

Drunk With Love

By David Feddes

What is a kiss? Here's how Dictionary.com defines a kiss: "To touch or press with the lips slightly pursed and then often to part them and to emit a smacking sound." We maybe should call in a little higher caliber level of expert. A medical authority, Dr. Henry Gibbons Sr., defines a kiss as "the anatomical juxtaposition of two orbicular oris muscles in a state of contraction." That was helpful! Bacteriologist Arthur Bryan gives this definition: "A way of transferring up to 250 colonies of bacteria." The grumpy Chinese Communists, in the Beijing Workers Daily, say that a kiss is "a vulgar practice all too suggestive of cannibalism." Aren't those heart-warming definitions of a kiss?

So, there are different ways of looking at kisses. Here is a snippet of what the Scriptures have to say: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine... Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue... His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable" (Song of Songs 1:2; 4:11; 5:16). This doesn't say anything about the "juxtaposition" of this or that, but it may tell us more about what's actually going on with a kiss.

I want to reflect with you on the Song of Songs and on the very heart of it, which is an invitation and an affirmation of being drunk with love.

We're going to read from chapter 3:6 and chapter 5:1. There are several different sections in the Song of Songs. This book is not necessarily laid out as a story in the order of the time things happened. It's a poem, and things go in cycles. You get different views and different angles on love. This particular cycle goes through the wedding, and we find that it's a royal wedding.

A royal wedding--of shepherds

What is that coming ...? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men... all of them wearing swords... King Solomon made himself a carriage..., its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart. (3:6-11)

Now, before I read any further, there are some things that we ought to clarify about this royal wedding. The book is called The Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon, and some people take that to mean that it's about Solomon's love affair and Solomon's wedding. Not really. It's not a poem about Solomon or his love. We know that he had many—well, I don't know if you'd call them loves—but many women, and this poem is most likely not about Solomon.

It may be written by Solomon. Solomon, after all, wrote more than a thousand songs and was a great artist. Sometimes great artists write better than they live. They can portray things in fantastic ways with their skill in language and their insights into what's going on when they themselves have lived a much different kind of life than what they portray. But whether it's a song that's written in honor of Solomon or whether it's written by Solomon, it's not exclusively or mainly about Solomon.

One reason I say that is because of what it says earlier in the book itself. Who is actually involved here? The woman says, "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock." And the man says, "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" (Song of Songs 1:7-8). Solomon grew up in a palace. Solomon never trailed sheep and goats. This poem is probably not about Solomon's own love relationship and wedding. It is about the love between a young woman and young man who are shepherds.

Well, then, what's going on with all this stuff about the mighty and royal King Solomon coming to his wedding if it's really about a wedding of two shepherds?

Near the end of the Song of Solomon, it says this: "If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised" (8:7). Then it goes on to say, "Now Solomon had a vineyard. He let out [rented] the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand" (8:12).

Throughout the Song of Songs, the vineyard is a picture of the girl and of her giving herself to her man. Here there's just one "vineyard," one woman, that the man has for his own.

Solomon has his many "vineyards," his many women, and he had his reasons for getting so many. He married an awful lot of his wives for political reasons. A marriage would cement the political bonds with another kingdom that he wanted to work with. It would bring more money into the royal treasuries to do things that way. Solomon gained political power and financial power through his various marriages.

But Solomon missed out on something. He missed out on having that one precious vineyard. He missed out on what it is to really love and be loved. Solomon is the probable author of the book of Ecclesiastes, which he wrote near the end of his life after all of his pleasure trips and all the other things he tried out. After 1,000 women Solomon advised: "Enjoy life with the wife whom you love" (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

Wilt Chamberlain, the great basketball star, was a little bit like Solomon. He claimed to have slept with thousands of women, and he seemed to be bragging when he said that. But then, during an interview near the end of his life, he said, "You know, some guys think that it must have been great to be a guy like me with a thousand women, but I think perhaps it may have been better a thousand times with one woman."

