

# Romance & Intimacy from the Song of Solomon, Part 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we are going to be in the Song of Solomon. You can go ahead and turn there tonight as we talk about romance and intimacy, hence the steaminess that Ben referenced.! So if you just flop to Psalms and kind of go to your right, you'll be in the wisdom literature, pass through Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and you'll find yourself in Song of Solomon or Song of Songs, probably what I'll call it tonight.

And just move to chapter 8. And I'll tell you a little bit about our love story tonight. You know, in the fall of 2005, I quit seminary. I did finish a number of years later, but it was a long, strange trip. And I finished in 2016 and became a campus intern for Cornerstone's campus ministry called Volunteers for Christ. That wasn't because we went to volunteer somewhere. That was because we were UT Vols.

And we were happy about it, though we do believe in volunteer ministry. You know, one of the things that was heavy on my heart as a 24-year-old, 23-year-old, no, 24-year-old, was a desire to get married.

I was, and what some of my single buddies would say, we were all burning with passion, right? We were the man in 1 Corinthians 7, burning with passion and praying for God to bring us a wife.

[ 1 : 21 ] And that fall, fall of 2005, I became reacquainted, or reacquainted myself with Kim Nguyen. N-G-U-Y-E-N. You know, we barely knew each other, so I had some work to do.

In December, I casually invited her to swing dance. We were all at this swing dance thing. Now, if a guy learns to swing dance, there's only one reason he's learning to swing dance, and that's to try to get married.

You know, we talked, we talked and laughed throughout the night, or at least I laughed and enjoyed myself. You know, unbeknownst to her, though, I was captivated.

I think this was December 16, 2005. You know, I wanted to date her. I wanted to make her my wife. A month or so later, we started to date.

You know, at first, she wasn't digging me. What can I say? I have that effect. But over the next several months, we got to know one another much better and fell in love, to use the little phrase.

[ 2 : 20 ] You know, the good nights grew longer, and the side hugs grew more firm. You know, we talked constantly. Sorry, this is a little, still a little hot, Matthew.

We talked constantly. The romance grew. It was natural. It was fun. In June, we got engaged, and they were just some of the most thrilling days of our life.

I'm sure in a lot of ways like you. The following January 2007, after what seemed like the longest engagement in the history of man, we were married. And a lot has happened since then.

We've added three kids. We've added a few years, 12 years, and more than a few wrinkles. We've added a lot of responsibility.

When I look back on those days, I just see a carefree person. You know, we've walked through a lot of disappointment. A lot of sin.

[ 3 : 19 ] A lot of conflict. And while we've only been married 12 years, we've had to fight to keep romance alive.

My guess is that our lives, my life, Kim's life, are not much different than yours. If you're still married, it's because you've learned to fight. And my hope is tonight that regardless of how long you've been married, you'd be refreshed by looking again at God's word and God's gift of romance and intimacy in the Song of Songs.

I just want to read two verses at the outset, and then we'll continue to unpack this. So this is Song of Songs 8, verse 6.

He says, set me. These are some of the verses you've probably heard read in a wedding. He says, set me as a seal upon your heart. For love is strong as death.

Jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are the flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love.

[ 4 : 32 ] Neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised. You know, the Song of Songs, in so many ways, unveils and revolves around self-giving, joy-filled love.

You know, day after day, we're overrun with a view of sexuality and marriage with self at the center. The love shared in the Song of Songs is just wonderfully different.

It's self-giving. It's selfless. It shines in our self-focused culture. It's filled with joy. If you've ever read this book, it's just tons of joy.

I mean, love lived according to God's design. What it's trying to say, love lived according to God's design, brings joy and delight. And just like this thing, just like these verses say, it lasts.

It's invincible. It's as strong as death. Now, that seems a bit of an overstatement. What he's trying to say is many waters can't quench love. Floods can't drown it. It overcomes innumerable obstacles.

[ 5 : 36 ] That's why the book of Common Prayer says we get married, we commit ourselves to a wife for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.

You know what he says more than anything else there is it's supremely valuable. It cannot be bought or sold. A man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

You can't pay for the love that it points us to. You know, and my goal for tonight is I want us to take us back through this whole book and unpack this theme.

