

# Love Song

Song of Songs

7:1-8:7

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

## The Power of Love

He

- 7 How beautiful are your feet in sandals,  
O noble daughter! Your rounded thighs are like  
jewels, the work of a master hand.
- 2 Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine.  
Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies.
- 3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.
- 4 Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools  
in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is  
like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus.
- 5 Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks  
are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses.
- 6 How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one,  
with all your delights!
- 7 Your stature is like a palm tree,  
and your breasts are like its clusters.
- 8 I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit.  
Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,  
and the scent of your breath like apples,  
9 and your mouth like the best wine.

She

- It goes down smoothly for my beloved,  
gliding over lips and teeth.
- 10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.

### The Bride Gives Her Love

- 11 Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge  
in the villages;
- 12 let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the  
vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have  
opened and the pomegranates are in bloom.  
There I will give you my love.

- 13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our  
doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I  
have laid up for you, O my beloved.

### Longing for Her Beloved

- 8 Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my  
mother's breasts! If I found you outside, I would kiss  
you, and none would despise me.
- 2 I would lead you and bring you into the house of my  
mother— she who used to teach me. I would give you  
spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate.
- 3 His left hand is under my head,  
and his right hand embraces me!
- 4 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.
- 5 Who is that coming up from the wilderness,  
leaning on her beloved?

Under the apple tree I awakened you.  
There your mother was in labor with you;  
there she who bore you was in labor.

- 6 Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong  
as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
the very flame of the Lord.

- 7 Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can floods drown it.  
If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house,  
he would be utterly despised.

- Song of Songs 7:1-8:7



## Notes on Song of Songs 7:1-8:7

**Summary** - The love poems of this section parallel those of 1:9-2:7. In the former songs the Bride and Groom, having sought and found one another, expressed their mutual, exclusive desire in passionate anticipation of the day that was soon to come--their wedding day. The chorus told of the ornaments they would make for the occasion, and the couple praised each other with highly stylized and symbolic images.

Now the new husband and wife offer similar songs, but this time the admiring descriptions of each another are accompanied by expressions of their intentions to make love... For the husband, his woman is no longer a "locked garden" (see v. 4:12), so he says "I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit." And the wife invites her man into their "vineyard" of ripened fruits and says, "There I will give you my love."

Then, in chapter 8, verses 5-8, we have the “Claiming the Beloved” song that parallels the “Finding the Beloved” song of 1:7-8, and in these lines we find some of the most beautiful and powerful words about love found anywhere in all literature... *Set me as a seal upon your heart... love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave... Many waters cannot quench love...*

7:1-9 - The husband’s song here is interesting in a couple of respects. Though he begins with her sandaled feet, she seems otherwise to be wearing little or no clothing. Also, at the highpoint of his physical description, before declaring his intention to make love with her, he lingers at her face and head. *This focus conveys*, says Dr. Duane Garrett (p.250), *an appreciation for the person and personality of the woman since the face, more than any other part of the body, physically presents a person’s individuality.* It is not simply a female body that enralls this lover, it is his woman in her entirety!... **ivory tower** (7:4) may be compared to the “Tower of David” of 4:4. The prior military language may indicate a kind of fortress he was unwilling to breach by force. Now the military language is gone. She is for him a pillar of strength, beauty and craftsmanship where, by sincere invitation and joyful agreement, he takes up residence... **I say I will climb the palm tree...** He announces his loving intentions. With the kind of determination it would take to scale a branchless date palm to retrieve its fruit, he will seek to share the pleasures of their marriage bed.