Anyway, here in Song of Songs, this shepherd is having a royal wedding--because every wedding is a royal wedding! And he, in a sense, is better off than Solomon. To his beloved, he's got the dignity and status of royalty. When he shows up with his groomsmen, it's like Solomon guarded by his elite troops, who are ready to defend and fight, and they're there with all the pageantry.

Now, the groom may pull up in a run-down old Toyota, but it is the royal chariot. Or they may rent a limo for the day. Sometimes, with weddings, people go all out. They can't afford much,

but for one day, they dress up like Solomon and his queen. For one day, they rent a fabulous chariot. For one day, they splurge and throw a banquet that they're going to be paying for a long time. And they do all this because there is one day—even if you're not royalty most of the time—there is that one day when you are royalty, and you want to act like it and feel like it.

Sometimes girls dream and fantasize about their wedding day and exactly how it's going to go. They know what their dress is going to be like, they know the colors they're going to be picking and what all the bridesmaids are going to be decked out in. They may have the menu for the reception chosen. They know where they want to get married. There's just one small blank to fill in—the name of the groom!

Of course, there are hazards with that. When the groom is just a blank who is to be filled in, and the bride already had all her ideas, she may be in for a surprise. You may fantasize about this or that person, but in the end, it's a real person whom God gives you. There are some young girls who fantasize about this famous person or that rock star or that movie star, and they think like groupies. Then, somewhere along the line, they grow up a little, or they meet a real person, somebody better than any of those fantasies they dreamed about. A wedding is where you start a union with a real person and not just with a fantasy.

A wedding day is a very, very strange thing. As we see in the Song of Solomon and as we see in real life, a wedding day is the most public thing in the world, and it is the most private thing in the world.

The wedding day is filled with ceremony, being formal, marching in just the right place, and then standing in just the right spot. You even have to rehearse all that to make sure you get it right. You wear all the right clothes, and you all look so fancy. And then, the culmination of the wedding day is when you forget about formality, and the two of you are together with nobody else around, doing crazy things together.

On that wedding day, you make public vows in front of many witnesses. And on that wedding day, you whisper things in somebody's ear that you don't want anybody else to hear.

On your wedding day, there are crowds to celebrate, and yet you can't wait to be alone with each other.

On your wedding day, you wear the most expensive clothes you've ever put on, and the best part of the day is when you take off all your clothes.

Today, in Christian circles at least, the wedding day is prepared for and guarded by very strict, stern morality and commands and orders for self-control. And the fulfillment of it is total loss of control. A wedding day is a very strange and paradoxical thing, and a very wonderful thing.

On the wedding day portrayed in Song of Songs, there's the king—or at least the king for the day—showing up with his royal entourage. She sees him coming, and what a magnificent thing it is. And then he sees her.

Beholding beauty

"^{4:1} Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead." Now, this might not work on every girl, but if you've seen the beautiful mountains, and you've seen the slopes, and you've seen a whole flock coming down the slope from a distance, it reminds you of her hair.

"² Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young." In that day, it was a good thing not to have any teeth missing and to have straight teeth when you had no dentists, no orthodontists. Great teeth were quite a thing.

"³ Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. ⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors." This might not work as the introductory line to a girl—"Your neck is like a tower"—but you have to remember that this isn't a literal description of what she looks like. He's not saying, "You look like a huge bulwark of battlements that weighs 150,000 pounds." No, it's about being in awe of a great, majestic, overwhelming presence—like when you're in a cathedral or when you see a great fortress. It's not a comparison of size but of how awestruck he is.

"⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. ⁶ Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. ⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. ⁸ Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards." Come away from all those dangerous places and just come to me. You're going to be safe with me. We're going to be together forever.

"^{4:9} You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride." Isn't it strange to call a bride "my sister"? Well, even when you marry a bride, you see her as a person. You view her as somebody who's not just your lover but also a person and a part of your family. In fact, if you're both believers, she is your sister in the Lord.

"^{4:9} You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. ¹⁰ How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! ¹¹ Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. ^{4:12} A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed. ¹³ Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, ¹⁴ nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices-- ¹⁵ a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon."

