

Song of Solomon 1-2:7, Love Anticipated

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[0 : 00] Song of Solomon, chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse 7. This can be found in the White Bibles on page 624. Again, the scripture text is Song of Solomon, chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse 7, on page 624 of the White Bibles.

Please stand for the reading of God's word. The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine. Your anointing oils are fragrant. Your name is oil poured out.

Therefore, virgins love you. Draw me after you. Let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. We exalt you and rejoice in you.

We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you. I am very dark, but lovely. O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kadar, like the curtains of Solomon.

[1 : 28] 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.

Tell me 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?

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.

I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

We will make for you ornaments of gold studded with silver. While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance.

[2 : 28] My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyard of Engedi. Behold, you are beautiful, my love.

Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are doves. Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved. Truly delightful. Our couch is green and the beams of our house are cedar.

Our rafters are pine. I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.

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.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins and refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me.

[3 : 32] I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thank you. Well, I want to especially thank the youth ministry and TJ's leadership for being led in worship by you today.

It's just the fullness of God's family and bringing us before the throne of grace is just a wonderful thing. You don't get that kind of thing anywhere else but in a place like this on a Sunday morning.

All these generations standing with one another in praise to God. Well, my guess is you don't often have a reading from the Song of Songs in the setting of a church service.

Likely that for many of us that is the first time you have heard a reading from that book in the assembly on a Sunday.

[4 : 58] Yet, everywhere we do turn, there is confusion in the church when it comes to our convictions on human sexuality.

Perhaps there's a correlation between the two, a connection between the two truths. Could it be that our avoidance of his word has something to do with our uncertainty over his ways?

I'm not speaking of the culture today. I'm speaking of the church community, the constituency of the followers of God. Could it be that our ignorance of the lyrics and the language of a song like this have something to do with the muddledness of our mind when it comes to the issue of sexuality or the handling of our bodies?

Likewise, perhaps by spending three short weeks in this book, which we are now going to do, we could acquaint ourselves in conversation with one another in ways that would help us be better prepared to think about God's wisdom on the matter.

It's my hope that over these three weeks, there will be some clarity that will be lent to our confusion.

[6 : 30] That our muddledness might, for the first time perhaps, find some rootedness in the mind of Christ. And that our ways in which we handle ourselves physically, sexually with others would, in some sense, be more rightly conformed to the wisdom of his word.

At least that's what we're going to attempt. And you might say, of all weeks to begin this, when you have third graders in attendance and in leading, and as a father of five children, I would say this is the perfect week.

If the church is not the place for the grade schooler and the junior higher, for the high schooler, for the collegian, to begin to consider and to hear from God's word on these matters, then we indeed are too late to the game.

I want to submit the verses before you today, and I hope you hold them open, and this very message under three headings. So if you're just thinking about clearly trying to stay with the movements as I will see them, it's like this.

The grammar of human love, the garden in God's design, and the gospel by way of God's intention.

[7 : 56] The grammar. The heading of this aspect of grammar refers to the matter of literary form.

So just take a look. This is a book which is given to you in the literary form of a song, even the title itself.

The Song of Songs. Now think about that for a moment. This is not a love story, although you will see a story told.

This is a love song. That's important to remember. Songs do what speech cannot. Poetry evokes what a narrative is more difficult in regard to its ability to reveal.

In fact, some of the greatest speeches you've heard over the centuries are great precisely because of their poetic force, their use of image and idea, metaphor and meaning.

[9 : 09] This is just an observation. When you are going to be reading through literature like this from the scriptures, know as a matter of grammar, this comes to you in the literary form, not really even of a song, but a collection of songs that are now brought together exploring, extolling, and elevating human love.

There's more on the grammar, though. There's a sense, then, that by way of implication, human love is to be celebrated.

This is important for all of us to know. The Bible, when it comes to human love, when it comes to sexual union, when it comes to matters of the image and the relationship, it celebrates it.

The scriptures themselves, then, are not on the outs with intimacy. The presence of this book in the Bible indicates that God would have us know human love is something to be celebrated.

Here's my word for it. Delighted in. Let me even go further.

[10 : 35] Songs use image to convey ideas. If you're looking for how poetry works, image is always related to idea.

So, what are the images here? And what ideas emerge? Look at verses 2 to 4. The images are those of sense.