7:9-8:4 - The wife now offers her answering song of invitation and delight... **I am my beloved’s and his desire is for me** (7:10)... Previously (2:16 & 6:3), she has said that she belongs to her lover and her lover belongs to her. The change to “and his desire is for me” may be significant. Dr. Garret again: *The locus of love and desire here is the woman’s body; all possessiveness and desire are directed toward her. While it is still true that the man and woman mutually possess one*

*another; it is the woman’s body that is the domain of their love* (p.245)... **mandrakes**... in ancient times these were thought to possess special curative, fertility and aphrodisiac powers... **O that you were like a brother to me** (8:1)... to our ears this is a strange thing to say, but it indicates the wife’s desire to be more open about her affection toward him--to shout her love from the mountain!--in a culture that forbade public displays between spouses while allowing it between siblings... **house of my mother**... a euphemism for her place of conception... **juice of my pomegranate**... what she cannot show in public, she will passionately offer in private... This kind of language from both husband and wife clearly conveys the idea that by God’s design, and confirmed in His Word, sexual activity is for pleasure and not for reproduction only.

8:5-7 - The power of love is affirmed and celebrated... **apple tree** (8:5)... symbolic of both physical love in the moment and reproductive activity throughout the generations (such trees produce luscious fruit and have many tangled branches)... **Set me as a seal** (8:6)... a sign of covenant commitment. Like a scroll marked with a seal by the king who owns it, this man is to open himself only to the woman he belongs to (Note: It is the woman, in a highly patriarchal culture!, who is claiming exclusive ownership over the man.)... **strong as death**... The couple’s love binds them together as relentlessly as death... **jealousy fierce**... those who love passionately are rightfully and passionately possessive... In this human lovers model the love of God for His people... **Many waters cannot quench love** (8:7)... Once the fires of love are kindled, they will not be put out by all the water in the world!... *To marry is to give one’s life to another; and whoever marries has died to all others... No one should lightly or thoughtlessly enter into a love or sexual relationship. To do so is to invite emotional catastrophe.* (Garrett, p.257).

**Read & Reflect - 7:1-8:7**

**First Reading:** How do the love songs you read here compare with those found toward the beginning of The Song? What is the same? What is different?

**Search & Consider**

**7:1-8** - In his admiring description, why do you suppose the man focuses on his beloved’s head & face (7:4-5)?

**7:9-8:4** - Through all of the garden imagery, to what is the wife inviting her beloved (7:12-13; 8:2)? Why, then, would she say she wishes he was like her “brother” (8:1)?

**Apply**

**8:5-7** - Which of the images for love’s power do you find most interesting? Most difficult? Most compelling? (Apple tree? Seal? Death? Fire? Wealth?)... When have you seen love like that in your own life experience?

# Abide & Conquer: A Wedding Homily on John 15:1-17

Ordinarily what happens during a worship service like this one, or on a Sunday morning, is that someone like me gets up and reads from the Bible, and then he offers something called a sermon, or a homily, or a message. If it is a good message it is about the Bible passage, explaining it, bringing it to life, stimulating listeners to their own transforming encounter with God through His Word.

The unfortunate thing about always going in this order is that we sometimes accidentally give the impression that what is really valuable, what is really the focal point of the service, what is really important to remember so you can discuss it later, is the sermon. Often people are not prepared to listen when the scripture is read. They're waiting for the stories and the humor and the main points of the pastor's message. This is unfortunate, a significant mistake. God's words given to us in the Old and New Testaments are the important ones.

So, perhaps as a kind of pastoral protest in honor of your wedding, I am going to offer in place of a wedding homily what amounts to a long introduction to an important Scripture reading.

*Bride and Groom*, on your wedding day I would like to give you a gift. No gift you receive today will cost less in terms of dollars and cents, but don't let that fool you. My gift, I am quite certain, is very, very valuable.

My gift is a word.

I hope and I pray that you will use it often. It's OK because this is a word that does not wear out with use. It becomes stronger. I hope you will remember this word throughout your life together. Call it to mind in the joyous moments of blissful marriage partnership. Pin it to the inside of your foreheads for the challenging times of painful marital discord. Make it the watchword of your union.

My gift is a word. And the word is "Abide."

Abide: That is what you are committing to do with each other today.

Abide: The weight of your decision to do this, no matter what, will anchor a foundation for your marriage to support a variety of additional blessings.