The man see his wife as a garden. It's beautiful, it smells wonderful, it has all these delightful fruits, and it's locked—it has always been locked. He says, "You are a locked garden." Which would you rather have: garden that has been trampled by several hundred people who have left

all their litter behind, or one that is private, carefully tended, beautiful, and reserved just for you and you only? That's why this man feels so privileged—because he's being let into a garden that nobody else has entered. It's been locked and kept just for him.

This is why the Bible commands us not to give our body to someone else until marriage—not just to give us orders, but to show us the most delightful and wonderful way to enjoy each other. When you have kept your garden for that one person and that one person alone, it is a gift beyond measure.

Drunk with love

The man is delighted by his woman, and she says, "4:16 Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind. Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits."

He responds, "5:1 I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk."

And then, there is a word of blessing: "Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!" This blessing is the center of the whole book of Song of Solomon. It has 111 lines of poetry before it and 111 lines after it. The heart of the book is, "Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love."

When people think of what the Bible says about human bodies and romance, they may associate it with a variety of commandments and boundaries. But this is God's Word speaking, and it is saying that you are meant to be drunk with love.

When the Bible speaks less poetically, it simply says that a man "went in to his wife, and she conceived and had a child." That's what Song of Songs means when the woman says, "Come into my garden." It's an invitation to sexual intercourse. We may get a little squeamish about this kind of language, but sometimes we are more squeamish than the Bible itself. The invitation is for the two to "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24)—for one to enter the other, physically and also spiritually, so that their lives intermingle. This is how God designed us. This is what God wants us to rejoice in if we are married persons.

The man and woman see splendor in each other. He says to her, "I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots." Now, some girls might not like being compared to a horse, but if you like horses, it's a great compliment. He compares her to the most beautiful horse he's ever seen.

She compares him to a gazelle: "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag" (2:9). "Turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains" (2:17). "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices" (8:14). A woman loves a man who is masculine, swift, energetic, and daring—maybe even a little bit wild. Sometimes girls fall for the wrong guy because the wildness predominates. But it's good for a guy not to be entirely tame or predictable. He ought to be exciting, dynamic, a little bit wild. God meant us men to be that way.

Nobody else like you

When he looks at her, and she looks at him, they see things that nobody else sees. He looks at her and says: "As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women." And she says: "As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men" (2:2-3).

They see each other in a way that almost nobody else does. This is very hard to explain. They say these things about each other's attractiveness, and yet it is very possible that if you entered him in a contest for Mr. Universe and had him flex, his belly might stick out a bit, and he might not look all that great. If you entered her in a contest for Miss Universe, the judges might say she's not so hot and choose somebody else. But not if he was judging the contest!

There is something that a person in love sees in another. We sometimes say "love is blind." But what if the truth is that love is the only thing that sees accurately? What if what love sees is something that God means to be seen, noticed, cherished, and brought out? Maybe love is just about the only thing that isn't blind. Maybe only love can see another person's unique, God-given splendor.

When my wife Wendy grew up, she had brothers. They had lovely names for her, like "Buffalo Butt." They had lovely tasks for her, like throwing her in front of a hockey net and then shooting slap shots at her. They were hockey-loving Canadians, so they used the sister as the thing they fired pucks at—without pads. Brothers don't always see their sister as a beauty. They don't always treat her as a treasure.

But I remember the first time I saw Wendy. I thought she was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my life. I still do! When you see somebody, and God gives you a total delight in them, it is a wonderful thing..

There's a variety of poetry in the Song of Songs—I won't go into all of it—but let's face it: poetry often describes beauty better than the anatomical descriptions we get from doctors or the pornographic pictures we get from perverts.

When love songs hurt

- Children horrified by opposite sex
- Youth whose desires are awakening
- Singles yearning for a mate
- Fornicators with a littered garden
- Scarred survivors of abuse
- Separated and divorced persons
- Porn user who strays from spouse
- Spouses in dull, cold marriages
- Lonely widow(er)

I need to pause here because when you get into a wonderful love song like this and talk about the wedding day, it hurts. It hurts a lot of different people for a variety of reasons. Anytime a group of people gathers together, there is a lot of history and a lot of pain, as well as a lot of different positions in life.