That's why I'm so thankful that we got four hours to do this tonight so that we can really tackle this thing. No, that's probably what I would like to have is about four hours to tackle this thing. But but and we can't cover every single verse in this.

But I do think this theme of self-giving, joyful love just it's like a banner over this this book. And that's my hope is the Lord would open our eyes to see this and change our marriages because of it.

[ 6 : 44 ] So I'm going to break this out in four points. Would you have an outline? I'm going to stop.

Think after point three, depending on where we're at with time for our little break. If you're a type A person and likes that stuff up front.

But the first point is self-giving, joyful love is romantic. You know, over the years, theologians have interpreted the song of songs in so many different ways. Many have used it as a love story between God and his people, between Christ and his people.

I mean, they would say, why else would a love a love song be in our Bible? I mean, it must be a love letter from God. And although there's aspects of that that are great, there's also aspects of it that are a little bit creepy because of how romantic this book is.

However, more recently, theologians have agreed that it's just a love story of captivated lovers. And the reason it's in our Bible is because it's meant to be a love song that outshines all the others.

So in Solomon's day, like I mentioned Sunday, this book was written because there are so many different love songs being written. And this one was written to say, this is love according to God's design.

[ 7 : 59 ] This is the perfect vision of love. In so many ways, this book just unfolds a love story. The opening chapters give us the introductions and we're introduced to this man and this woman.

There's a season of courtship or dating. Courtship is where they would have called it back in the day. You know, chapters 3 and 4 describe a wedding. The groomsmen are 60 mighty men, which I think is pretty cool.

That's probably the biggest wedding party ever, although they get larger every year. This carriage is prepared and the bride arrives. And then chapters 5 through 7 focus on sexual intimacy.

I mean, in many ways, they just focus on the wedding night. And then chapters 8 describes the approval of the community. The community is kind of celebrating this love and joining in.

Much like a wedding is not something that's often done on a beach somewhere, but it's often done in the church historically. So that the community can say, yes, we love this.

[ 9 : 00 ] We support this. We want to help fight for this. And all throughout, the song of song brims with romance. It's romantic.

Romance, simply put, is the communication and feeling of excitement and passion for a lover. Romance is designed in many ways to precede intimacy, to lead to intimacy, to heighten the expectation, the desire for intimacy.

And so this song brims with romance. If I could get even more specific, this song of songs is packed with carefully crafted, exciting, passionate, and suggestive words.

I mean, before this song is really about sexual intimacy, it's about words. In the first several chapters, if you flip back to chapter 1, the words are marked by invitation.

They're inviting. They're enticing. I have a little trouble getting to chapter 1 here. Look down there in 1, verse 2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine.

[10:19] 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.

And so she's just announcing, let him kiss me. Draw me after you. Let us run. She's kind of inviting him in, this romantic language. In verse 9, if you look down there, he says, I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

You know, some commentators say this means that she had very large haunches suitable for childbearing. Another says that she was a good runner. I don't think that's the point at all.

I think the point is she was decked out like Pharaoh's horse. Man, if you saw one of those horses in the derby last weekend, when they come out and they're decked out.

These horses have been pampered. I mean, they've been pushed, too, but they've been pampered for weeks. That's Pharaoh's horses. They eat like kings.

[11:24] And that's what he's saying. You're decked out like Pharaoh's horses. It's got nothing to do with her haunches. Just in case you're wondering. You know, they're names.

This book, they continue. They use names for one another that are romantic, that underline their longing and desire for one another. After waiting and looking and longing, she rejoices at finding her lover.

She calls him, you whom my soul loves. She repeats that. You whom my soul loves. Repeatedly, she calls him my beloved. And he, too, responds.

He calls her my love. They use these pet names, if you will, as ways to communicate longing, love, and delight. And so their words thread through this book as key, as powerful to underline intimacy.

Threading powerfully throughout the song are mutually given romantic words. You know, much of this book does not describe intimacy. I hate to disappoint you.

[12:27] Much of the book unveils the words that come before it and after it. Their relationship is not built on physical action.

Their relationship is built on a constant stream of words. One author says it like this. I think we have this in your outline. They relish their pleasure in each other, not only with physical action, but with carefully composed words.