Abide: Stripped of all the superficial romantic notions concerning the institution, this is what marriage is all about. One man and one woman in love, in a chosen attitude of self-giving toward one another, abiding together, making a common *abode* (a word from the same root).

Abide, and together you will meet the onslaught of daily duels with forces outside and within you attempting to divide your "one-flesh" relationship back into two selfish people.

*Abide and conquer.*

To abide is to remain, to stay with, to bear with. Remain with each other, and not just physically. There are too many tragic marriages where husband and wife share a roof but have long since stopped abiding with each other. Stay with each other emotionally. Share your joys and your sorrows. Bear with one another intellectually. Tell each other your secret thoughts, and give each other plenty of room to think differently about the same things. Sharing is more important than agreeing.

Abiding is what marriage is about. It is the perfect solution to the original human problem. As you may remember from the account of creation given in the first chapters of the Bible, there is a deep rhythm to God's creative process: God said "Let there be..." And there was. And God saw that it was good.

Day one through day five: God said "Let there be..." And there was. And God saw that it was good.

Then on day 6 God created man, and at once things were better and worse. With the addition of a human being, made in God's own image, God looks and sees that all He has made is now not merely "good"--It is "very good!" But then the rhythm is broken. For the first time since His invention of time, God says, "It is not good..." & what is this original problem?... "It is not good for the man to be alone."

Loneliness is the original human problem. And there was nothing in all creation to solve the problem. No animal, vegetable or mineral would do. Loneliness for the man would be remedied by nothing less than a suitable partner, an equal, someone with which to abide, someone very much the same but also quite different. So in the first recorded act of responsive divine genius, God made woman. And with the wave of a rib essential humanity became, essentially, co-humanity, marriage became the essential human institution and abiding became the essential act of marriage.

Notice that I am calling abiding an act. I believe it is like all human acts in that it involves choice. You must choose to abide, to stay with, to be partners, to grow in your togetherness. By this ceremony today and by the laws of this state you are guaranteed the appearance of abiding. It is up to you to make, and continue making, this appearance a reality.

Abide! How can you do this? Let me spell out a few suggestions: A - B - I - D - E. Abide!

"A" is for Accepting.

Good abiding begins with radical acceptance.

Groom, you are not marrying a "model wife" today. *Bride*, you are not marrying a "model husband." There is no such person. Neither of you is uniting with a type, a hope, or a dream. You are not declaring your love for an ideal, or your faithfulness to someone you can see five years from now shaped into your own image of what a good partner ought to be. Take a look now at the one standing beside you today. It is a real person you are marrying. Praise God! It is one made in His image, not yours. Rejoice! What a wondrous gift!

But I'm afraid I have some bad news, too: This beautiful person you are marrying is a sinner. He will disappoint you. She will frustrate you. You will hurt each other sometimes by accident. You will hurt each other sometimes on purpose. Don't let this surprise you. Keep abiding. Resolve to say this continually for each other: "As God

loves and accepts me as His child, so I choose to love and accept you as my special and only partner. You do not have to change to earn my acceptance. It is my gift to you, & I will not take it back."

Out of this rich soil of acceptance, a beautiful husband grows, a beautiful wife blooms, and a beautiful marriage flourishes. And the wonderful fragrance of heavenly abiding enriches all who come near the garden of your love.

Accept each other just as you are, and then watch each other grow. That's good abiding.

"B" is for Believing.

## **Marriage Builder's Corner**

Read aloud and talk together about this Wedding Homily from Pastor Jay...

**Prayer:** *Our Lord and our God, we affirm and rejoice that You have not made us to be alone. You have made us for each other. You have made us for yourself. Help us to abide well as husband and wife. Help us to abide well together in You. Amen.*

# Teaching the Word of God

A Back Page Thought -----  
----- from Pastor Jay

Covenant -- *Abide (continued)* --

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Real abiding runs on the fuel generated by your mutual decision to believe in each other, to have faith in each other's promises, to foster a deepening trust.