Some kids listen to a sermon like this, and if they comprehend anything, their initial response is, "Yuck! Gross!" Some boys are horrified at girls, and some girls feel the same way about boys. Well, a good many of you will get over that at some point in your life and fall in love.

Others are at a stage where they're interested in these romance and sexuality. Their body is starting to wake up, they're starting to notice people of the opposite sex, but it feels kind of tacky and embarrassing to talk about in public. It's kind of creepy for a minister to talk about it.

Others are older singles who are yearning for a mate but don't have one yet, so this kind of passage can make them wish even more—but it doesn't exactly satisfy that wish.

Others come with a garden that's not exactly pristine. They have fornicated with many sexual partners. There's been quite a bit of litter and quite a bit of trampling. Now what? To read about that private garden and what it should be like is not exactly comforting for where you've been and what you've done.

Others find it uncomfortable to reflect on love poetry, let alone the actual things that love poetry talks about—the touching, the caressing, the kissing, and more—because of terrible things that were done to them by people who betrayed them, mistreated them, or abused them. Survivors of sexual abuse or other kinds of abuse sometimes have a hard time with this kind of message, let alone what the message is talking about.

There are people going through separation or who have been through divorce. They know their life hasn't exactly panned out the way the love poetry describes.

There are some who are already married, and even if they love their wife very much, they've got a porn habit, and they can't free themselves from it.

There are spouses who are married, but their marriage is dull and cold. They're devoted to Christ, they're devoted to each other, and they're not going to separate—but their marriage is more of a struggle than a joy.

There are widows and widowers who have lost a spouse. Earlier in life, they experienced love and romance and delight, but their spouse has died. They're alone. Sometimes the aloneness is amplified by the fact that not only do they not have their spouse anymore, but when you're widowed, you don't get invited to couples' events anymore.

In speaking about this love song in the Bible, we need to be aware of the different people who may feel pain hearing it. What about those who find that it hurts more than it brings joy?

One thing is always to keep in mind who the Creator is and the fact that even if there are things that we've misused or that we are not yet enjoying, they are good things that God has made. And we can be glad that there is such a God who makes such things.

Another is that we should not forget that God is a God who redeems, a God who raises from death, a God who takes some very serious messes and cleans them up again. He takes something that has fallen into terrible disrepair, that has perhaps gotten littered and misused in many ways, and he cleans it up again.

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation," says the Bible. And as that new creation takes shape, there are things that you may have given up on—things you thought, "This will never be true of me. I can never have that kind of relationship. I can never enjoy that kind of romance. I can never get that excited about somebody else's body." And then, God does it. Things that you thought were dead and impossible become alive and new.

Another benefit of studying Song of Songs is understanding of each other. The Bible says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). On Valentine's Day, some people are rejoicing. They are glad, and the Song of Songs is a living reality to them, at least to some degree. Even if you can't enjoy that yourself, or at least not yet, you can rejoice with those who do. And those of us who do rejoice in our beloved spouse can also, at the same time, mourn with those who mourn, sympathize with those who struggle, keep a friendly eye out for the singles who are still looking, support those who have fallen, and show kindness to the widower and the abuse survivor. God brings all of us together in one body. And as members of one body, we are called to love, to cherish, to build one another up, and to believe in the power of his new creation.

When the love songs hurt, we can still rejoice in God, expect great things from him, and empathize with others. Having said that, I'm going to move on with more of the love song itself.

Altogether desirable

Once is not enough for him to describe her, or for her to describe him. Here's a description of how he appears to her: "My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool. His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. " (5:10-16).