The lesson for the reader is that he or she needs to speak often and openly of his or her joy in the beloved, in the spouse.

The takeaway for the reader is that he or she needs to speak often and openly of joy in one another. You know, sometimes we can rush to diagnose our marriage problems so quickly.

And often it's found in the tone and the character of the words in the home. Is your home filled with often and open words of romance and delight?

[13:40] CJ Mahaney applies this truth powerfully with the line that he says, Before you touch your body, touch your heart. Before you touch your body, touch your heart.

Now the idea is not that we should brew a cup of coffee and talk it out before we have any moment of intimacy. That's not the point. The idea is that every word spoken to our spouse, every note, every email, every text, every goodbye, every hello, has the power to enhance or diminish moments of intimacy.

It's the idea that intimacy doesn't even begin with the expression of romance physically, but with the expression of romance through our words. You know, isn't that so true?

Romance doesn't begin in the bedroom so often. It begins earlier in the kitchen. You know, if you're a husband like me, maybe you start complimenting the dinner a little bit more and the romance starts to increase.

You talk about how good the lasagna is. And it begins to increase. I don't know if you've seen some of these memes from ladies who would just say, Man, this was so sexy.

[14:52] And it's a man doing the dishes or something, you know. Or it's a man, this is sexy. My husband always changes the poo-poo diapers, you know. This is sexy, a man who holds my hair while I ralph, you know.

And you see that. And there's this idea that what's sexy is serving one another. What's sexy is communicating grace toward one another.

CJ continues in a quote I think we have for you. What we express towards our wives and how we behave toward our wives in the days and hours before we make love is actually far more important than what we do when the clothes come off.

That's so true and so helpful. You know, when we were first married 12 years ago, our marriage was marked way more by criticism and neglect of words like these, especially in the words I spoke. I think there's a sense in which me coming home was not something Kim looked forward to because of my words.

[16:02] You know, gradually I began to see that my own arrogance and how easy it was for me to be critical of Kim, the root of all that was my own arrogance.

And it's shameful. And my criticism drastically affected romance. No one wants to be with somebody who always finds a blemish.

There's that line from *Pride and Prejudice* of the guy that always finds a blemish. I've never seen that movie, but I've heard that quote before. Just in case you were trying to take my man card. I'm ready to defend that. You know, man, part of one of the ways the Lord began to work in our marriage romantically is convicting me of that and convicting us of that to where encouraging one another and communicating our gratefulness for one another led to greater desire for one another and greater joy.

We've got a long way to go, but that season changed our marriage. You know, how might your marriage look different if you took up words like these? You know, as kids and more kids come, our communication is often marked by planning and logistics.

[17:21] You know what I mean? Can you pick up the kids? What time is dinner? Did you pay the ACUB bill? You know, really our spouse can become little more than a teammate, a co-pilot.

You know, I know people that like to say, my wife is a teammate. I don't like that. We're not teammates. I get what you mean by that. You know, or our spouses can think of themselves as little more than a father or a mother because of the neglect of these words.

You know, a question maybe to ponder on is, does the way you or the way I relate to you make you feel more like a father or a husband? Does the way I relate to you make you feel more like a mom or a wife?

That's an incredible question. In marriage, we're privileged to orient ourselves toward one another, to focus on the spouse, to study them, to think carefully about them, to communicate with them. Kids are great, but they're distant seconds. I love taking Kim out on a date night and saying, guess who's not going tonight? The three of y'all, you ain't even got a prayer, not even a thought throughout this evening, you know?

[18:37] And that's the privilege we have. It's a gift to our kids. It's a gift. It's the biggest mistake to let the kids think it's all about them. Matt Chandler says, pay attention to the desires, the strengths, the growth of your spouse, the things that only you see, mine for those, dig for them, look for those, be dialed in, pay attention.

Self-giving joyful love is romantic because it's all about words in so many ways. Self-giving joyful love is tender. Self-giving joyful love is tender. I need to confess, and this may actually take my man card, actually.

Several years ago, I got hooked on Taylor Swift's album, 1989. It's all right, haters are going to hate, hate, hate. I'm not scared.