You're dealing here with the mouth and with oil. You're dealing here with that which is fragrant.

Verse 12. You're dealing with fragrance and myrrh and blossoms and vineyards.

The image, then, is that love is, by nature, human love, is something that is sensory in the best of ways.

[11 : 38] There's a desire that's attached to both the woman speaking and the man.

And it's not desire that we so often see depicted in our culture today. This animalistic, utilitarian, nothing more than fluids.

No, this is a desire that is full, beautiful, lovely. The image wants to create that in our mind.

But it not only shows desire, but what so often happens in a relationship with another individual where you begin to move toward intimacy, it also demonstrates insecurity.

Take a look at verses 5 through 7. The image, now, of the woman as she speaks concerning herself is of darkness, but lovely.

[12:52] Of a woman who was at work in the fields. And therefore, her skin left, in a sense, sun-grown.

Open to the rays, to the weathering. In contrast to women who would have had a privileged station in life to hide themselves from any external forces of winds and work and blemish.

And so she speaks concerning herself in verse 6. Almost of, do not gaze on me because I am a woman of wonder and work.

She wants to express her own beauty, but she does so in terms of her own insecurity. How will I be received? For what reason will you look on me?

To what end do you gaze? This is something to consider, that human love is filled with delight.

[14:14] Human love is filled with insecurity. And the need to be tender. And understanding. But even beyond that, it's filled with strong attraction.

I find the man's images humorous. He says in verse 9, I compare you, my love, well to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

I mean, this guy hasn't written poetry for long. Or he'll say later when he's reaching for the most exalted terms he can in verse 15.

You're beautiful. You're beautiful. Notice how he says it twice. I'm not sure where to go with this. But behold, you're beautiful. Behold, you know, you're really beautiful. In fact, if you want to know how beautiful you are, well, your eyes are like doves.

Which in our culture, I suppose, to be compared to a mare or to have your eyes compared to doves may fall flat. But the image, the image that he wants to convey is that I like to see you face to face.

[15:38] I like to gaze upon your face. Or the image of the mare of chariots, pharaohs.

I mean, whichever mare was leading the chariot upon which the king was riding was the most exalted of, in that sense, adornments.

He's saying, if I could go through the streets with you on my arm, I would be like a king among kings who is pleased with the one in which I'm walking.

So he's reaching for the language of deep attraction.

For desire to be in relationship and to be walking among. And so the grammar itself, then, is indicating to us, because it's come in the form of a song, that love is to be celebrated.

[16:54] Because it's come in the form of these images and ideas, it's to be something that's delighted in. It's to be something that recognizes this is a very tender relationship with insecurities that must be accounted for.

It's to be indicated that this is something that is attractive and good and desirable. But there's another aspect of grammar, and I want you to see it.

I want you to see the Hebrew linguistic endings upon the pronouns, both masculine, singular, and feminine, singular.

You wouldn't have caught it without the editors inserting language. And you can see it there. She, others, she, he, others, she, he, she, he, she.

In other words, the editors are helping you see what you would not notice were you just reading this or hearing this sung. They're identifying for you, the reader, the literary form, and the linguistic endings on the pronouns as Hebrew, masculine, or singular, predominantly.

[18:07] But at other times, first person plural. At other times in the book, it's actually a bit difficult to discern who is singing at this moment. But the grammar is there.

In other words, what you're seeing then about human love from a book like this is that it's between a man and a woman. That's what the Bible decides to highlight.

It decides to cast your eye upon the love of a man and a woman. And beyond that, the exclusivity of that love. I mean, notice the language of the others in the text.

We will exalt and rejoice in you, verse 4. We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you. This movement of whatever this relationship is between the two of you, we are in wonder and in awe over it.

Or, verse 11, we will make for you ornaments of gold studded with silver. We are attending this exclusive relationship between the man and the woman with delight and care.

[19 : 23] Interestingly, and let me say by way of implication, whenever the Bible celebrates human love, it celebrates the exclusive relationship of a man to a woman.

By way of description, that's the way the Bible reads. It doesn't celebrate the relationship of a man to women.

It doesn't celebrate the relationship of a man to a man or a woman to a woman. It continually upholds this revelation of masculine singular, feminine singular.

Now, you can disagree with it. You can live in a world that won't understand it. You can sit here this morning and question the validity of it. But this is the Bible's depiction on love.