And when he describes her, which he does repeatedly, he sees her as a dazzling beauty: "Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me... Sixty queens there may be, and eighty concubines, and virgins beyond number; but my dove, my perfect one, is unique, the only daughter of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her. The maidens saw her and called her blessed; the queens and

concubines praised her: "Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?" (6:5-10)

You may have magazines filled with models and supermodels. You may have the screens filled with actresses and glamour girls, "but my dove, my perfect one, is unique." In his mind, the queens and supermodels say of his woman, "Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?" To him all the glory of the universe and all the beauty of the skies have been poured into this one person. And in his love-drunk state, he thinks everybody else sees her the same way. He thinks the supermodels are looking at her and saying, "Ooh, I wish I looked like that!"

"How beautiful are your feet... your rounded thighs... your navel... your belly... Your two breasts ... your neck... your eyes... your nose... your head... your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses. How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights!" (7:1-6) They're praising each other from head to toe and from toe to head, delighting in the one whom God has given them.

He: Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. 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, and your mouth like the best wine.

She: It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth. I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me. (7:7-10)

Again and again throughout the Song of Songs, you see desire getting stronger and stronger and then being satisfied in each other. There's a lot about each other's bodies, but that's not all. In any marriage, there is more to life than just the two bodies and what they do together. The two are simply doing life together. Everything is twice as nice when you do it together.

There's a beautiful snippet of poetry in chapter 2:

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. (2:10-13)

When Wendy and I got married, we went to Niagara Falls. I could have gone to Niagara as a tourist, but I suspect I enjoyed Niagara more than most of the other tourists did. I had more than a month off between when I finished my seminary studies and when I started as an intern pastor at a church. So Wendy and I had a month together to do things, to go places. We went to Niagara, which was in Ontario where she lived. Then we went out west where I grew up. We went to Yellowstone Park. We went to Glacier Park. We camped in a tent, and Glacier gets really cold at night—but that was no problem! I guess I could have gone to Niagara as a single and hiked Yellowstone and Glacier as a single, and it would have been pretty. But it looked even better with somebody else to enjoy it with.

That's how life is. You enjoy things together. You go through things that aren't so pleasant together. But the burdens are cut in half when you bear them together, and the joys are doubled when you enjoy them together.

Captivated by true love

Proverbs 5 emphasizes the joys of being captivated by true love. The world will try to sell you many alternative approaches—that sexuality is just something to be shared with as many people as possible, that you should run up as long a list as possible. But the Bible says:

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer--may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? (Proverbs 5:15-20)

Be captured by true love. And then remember that love has a number of aspects beyond simply physical desire or romantic attraction.

Well-timed love

Love has timing. Three times the Song of Songs says, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem... that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases" (2:7, 3:5, 8:4)

- Wait for the right person: don't fling yourself at just anybody.
- Wait for the right time: keep your passion in check until the wedding banquet
- Wait for the right mood: seize special marital moments when both feel passion

Timing is everything. You need to wait for **the right person** and not just fling yourself at anybody because you were dreaming of the wedding with "Name to be filled in later." You want the right groom or the right bride. Be willing to wait for the right person. It is better to be single and wish you were married than to be married and wish you were single. So waiting, and not awakening love until the right time, is important.

We also need to wait not just for the right person but for **the right time**. Keep your passion in check until the wedding banquet. There is an invitation to be drunk with love, but there is also a command about when not to be drunk with love.

For married people, sometimes you should wait for **the right mood**. There are special marital moments when both of you feel passion, and there are other moments where one of you feels lousy, or the other isn't interested, or life just gets in the way. The Song of Songs has that too. She's dreaming, she's sleeping, and all of a sudden, she wants her lover—but he's not there. All these different things can happen in a marital relationship. The ability to recognize timing—and sometimes just to laugh about weird timing—is all part of it.

Public love

Love is well-timed. It is also public.

Much of what Songs of Songs talks about is very private. Somebody once said to me, "They should make a movie of the Song of Songs." I replied, "Better not." Some things shouldn't be shown on a movie screen. Some things are meant to be private.

But other things are meant to be very public—the fact that you love each other, the fact that you are committed to each other, the fact that you make a very public declaration about what you are going to do in private: "The king has brought me into his chambers" (1:4). "He brought me to the house of wine, and his banner over me was love" (2:4). "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (6:3). They don't make any secret about it.

