? Why is this important at this point in the drama?

5:9-16 - How does the Bride direct her thoughts in a way that helps to calm her fears? How does the Chorus help her?

Which of the descriptions of her new husband do you find most intriguing? Most confusing? And/or most attractive?

6:1-3 - Where does the Bride tell the Chorus that her recently-lost Groom has gone? Where is “his garden?” What does this mean?

6:4-10 - What makes these words of great significance to the Bride?

Which of these descriptions do you find most intriguing? Most confusing? And/or most attractive?

How is the Bride’s risk of love vindicated?

Apply

In light of this section, how would you advise someone who was anxious about committing to another in marriage?

How does all of this illuminate the name “Bridegroom” used by & of Jesus in relationship to His people (Mt. 9:15;25:1ff; John 3:29)?

Marriage Builder’s Corner

Question for Couples to Share: 1. What is one way that loving & marrying you was a risk for your spouse?
2. How have you seen your beloved partner vindicate your decision to love him/her enough to marry him/her? (Do not neglect the simple & profound response: “By simply sticking with me through thick and thin.”)

Prayer: *Lord we thank You, first of all, for each other, for the love given and received in so many ways through our years together. We rejoice and believe that You are honored by our ability and willingness to say with each other, “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.” And we thank you that in our marriage we see and reflect the truth of your love and faithfulness to us. Jesus, You are our faithful Bridegroom, the passionate Lover of our souls. Hallelujah! Amen.*

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David A. Hubbard on the Glorious Concert of the Song of Songs

In my preparations to teach and preach on this intriguing and often misunderstood book of the Bible, I ran across a wonderful commentary written by one of the professors at Fuller Theological Seminary I was blessed to sit under and learn from many years ago. Dr. David Allan Hubbard was a Hebrew and Old Testament Scholar and a demanding professor. He was also for many years the president of the seminary.

In the introduction to his Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon commentary, in the Thomas Nelson "Preacher's Commentary" Series (v.16) published in 1991, he offers an inspiring summary of the thematic brilliance and contemporary relevance of this little-used Book found in God's Word...

David Carr has pointed out that the shift in the nineteenth century from an allegorical to a literal reading was accompanied by what he calls a "functional decanonization" of the Song. That is, while the academy and the Church now recognize the sexual nature of the Song, this has led to less actual use of the text in sermons and even academic writing. Those of us who believe that the whole canon is relevant to modern Church and society would conclude then that the battle is only half won if, when the text's true nature is recognized, it is not then used.

- Tremper Longman III, Song of Songs, p.62

"Sexual promiscuity, sexual abuse, sexual confusion, and sexually transmitted diseases have reached epidemic proportions. The cry for sex education, beginning at an early age, is voiced ever louder and in ever more influential circles. The church must hear and be part of the answer. At stake is the true meaning of our humanity. For that, Christ is the only adequate answer. Part of Christ's answer will come to his people through the Song of Songs.

Its *themes* provide balance and insight in an area where we are unsteady of foot and dull of eye. Among the many that may be singled out, these four have been useful to me and will appear more than once in the discussion of the title and poems of the Song.

Love is mutual. The book features two people with equal commitment to the pursuit of its fullness. The woman's eagerness is matched by the man's delight. Without openly saying so, the partners have imbibed of the nectar of Genesis 1-2: sex is for enjoyment, for covenant, and for procreation. None of those God-given purposes is truly achieved without mutuality. Neither spouse does bargaining or contracting with the other. Halfway for each is not commitment enough. Both parties look for ways to say yes to each other's needs and desires. Both own the responsibility to support the other. In so doing, both demonstrate the truth of the divine covenant that yokes God to his people, Christ to his church.

Love is exclusive. marital love is what the Song celebrates. The ceremonial settings of Poems III (3:6-5:1) and V (6:4-8:4) should be proof enough of this. We are not dealing with extramarital dalliance, which would not evoke the cheers of the daughters of Jerusalem and the other companions. Nor are we viewing premarital experimentation, against which the culture would have closely guarded, as the final chapter of the book testifies. No effort is spared, no literary device is left idle in making clear that the partners are pledged fully to each other and only to each other. *Metaphors* of exclusiveness (4:12-5:1; 4:4; 7:5), *vows* of exclusiveness (2:16; 6:3; 7:10), a *game* of exclusiveness (5:2-6:3), a *test* of exclusiveness (8:8-9), *yearning* for exclusiveness (8:6-7), *boasts* of exclusiveness (she: 8:10; he: 8:11-12)--these combine to form a theme so dominant that it can rightly be called the main melody of the poems. When we hear this melody sung in the context of the entire Bible we know that the tune was learned from the God of the covenant who bound Himself not to leave or forsake His people. Fragments of that love song are found in Hosea 14:4-7, where Israel's Husband promises love, shelter, fruit, and healing to His bride in phrases akin to snatches of Solomon's Song. Whether on divine lips or human, it is the music of covenant loyalty, and its prominent theme is faithfulness.

Love is total. Marriage is to a person, not to a body or a brain, not to a cook or a breadwinner, not to a bank account or a security blanket. Love needs to remain bright even when affection, admiration, and approval grow temporarily dim. If love is misdirected to a physical attribute or a behavioral pattern, it finds excuse to wane when these things change. It is total when it is fixed on the whole person of the partner. The Song sings of a *total regard* that each has for the other. The relationship goes far beyond their mutual attraction. They long for each other's voices as well as bodies. They are firm friends as well as passionate lovers. They have made to each other a *total commitment* that fire cannot melt, that bribery cannot dissolve. They find their completion (Hebrew *shalom*, peace) in each other. Compared to this, all other commitments are not total but partial, except our commitment to God. But even that commitment is expressed most consistently and clearly in our covenant with each other.

Love is beautiful. It deserves to be expressed in graceful language. It has the poise to center in the beauty of the other person, not in one's own. It has eyes to see inner beauty even where outward beauty is lacking or fading. It thrives in lovely settings where the environment mirrors the quality of the love. It behaves attractively and hence imitates the beauty of God, which is the "beauty of holiness," the unique beauty of One who cares about His own and always expresses that care in righteousness and goodness.

But enough of these program notes! It is time for the concert to begin. We are ready to hear the melodies and harmonies of the best of songs. Let them sing for themselves" (David A. Hubbard, Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs, pp. 260-261).