You know, I began, though, after being totally addicted to this album for about two weeks because it's incredibly catchy. I began to view the album very differently when I listened to a cover album by Ryan Adams.

I don't know if anybody knows who, anybody know who Ryan Adams is? He's just, he's just, not Brian Adams from the 90s, okay, Tim. But Ryan Adams is this whiny singer-songwriter guy from Nashville.

[19:59] He's an incredible musician. But he took Taylor's album and covered the whole thing. And Ryan Adams exposed a darker side.

What Swift sang, the poppy back beat, Adams sang with a gentle hush and an acoustic guitar. You know, one of the songs was Blank Space.

And Swift sings of the thrills of being a wild woman, of chasing a guy for a weekend and playing the game of love. You might think twice if you read those lyrics before you let your 12-year-old daughter listen to this.

Swift sings it boldly and triumphantly. You know, I'm going out and I'm doing whatever I want to do. But Adams exposes a darker side and exposes in the end Taylor's warped view of love.

She writes in that song, nice to meet you, where you been? I could sing this right now, but I'm not going to. I could show you incredible things. Magic, madness, heaven, sin.

[ 21 : 02 ] Listen, I saw you there and I thought, oh my God, look at that face. You look like my next mistake. Love's a game. You want to play? She says later, so it's going to be forever or it's going to go down in flames?

You can tell me when it's over if the high was worth the pain. I got a long list of ex-lovers. They'll tell you I'm insane because you know I love the players and you know I love the game.

She keeps going, because we're young and we're reckless, we'll take this too far. It'll leave you breathless. It'll leave you with a nasty scar. Got a long list of ex-lovers.

They tell you I'm insane, but I've got a blank space baby and I'll write your name. You see, this is this thrill. I'll just, I'll throw you for a knife.

But even within it, and I think the reason Adam's covered it, is it exposed. I'll give you a scar. It'll be pain. You know, in so many ways, unlike our culture's easy hookup and self-absorbed view of love, the self-giving joyful love of the song is marked by thoughtful tenderness.

[ 22 : 12 ] It's radically others-focused, where she's all about what might come of tonight, what might be fun, high of tonight.

The song is so self-focused. I mean, others-focused. You know, one of the most striking themes of the song is the man's tender communication of her beauty.

Look down there in verse 5 again, chapter 1. The woman communicates how unattractive she feels. She says, I'm very dark, but lovely.

Oh, daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of cedar, like the curtains of Solomon, don't gaze at me, because I'm dark, because the sun has looked on me. My mother's sons were angry with me.

They kept me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept. She's saying, I'm not fair like the daughters of Jerusalem. I'm dark. You know, in that culture, you know, they didn't go to a tanning bed to get a certain color.

[ 23 : 18 ] They wanted to preserve a fair color, because that's who the ones, the ones that weren't working in the fields were fair. I remember when we went to Vietnam a couple years ago to visit Kim's family, a fair complexion is a huge value for Vietnamese people.

And so it's like 90 degrees, 95 degrees. It's like today over there all the time. And they would have gloves all the way up their arm in this weather.

And, well, the mask, I guess, is more for dust. But the women would just be almost completely covered in the winter to keep from getting dark. So that's what she's saying. I'm dark.

And it's not just like a complexion issue. It means I'm ugly. She says, my own vineyard I've not kept. You know, romance and intimacy reveal her insecurity, her feelings of ugliness, her sense of shame, her feelings of vulnerability.

You know, we're never more vulnerable than in moments of intimacy. And we all know that to be true when the kids come and knock on the door, you know, and you get like a knock, knock, knock.

[ 24 : 23 ] Yes, son, we'll be out in a minute. We're busy, you know, or whatever. And, you know, if the kids only knew what was going on, they could take so advantage of us.

You want some candy, you know, or they'd say, Dad, can I have some candy? Yes. Just drink the whole bag, whatever. You want a show? Watch five, you know. But, you know, we're vulnerable in that sort of way, but we're vulnerable in a much more significant way.

Because we're naked before one another. Physically, yes. But our insecurities are unveiled.

That's what she's saying. That's what that woman's feeling. She feels unattractive, unappealing, deeply vulnerable. You know, that prayer I read at the beginning set me as a seal on your heart.