It's public love. It's committed love.

Committed love

"My lover is mine and I am his" (2:16). "I am my lover's, and my lover is mine" (6:3). "I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me" (7:10). This love is meant to be between one man and one woman in a lifelong commitment. We belong to each other.

As the apostle Paul said in the New Testament, you don't own your own body anymore—it belongs to your spouse. "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Corinthians 7:4). This is a committed love where you belong to each other and to nobody else.

Fierce love

Near the end of the Song of Songs comes an amazing declaration: "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. 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. (8:6-7)

Why is the phrase "forsaking all others" in old-fashioned wedding vows? You forsake all others because love is jealous and as fierce as the grave.

"Its flashes are flashes of fire—the very flame of the Lord." This is the only mention of God in the whole Song of Songs, but it tells you where love comes from. The flame of love is like a flash of lightning from the Lord. True love cannot be quenched or bought. It originates in the fierce and jealous love of God himself. And he wants us to experience at least something of that.

Realities in Song of Songs

For those of you who like bullet points and lessons rather than poetry, here they are:

- Romance is thrilling and delightful.
- Bodies can be fun and funny.
- Making love brings fantastic pleasures.
- The Inventor of all this is amazing.
- The best garden is kept very private.
- Marriage unites one man, one woman.
- Flattery and finance can't buy love.
- First love should stay aflame.
- Marriage is a drama and an appetizer.

Sometimes marriages grow cold or become routine. They just muddle along. Don't forget your first love. Don't forget the joy or the passion you once had. It can live again if you both desire it, pray for it, and seek it together. It may come slowly. It may come suddenly. But it is meant to be joyful and fantastic.

There are some people who think that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, are opposed to pleasure—like a wet blanket on romance. Do you think the enemy of pleasure invented making love? God is the one who invented it. He is the source of every good and perfect gift. He knows more about delight and pleasure than anyone else in the universe—because he is the Creator of it all, and he is the source of it all. He knows more about love than anyone else in the universe because God is love and the source of all loving. We should be grateful to him, glorify him, and be amazed at him.

Marriage mystery

Marriage is a drama and an appetizer. Marriage dramatizes the ultimate relationship. It's meant to portray the love of Christ for his church and the love of the church for Christ.

Love is strong as death... Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord (Song of Songs 8:6)

This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Eph 5:32)

As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:5).

The wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (Rev 19:7)

Marriage is an appetizer for the ultimate feast of love. Jesus says there will not be marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30). But there will be something better. Just as little kids now can't imagine girls being as much fun as mud pies, you might not be able to imagine anything being better than sex and marriage. But there will be—because the Inventor of love and pleasure has greater loves and greater pleasures still in store for us.

So, as you listen to the Song of Songs, praise the Maker of such love. Take the love he gives you now as an appetizer for greater love yet to come. Take it as a drama—and those of us who are married, let's make our marriages, by God's grace, a drama that shows the great love of the God who made us.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we thank you for this wonderful book of the Bible, for its poetic descriptions of love, and for the realities of love that we can enjoy. Kindle in us this flame of the Lord. For those of us who are married, may that flame burn more and more brightly. May it burn away all that is displeasing or that weakens our relationships. May it burn with all the blaze of first love. And as we grow older, Lord, may we have the best of first love and the best of seasoned, experienced love.

We pray for those who are young or single, still hoping for the day they might be married. Father, give them the encouragement and joy of knowing that there are fantastic things lying before them—things worth waiting for and worth seeking.

We pray for those, Lord, whose lives have been damaged or spoiled by sin—including this area of romance and sexuality. We pray, Father, for your healing, for your forgiveness, for the mercy of your grace.

We pray for the bonds of love that go beyond marriage—for the fellowship among believers. May we support and encourage each other when we struggle, when we feel lonely, when we feel let down, or when we feel that we have let others down.

Lord, when our marriages are struggling, help the wider family of faith to be an encouragement to those whose hearts are torn. We pray, Lord, that you will build us all together in your love.