You will be tempted to fear the worst in each other sometimes. It is better to believe the best. I am not suggesting you work a denying reality. That you must deal with together. But fear will expand and inflate if you let it. It will creep into places it doesn't belong. It will invite you to live under its dark speculations. Don't do it. Live in faith not fear. Believe in her "I love you." Trust he will not abandon you. Let that faith shape your marriage reality toward health and wholeness, toward real abiding.

"I" is for Including.

Include each other as much as possible in everything you do. Become "me" less and less to become "us" more and more. Abide. I realize that this exhortation flies in the face of cultural expectations here in America in the New Millennium. We are bombarded with daily messages and examples promoting rampant and destructive "individualism." Even marriage ceremonies today often seem to make more of an effort to maintain the individual identities of bride and groom than to affirm the "two becoming one flesh." No wonder there are so many lonely halves of married couples running around today. But God intends married people to be not a severed and lonely half but a fully integrated part of an enriching and growing whole. That's marriage. That's abiding. Find ways to include each other in everything you do. Do things together. Give each other permission to explore and enjoy individual activities, but tell about them and ask about them and share. "Groom, what's it like when you and the guys are cheering for your team like total idiots around the TV?... Bride, what did you learn from your Bible Study with your friends?... "I" is for including, and it's an important element in abiding as husband and wife.

"D" is for Dying.

If you are going to abide for all your worth, if you are going to grow to the fullness of love God desires for you in your marriage, you must learn to die for each other. It is a discipline wrapped in deep pain and deeper joy, and in it Jesus Christ is our example, our guide and our source of strength. It is a discipline absolutely impossible because we are human and absolutely necessary... because we are human. But Jesus can and will empower you to do it... because He is divine. He died for you, and He will help you in your holy dying... Dying to self-interest for the sake of your beloved... Dying to "my" agenda in favor of "our" growth... Dying to perceived needs, rights, comforts and dreams to achieve a richer life together... This you will dare to do if you are going to keep abiding, truly abiding in love as God intends you to do.

"E" is for Enjoying.

Abiding well will mean learning to enjoy each other, not just what you do for each other but the richness of your unique persons. There is a well of rich enjoyment and refreshment within each of you for your partner to drink from. The water from that well can make you laugh until your insides ache with enjoyment. It can make you burst with pleasure all the way to the tips of your toes. It can make you drunk with love for each other and for the God who gives such good gifts. It is good water and pure. Drink deeply. Let it spill over your chin. Enjoy.

Bride, Groom has the body of a man but inside is the heart of a rambunctious little boy. Enjoy! He will help you do things you wouldn't think you could do. He will help you make your life together a constant adventure and a lifelong celebration of the richness and vitality of the dynamic Spirit God has put in His children.

Groom, Bride has the soul of a woman but inside there is the mind of an inquisitive little girl. Enjoy! She will help you see things you would have missed. She will help you make your life together a joyful search for truth and a lifelong celebration of the richness and variety of God's creation.

I've given you a word, "Abide," but as you follow this command, united and always uniting as life partners under God, you will discover that the word "Abide" can be spelled L - O - V - E. And, finally, here is a last exhortation and encouragement:

The best thing you can do to abide well as a married couple is to abide together in Jesus Christ who is our Risen Savior and Living Lord. He will help you, strengthen you and challenge you to make your marriage all that God intends it to be. He will empower you to bear much fruit together. And everything I have said about abiding as human partners in marriage we can apply to abiding as partners with Jesus in discipleship... Abide in Him.

Accept His love for you and His rightful and gracious lordship over you... Believe. Trust wholeheartedly in His Word to you and His work for you... Include Christ consciously and intentionally in everything you do. If He can't be included, don't do it. And watch for what He is doing in the world around you, and involve yourself in those things... Die to yourselves in order to live abundantly for Him and for others as He directs you... And learn to Enjoy Jesus, not just what He has done and is doing for you but who He is and how He is revealing Himself to you by His Word and Spirit... Abide in Christ and He will abide in you, and you will abide well with each other.

And now I hope we are ready to hear the most important words of the day, from God's Word, John 15:1-17 (NASB)...

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.*