

WEEK 01 · AN OVERVIEW

The longing, seeking, passion, and power of love.

Preface

Background: Song of Songs is a book in the Bible that is a collection of lyrical poetry capturing the interactions of two lovers in their quest for satisfaction in love. This book includes dialogues between lovers expressing their feelings, praises of physical features through comparisons with nature, and depiction of events in a romance as a dream or vision. These songs were written to portray the feelings and experiences of romantic passions in heightened form, set in an idealized world.

There is nothing in this world that was not created by God. He created human sexuality to be thoroughly enjoyed within appropriate boundaries and to reflect God's passionate love for humanity, as uncomfortable as this idea might make us feel.

This week, we will examine the entire book to identify major themes, repetitions, and the flow, as we look at the passion of God reflected in a relationship between a man and a woman.

Warm-up question: What is one silly thing people do that you actually find romantic?

Study

Read through the entire book of Song of Songs in one sitting.

The aim of this first read is to get an overview of the entire book, so read at a steady pace and do not worry about things you may not readily understand. Feel free to be creative in tackling this book together. For example, assign one person to read "She," another for "He," and a third for "Friends," taking turns as necessary. This reading should take around 20-25 minutes.

As you read, keep these general principles in mind to help you read between the lines and pay attention to the overall message:

1. The metaphors and comparisons are figurative and not intended to convey visual resemblance. For example, when the bride's eyes are compared to doves, it highlights the qualities associated with doves rather than a literal comparison of their shape or color.
2. The comparisons refer to shared qualities, often highlighting excellence. For example, references such as "Tower of David," "En Gedi," "lily among thorns," "beautiful as Tirzah," and "lovely as Jerusalem" exemplify this.
3. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. As you read, ask yourself: What do these songs teach, rebuke, correct, or train you about love, and how do they equip you to love righteously?

After reading the entire Song of Songs, discuss the following questions.

1. What are your impressions of the book? How would you describe the flow of emotions in these songs?

Notes: This is an open-ended question to share first impressions on the book.

2. What are some repeated phrases in this book? What do these sets of repeated phrases teach or emphasize about love?

Notes: There are several *sets* of repeated phrases/images/ideas, as listed below:

- 2:6; 8:3
- 2:16; 6:3; 7:10
- 2:7; 3:5; 8:4
- 4:1; 5:12

Read the background information on Song of Songs and discuss the following questions.

3. As modern readers, encountering the graphic and sensual aspects of love in this book can feel uncomfortable, particularly when considering it as a portrayal of God's love for humanity. Nevertheless, what are some characteristics or observations about love that this book reveals regarding God's love?

Notes: Song of Songs portrays the depth of passion that love can bring and how it manifests physically in mutual and consensual acts between a man and a woman. This book shows that God creates human sexuality to be enjoyed within proper boundaries, and He is not only interested in our souls but also in redeeming our bodies. Overall, this book emphasizes God's passion for His people and commitment to love.

4. In what ways should human love mirror God's love for His people?

Application

1. How does this book teach you to approach love and desire wisely, and how does it help you distinguish seeking satisfaction in love from chasing sheer pleasure?

2. What is the importance of passion in love, both in human relationships and our relationship with God? How can you deepen your passionate love for God?

*) Do you have any lingering questions or confusions about any parts of this book? Feel free to list them and explore the answers in the following weeks.