May the realities and spirit of the Song of Songs—and of the Lord of that great song—fill our hearts and our lives. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Drunk With Love
Slide Contents
David Feddes

What is a kiss?

- To touch or press with the lips slightly pursed, and then often to part them and to emit a smacking sound. (dictionary.com)
- The anatomical juxtaposition of two orbicularis oris muscles in a state of contraction. (Henry Gibbons, Sr., MD)
- A way of transferring up to 250 colonies of bacteria. (Bacteriologist Arthur Bryan)
- A vulgar practice all too suggestive of cannibalism. (Beijing Workers Daily)

What is a kiss?

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine... Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue... His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. (Song of Songs 1:2; 4:11; 5:16)

A royal wedding

What is that coming ...? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men... all of them wearing swords... King Solomon made himself a carriage..., its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart. (3:6-11)

A royal wedding-- of shepherds

She: Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock.

He: 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. (Song of Songs 1:7-8)

This poem is probably not about Solomon's own love relationship and wedding. It is about the love between a young woman and young man who are shepherds.

Better off than Solomon

If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised. (8:7)

Solomon had a vineyard ... he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand. (8:12)

After 1,000 women Solomon advised: Enjoy life with the wife whom you love. (Eccl 9:9).

Beholding beauty

^{4:1} Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. ² Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. ³ Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. ⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. ⁵ Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. ⁶ Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. ⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. ⁸ Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards.

Heart held captive

^{4:9} You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. ¹⁰ How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! ¹¹ Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

Pure, private paradise

^{4:12} A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed. ¹³ Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, ¹⁴ nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices-- ¹⁵ a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Drunk with love

^{4:16} *She:* Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind. Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

^{5:1} *He:* I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.

Blessing: Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!

I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. (1:9)

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. (2:9)

Turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains. (2:17)

Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices. (8:14)

Nobody else like you

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

She: As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. (2:2-3)

When love songs hurt

- Children horrified by opposite sex
- Youth whose desires are awakening
- Singles yearning for a mate
- Fornicators with a littered garden
- Scarred survivors of abuse
- Separated and divorced persons
- Porn user who strays from spouse
- Spouses in dull, cold marriages
- Lonely widow(er)

How he appears to her

My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool. His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. (5:10-13)

Altogether desirable

His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (5:14-16)

Dazzling beauty

Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me... Sixty queens there may be, and eighty concubines, and virgins beyond number; but my dove, my perfect one, is unique, the only daughter of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her. The maidens saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines praised her: "Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?" (6:5-10)

Beautiful from toe to head

How beautiful are your feet... your rounded thighs... your navel... your belly... Your two breasts ... your neck... your eyes... your nose... your head... your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses. How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights! (7:1-6)

Desire aroused and satisfied

He: Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. 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, and your mouth like the best wine.

She: It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth. I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me. (7:7-10)

Twice as nice

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. (2:10-13)

Captivated by true love

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer--may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? (Proverbs 5:15-20)

Well-timed love

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem... that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. (2:7, 3:5, 8:4)

Wait for the right person: don't fling yourself at just anybody.

Wait for the right time: keep your passion in check until the wedding banquet

Wait for the right mood: seize special marital moments when both feel passion

Public love

The king has brought me into his chambers. (1:4)

He brought me to the house of wine, and his banner over me was love. (2:4)

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine (6:3).

Committed love

My lover is mine and I am his. (2:16).

I am my lover's, and my lover is mine. (6:3).

I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me. (7:10).

Fierce love

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. 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. (8:6-7)

Realities in Song of Songs

- Romance is thrilling and delightful.
- Bodies can be fun and funny.
- Making love brings fantastic pleasures.

- The Inventor of all this is amazing.
- The best garden is kept very private.
- Marriage unites one man, one woman.
- Flattery and finance can't buy love.
- First love should stay aflame.
- Marriage is a drama and an appetizer.

Marriage mystery

Love is strong as death... Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord (Song of Songs 8:6)

This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Eph 5:32)

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