A man and a woman who delight in one another, who express their insecurities with one another, who want to face one another, who are attracted to one another, who desire one another, who speak to one another, who spend time with one another, who rise up and lay down and linger in the presence of the other.

[20 : 51] So much for the grammar. The grammar of human love depicts this as something to be celebrated. This is a song worth singing.

The grammar of human love indicates desire, insecurity, attraction, and affirmation. The grammar of human love describes it in terms of a man and a woman.

If I was to put one word on it all, delight. That's the revelation of God on human love. Is that the only thing we can say from these verses?

Certainly not. We can do more than simply say something by grammatical description. I want to move to the second heading. Not the grammar of human love, but the garden.

The garden. By way of God's design. For that, you need to look a little further in the text. And you need to really put your eyes upon verse 16 of verse 1 through the remainder of what was read today.

[22 : 01] There's something here. The image of a garden is actually put forward. And not only in these verses, I'm sure we'll be talking about this in the next two weeks.

The whole book is put forward in terms of being in a garden as a setting. The entire collection. Let me show it to you.

Look at verse 16. Our couch is green. 17. The beams of our house are cedar. Our rafters are pine. I mean, that is a poetic description of being outdoors, on the grass.

We don't have a house in which we are going behind a door. Or we have a home in which the cedars are overhead. The rafters of my house are pines.

It's a garden. Even the description of the way they view themselves. Chapter 2, verse 1. I'm a rose.

[23 : 04] A lily. And then he responds, Yes, a lily among brambles. Or look at the way she speaks of him in verse 3. You are as an apple tree among the trees of the forest.

In other words, she sees him as a man among men, but by way of image, as a tree in the out of doors. doors. In which she sits in his shadow.

And calls that the banqueting house. And then is sustained in verses 5 and 6. Through the fruit of the vine. Indeed, even the refreshment of the apples.

His very presence. His love to her. In the most intimate of ways. Is in the open.

And unashamed. Now, think about. How difficult that is. To consider.

[24 : 09] In the day in which we live. We are far from a garden. It seems to me that this book. Is asking you as a reader.

To connect the ideas here. With the garden of. Eden. And that first relationship. I mean, the fact that this is in the scriptures.

The Hebrew scriptures. It's connected. To all of the material. In the canon. And here we have a relationship. Between a man. And a woman. In a garden.

And our minds. Immediately are meant to reflect. Upon. That relationship. In. That garden. In other words. The images here. Are rooted.

In the garden. Of Eden. There. The outdoor. Garden. Here. Is to. Call us to reflect. Upon the design. That God had.

[25 : 04] At the outset. That. So let's take a look. Just ever so. Briefly. At that garden scene. In. Genesis.

When you consider. The very first opening. Of the scriptures. He places a man. In chapter 2. Verse 8. In a garden. He planted. A garden.

In Eden. And there. He put. The man. Whom he. Had formed. And in the midst of that. Was a tree. Of. Life. Itself. But then.

He creates. Eve. Woman. Chapter 2. Verse 22. And the rib. That he had taken. From the man. He makes into a woman. And he brings the woman.

To her. I mean. You can almost just see this. Marriage. Ceremony. The bride. Coming. To the bridegroom. On the very arm. Of God. And as Adam.

[25 : 58] Sees. His. Bride. Arriving. He. He bursts. Into song. This at last. Is bone of my bones.

Flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman. Because she was taken out of man. And then. Verse 24. They hold fast. To one another. They are one flesh. In all the intimacy.

That that conveys. And they are both naked. And. Not ashamed. What are we to make. Of. The relationship then.

Between the ideas. In our song. On the garden. And the image. That we find. In both male. And female. Simply this.

There's something about. Gender. Maleness. Femaleness. Distinction. In the original. Garden scene.

[26 : 54] I mean. Go back to chapter 1. And you can see it. In verse 26. Then God said. Let us make man. In our image. And our likeness.

And so. Verse 27. He did create man. In his image. In the image of God. He created him. But notice the emphasis here. The image. And likeness of God.

The image. And. Image. Bearing likeness of man. Is put forward. Verse 27. Male. And female. He created them. There's something. About male.

Male. And female. That. That are embedded. In the garden design. Of the image of God. Now we can't explain this fully.

But it's certainly more than science. It's more than chromosomes. It's more than. DNA distinctions. There's something. Spiritually. In place.