What she's, she's just pleading with her that their union would be more than physical. That she would be a seal on his heart. Rather than a ring or a gift that might communicate that seal, she wants to be stamped on his heart.

[ 25 : 25 ] Indelibly stamped. That their union might be fixed because she feels this vulnerability. That she's just kind of being thrown back and forth by the waves. And she feels so insecure and unable to be untangled and holding to this security.

She's fearing losing him and fearing being exposed. And one of the most precious things of the song is that again and again, he overwhelms her insecurity.

He just overwhelms it. He knows her insecurities. And if you're a husband, you know him too. Don't ever use them against your spouse.

He's heard her say him a thousand times. He draws her out. He listens to her heart. And then he proclaims her beauty. We overhear in this song, not the polished words before a crowd, but the pointed words of a husband to his spouse.

You know, in chapter 2, he says, you're a lily among brambles. You know, she says, I'm a lily of the valley. I'm just one of the many out there in the valley. No, baby, you're a lily among brambles.

[ 26 : 29 ] Everything else is thorns. And you're a lily. He says, you're beautiful. Chapter 2, 15. Twice, you're beautiful. Verse 4, 1. He says, behold, you're beautiful, my love.

Behold, you're beautiful. And he gets more specific, as we'll say again later. In chapter 4, again, he says, you're altogether beautiful, my love. There's no flaw in him, flaw in you.

Chapter 6, he says, my dove, my perfect one, is the only one. He assures her again and again, you're the only one that I want. You're the only one that I love. And for whatever reason, God has designed for our wives to thrive under the communication of these words of acceptance and delight that overshadow all the insecurity.

The song is telling us, by repetition, that the words our wife needs to hear again and again and again and again and again is that you are beautiful.

There's a culture that says you've got to look a certain size. There's a culture that says you have to have a certain competency in what you bring to the table, maybe in the workforce or maybe in how many kids you have or maybe in how well you score, whatever it is.

[ 27 : 35 ] But the Bible encourages us to announce that beauty over our wife that we know, we know her insecurities and announce it again and again and again. The man continues to give himself to his spouse by assuring her again and again of her beauty.

You know, and then his actions align. He's thoughtfully tender in the way he speaks to her and the way he touches her. Anyone that's been married for longer than a day knows intimacy is not as easy, fast-paced, and action-packed as Hollywood likes to paint it out to be.

So he moves tenderly towards her. He's not rough or pushy or demanding. She says his left hand was under my head and his right hand embraces me.

Why? That's a posture of tender care, almost like a mother would hold a baby. She says later, his banner over me with love.

His actions and his words communicate security, tenderness, trustworthiness, warmth, selfless affection, and love. Point three, self-giving, joyful love is reciprocal.

[ 28 : 53 ] Self-giving, joyful love is reciprocal. That just means it goes both ways. You know, it's a street that has both directions. I'm a complementarian, which means I believe God created man and woman equally in the image of God, and yet gave them different roles in the marriage.

And I believe man's called to leave, protect, and provide for his wife. The wife's called to love, smit, and follow her husband. So it's a bit surprising for me to read this song, which talks about love that's reciprocal.

Romance, sexual intimacy is not just a man's responsibility. In this book, the woman's the first to speak. And she's the main speaker. You know, she dominates.

She's a forward woman. She rustles the leaves. Have you ever heard that phrase? You know, she's kind of letting that man know I'm over here, here for the taking.

You know, the song is strikingly reciprocal. Now, some of that's tongue-in-cheek, but I trust you guys understand that. You know, romance and intimacy are not seen as the man or the woman's responsibility alone.

[ 29 : 58 ] Both are joyfully engaged in it. Turn to chapter 4. Actually, you may not have to turn. It might be right there. Chapter 4 and 5 present a compelling picture of this mutually giving reciprocal love after the ceremony when the first night begins.

You know, the man leads and communicates. Look down there in verse 1. He communicates how beautiful she is. Again, these words. He says, Behold, you're beautiful, my love. Behold, you're

beautiful.

Your eyes are doves behind your veil. The veil is because it's this wedding ceremony that's going on. Your hair is like a flock of goats. If anybody wants to explain that one to me, we'll take it. You know, leaping down the slopes of Gilead, your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes. Now, if that doesn't do it for you, I don't know it will. That have come up from the washing, all which bear twins, and not one of them has lost its young.

Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Again, she's at that wedding.

[ 31 : 05 ] You know, he's quite eloquent early in the song, but when he looks upon her naked body, it gets to a whole new level. I mean, it's Shakespeare as he begins to talk.

And this is where historical interpretation got a little crazy. Origen said that one breast was the Old Testament and the other was the New Testament. I don't know where he was going with that, but I'll just leave that for you.

You know, he's speaking, though, of the beauty of her body. He's speaking of how satisfying her love is to him.

He's not just going through the motions. He's overflowing with delight. Look in verse 10. He says, You know, he likens her later on to a garden locked, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.

He's saying, I need a key. You're beautiful. And this is all locked. The woman responds to his communication here and his leadership and avails herself and responds.

[ 32 : 32 ] You know, lest you think her response is mere willingness. She just repeatedly invites him. We saw that in verse 1. Draw me after you. Or chapter 1. Draw me after you. Let us run. Verse 2.

She says, She's saying, She's saying, She's not talking about some hand sweatiness going on. She's describing the feeling of love. Maybe it's an enrapturous feeling is what she's describing. If you're in the room, I mean, you can look back and you know that feeling, that rapture. That's what she's describing. My heart was thrilled.

My love had come for me. Verse 16 of chapter 4. She says, Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind.

[ 33 : 48 ] Blow upon my garden. Let its spices flow. What she's saying is, you know, he says that garden is locked.

And she says, The time has come. The garden is ripe. Come in and feast and enjoy. Is what she's saying. The north wind here symbolizes strength. Yeah, he says he's planned to make love to her until daybreak.

And she says, well, essentially responds with, well, I'll bring the Gatorade. You know, I'll bring strength. That's what she's saying.

Come on, O north wind. The south wind symbolizes gentleness. She's saying, come to me. Come to me. But come gently.

Be gentle to me. The man rejoices. Look down there. He says, I came to my garden, my sister, my bride. I gathered my myrrh with my spice.

[ 34 : 47 ] I ate honeycomb from my honey. I drank my wine with my milk. You know, first impression, that might come across what Caesar says. I came, I saw, I conquered.

But that's not what's going on at all. That's far from the case. There's no room for macho triumph songs in this song or in biblical marriage. What he's saying is, I just rejoice.

She said, come, the garden is unlocked. Come and feast. And he just rejoices over her. He's thankful to God. He's overwhelmed at freedom, at joy, at the ability to express it in marriage.

At the heart of the song is this joyful giving of sexuality to one another. 1 Corinthians 7, 4 says, the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband.

So marriage is to be marked by the willing and eager giving of ourselves to one another. Sex is to be free and frequent. Not as a rule, you know. I remember Martin Luther was doing some premarital counseling.

[ 36 : 00 ] That would be pretty fun to have Martin Luther as premarital counseling. Because you're guaranteed to go off the rails a number of times. Because he was a wild man. Somebody asked him, how often should you have sex?

And he said, I think two times a week, 104 times a year. I think that's pretty good, you know. And I thought that was a pretty good reply.

But the idea is that it's just to be frequent. And it's to be free. It's a gift to be enjoyed, to be shared with our spouses in that way. You know, in so many ways, the song invites us to roll back time to those first days.

That we might recover the delight. You know, in so many ways, one of the greatest date nights. And our kids will do this now because they want to look through the pictures of a wedding. It's just to walk back through those pictures.

Remember those feelings. I couldn't eat the whole day of our wedding. I ate breakfast and felt like a wacko. Because I was so nervous. Not because I was afraid of getting married.

[ 37 : 04 ] I mean, I think just the sobriety of it. And yet it just kind of gave way to this massive celebration. With everybody that really meant something in your life at that time.

Coming and pointing the fingers and saying, praise the Lord. It's an incredible moment. And then to go and rehearse those first days together as husband and wife.

So he's inviting us to free and frequent love. Not as a rule, but as an invitation to come and feast and enjoy. You know, it's precisely here where I think many couples misstep.