[27 : 52] Where. Gender. That is. Difference. Distinction. Yet one.

Unity. Yet plurality. That bears the likeness of God. Who is. One. But. Distinct. In persons. So. So what happens in the garden of Eden. Is he says. I'm going to make. I'm going to make. The.

The. The. The best. Reflection. And fullness. Of who I am. And it requires of him.

Male. And female. It required of God. Adam. And Eve. Now. We ought to think about this for a moment.

My understanding then. As I read the scriptures. Is gender. Is not a social construct. It's.

[28 : 54] It's an intentional. Design imprint. It's not. Strictly.

Fluid. There's something. Fixed. Now. We live in a day. Where the experimentation. On gender. Is not going to. Even consider. That notion. And you may. Leave here today. In disagreement. With that thought. But the scriptures.

Are. Clear. That the image. Of God. Is somehow. Reflected. Most. Descriptively. By male.

And female. One flesh. Two persons. Unity. Plurality. Which. According to scriptures. Then. As I'm thinking about this. And trying to teach my own children.

[29 : 49] Over time. And trying to talk with people. About the issue of sexuality. I think there's something then. About the homosexual union.

That. The scriptures would say. There. There is a. There's a distinction. In that union. That by nature.

Is incapable. Of reflecting. The imago dei. That is two. Two. Different. Genders. Two. Persons. In that sense. Look. Homosexual union. According to scriptures. Isn't wrong. Because. You can't love someone. Of your same.

Sex. That happens every day. It. It isn't wrong. Because you're going to have struggles in life. And. You would alleviate all these problems. If you just didn't walk.

[30 : 47] On that. Way. It's. It's simply. An inadequate. Union. To display. The fullness. Of his image.

That is built. In. At creation. Now. Now. We need to say a couple things on that. Because that's a very hard thing to think about. But.

This is not to say that we all. Are. Built. With a desire. Or attraction. Or. Longing. For.

This created. Intention. That the bible. Shows. In. Genesis 1. I mean. The scriptures are clear. That. One of the manifestations.

That place in the world today. Deals with our bodies. And our minds. So that. In the book of Romans. One of the things that happens. When we begin to live our own lives.

[31 : 46] Is we actually. We actually have. Manifest. Distinctions. In our bodily pursuits. That don't always measure up.

With what you read in Genesis 1. And may never measure up. In your mind. Or heart. Or affection. The same thing with our mind. Our mind doesn't really think.

As clearly as we think it can. And our. Our mind. And our body. And our souls. And our desires. Are not always in line.

With what's here. And so. And so. And so. You're not asking someone to.

Change. In that sense. You're asking someone to. Consider. God's original intent. And to enter into relationships. Within. I'm talking about within the church.

[32 : 45] I'm talking about within the Christian community. Enter into relationships. That are lifelong. And lasting. That are meant by design. To reflect the imago dei.

In ways that any other relationship could not. A polygamous relationship. Would not. Because it violates the exclusivity. A same sex union.

Could not. Because it actually moves away from the idea of plurality. It's not that it can't be done. It's done every day.

It's that it can't quite reflect. What he intends of himself. In other words. When one speaks of the quote sin of homosexuality.

One has to find its rootedness. In a relationship or discussion on the imago dei. Or the image of God. That somehow it is a slight distortion.

[33 : 44] Of the imago dei. That he. That we are now incapable of revealing. Jesus himself. Then actually moves this forward.

In Matthew 19. Where he's asked a question on. The union of a man and a woman. And what he argues from Genesis 1. And Genesis 2. Is simply this. That what God created. Genesis 1.

He intended. Genesis 2. And what God intended. Matthew 19. He said let no man separate. So Jesus' interpretive force is. God had a design.

God intended the design. And that design was not to be broken. And that's a challenge for us. As we walk with one another.

In love. To learn. How. We might rightly reflect. The image of God. And this also doesn't mean. That everyone's supposed to be married. My goodness.

[34 : 41] Let's read the Bible. Paul. Paul is an advocate for singleness. More than he is an advocate for marriage. In regard to its reflection. And its pursuits in life. So. The end of life.

Is not your. Your sexuality. The end of life. Is not even your married state. The end of life. Is how do I live my. Life as the bride of Christ. In a single relationship.

And how do I live my. How do I represent him. If I'm in a marriage relationship. All these things require. Much conversation from us. Over the days.

To come. But suffice it to say this. Human sexuality. Is something God delights in. Human sexuality. Is something God has a design for.

The grammar. Is rooted in the garden. And the garden. Get this. Last point. And I'm done. The garden.

[35 : 38] Has something to do with the gospel. The grammar of human love. The garden. As divine design.

The gospel. As God's. Intention. Ephesians 5. Is interesting to me. When Paul.

Is speaking about. Husbands and wives. By way of. Trying to be analogous. To Christ. And the church. And in verse 31.

He quotes. Genesis 2. In the garden. He quotes the design. Therefore. Man shall leave his father. And mother. And hold fast to his wife. And the two shall become one flesh.

And then he says this. This mystery is profound. What mystery? The mystery of a man. And a woman. In exclusive. Relationship. In accordance.

[36 : 33] With the creation quote. Is to refer. He says. To Christ. And the church. Now if that's the case. Then what Paul is arguing.

Is that the very first. Marriage. Was already pregnant. Not with children. It was pregnant. With the divine. Eternal.

Intention. To later display. Disclose. Is my word. To disclose. Christ. And the church. So. Human love. Is to be delighted in.

The garden itself. Represents. Its design. And the manifestation. Of a. Relationship. With him. Is that it discloses.

Something about Christ. And the church. Unbelievable. Then. What it means. Then. Is you look. All the way back. To the opening verse.

[37 : 30] Of our song. The song. Of songs. Which. Is. Solomon's. This is the Lord's. Savior. Leader. This is the song. Of the king.

Concerning. His bride. This is the king of Israel. And Israel is the bride. This is the foreshadowing. Of Christ. And the church. While the book. Is about.

Human love. It can be reflected on. Fully. In terms. Of Christ. And the church. Human love. Is to reflect. Christ. And the church.

Ezekiel 16. Picks up. On the same metaphor. When God. When God. Is. Considering. For his bride. Israel. What.

They. Are. To him. And he uses. The same. Metaphors. That we have here. Listen to this. It's stunning. Ezekiel 16. Verse 6.

[38 : 29] God says. When I passed by you. And saw you. Wallowing in your blood. That's the picture. Of Israel at birth. And I said to you. In your blood. Live. I said to you. In your blood. Live. I made you flourish.

Like a plant. Of the field. And you grew up. And became tall. And arrived at adornment. Your breasts were formed. Your hair had grown. Yet you were naked. And bare. When I passed by you again.

And saw you. Behold. You were at the age for love. I spread the corner of my garment. Over you. I covered your nakedness. I made my vow to you. I entered into a covenant with you.

I bathed you. I washed you. I anointed you. I clothed you. I embroidered for you. I shod shoes for you. I wrapped you. I covered you.

I adorned you. I put bracelets on you. I put chains on your neck. I put rings on your nose. Earrings in your ears. A crown on your head.

[39 : 23] Gold. Silver. Clothing. Linen. Silk. Cloth. Fine flour. Honey. Oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful. And advanced to royalty. And your renown went forth among the nations.

Because of your beauty. For it was perfect. Through the splendor that I had bestowed on you. Declares the Lord. God chose a people for himself.

To declare or disclose his own glory. And your love with another person. Is to reflect it. Disclose it. Is to cover sin.

Is to exalt in face to face. Is to reflect the beauty of Christ in the church. What Jesus has done. What Jesus has done. This is wisdom.

As it relates to the care we take with our human bodies. Let me be done. The church is so confused on sexuality.

[40 : 30] Because we hear so little teaching that will promote conversations. On the way we handle ourselves sexually. Every third grader here today.

Hear me on this. God's view on sex. Is one of delight. God.

His plan for this. Is one of design. God's intention for this. Is one of relating. And revealing his own son.

And disclosing him to the world. Therefore. Do not. Awaken it. Before it's time. Our Heavenly Father.

These words. In these three weeks. Deal with. So many sensitivities. Because we are. We are conflicted. In and of ourselves.

[41 : 29] Every man here. Every woman here. Affected by the fall. In ways that need your mercy. Grace. Wisdom. Strength.

Community. Help. Provision. Covering. Guidance. Correction. Help us all. To hear your word. And to celebrate it. To embrace it. For the glory of your name. Amen. Let's.