Wives may be willing, but not eager for sexual intimacy. Now perhaps this is because of some fear or distrust of their husband.

Or some painful past issues. Or because they just simply don't enjoy it. So they're willing, but not eager. And if there is fear, distrust over some painful past issues or your husband's sin.

[ 38 : 08 ] Let me encourage you to seek the help of somebody else. I remember we were talking. We won't list any names, but Kim was talking to one of her friends. Had gotten married a similar time we did.

And this, this, there were so many issues in their sexual area of their life. And it's obviously a very private area. It's an area that her husband refused to talk about.

And please don't get there. I think in so many ways, the Song of Songs is in our Bible. It's to say that God's not afraid to talk about really, really tricky, vulnerable stuff.

And I would encourage you to seek help from a friend or your pastor or something. You know, if it's because you don't enjoy it, then let me talk to your husband. I do want to help, you know.

We want to help. Community wants to help. But I would encourage you, your husband's not seeking a willing participant. And if he is, let me correct him. He's seeking your eager, joyful love.

[ 39 : 10 ] That's what he wants. I'd say cultivate a heart for your husband. And a heart to do him good. But, you know, our culture constantly encourages all of us to orient our lives around our desires and wants.

Studies have shown, repeated studies have shown, since the rise of the iPhone, social media, immediate access to connection information, we're having less sex than ever. We're not just making less babies than ever.

We're having less documented sex through these statistics. You know, one of my friends is a counselor in Knoxville that a number of guys have seen over the years. And he's told me one of the things he's been shocked by, one of the things I've been shocked by as a pastor, is how many young couples are having very little sex.

They're happy to be alone, but alone together on their phone. One book recently put it like that. You know, we're alone in the bed.

I mean, we're together, but we're alone together because we're in our own self-absorbed world. So I would encourage you to watch out for the little foxes, is what the song calls them in chapter two.

[ 40 : 22 ] Watch out for the little foxes that distract you and keep you from pursuing your husband. It may be social media and staying in the know. It may be obsessing over the kids and having everything perfectly planned for the next day.

It may be daydreaming about the husband that you wish you had. It may be certain friends that pull you away. You know, I have friends that push me to be a better husband. I have friends that want to make me a better friend. Now, the ones that just want me to be a better friend and go plan more hunting things and all this type of stuff that I do enjoy doing, you know, I don't want to hang with them because I want to be a better husband.

I want friends in my life that push me towards my wife. Work hard to unplug and engage. You know, one of the things, categories, Kim and I have talked about over the years is that we want to work hard to not just relax together, but to relate together.

Far too often, we relax together, and we think that equals relating to one another. And it's huge. You know, I know this stuff is especially challenging for young, exhausted moms, and you have the hardest job on the planet.

And I think everybody would say amen. And thus, don't take too hard what I'm advocating.

Nevertheless, you know, wives may be willing but not eager.

[ 41 : 44 ] You know, husbands may be eager but not tender, I think is what this part of the song is getting after. Many wives feel their husbands' eagerness for sex but not his tenderness. They feel his desire to give pleasure or to receive pleasure but not to give it.

Many feel their husband is out for himself and is just using them. And this ought not be so. I read an article this week from a counselor on this.

And a number of case studies that came through where the husband was rough or the husband was demanding of sex or withheld money from his wife if he didn't get sex such a number of times and just controlled her.

If our wives feel controlled in any way, something is horribly wrong. Intimacy must always be to be tender and to give pleasure, to do good to the other as we would have them do it unto us.

And brothers, it's our privilege to live before our wives and ensure that they're not tempted in this way, to fight for it, to listen to her, to study her, to date her, to serve her, romance her, pursue her.

[ 42 : 59 ] And the pleasure that we desire will take care of itself because we're consumed in serving our spouse. Husbands may be eager but not tender as this thing reminds us.

It's also a warning to us, brothers, to wage war against the sin of lust and pornography. There is perhaps no sin as tempting to your wife and as destructive to intimacy than this one.

The Bible says give no opportunity for the devil in this area. Let her at all times fill you with delight.

All right. I think this is a good time to pause. Let's pause.