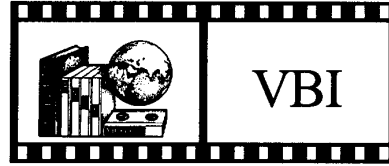
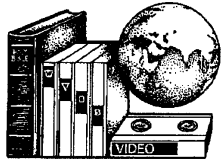


World Video Bible School®

Established 1986



SONG OF SOLOMON

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Song of Solomon

∞ Syllabus ∞

I. GENERAL INFORMATION.

- A. Instructor: Dr. Denny Petrillo.**
- B. This course consists of 6 lessons on 2 DVDs or 2 videotapes.**
- C. Each class is approximately 38 minutes long.**

II. DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE.

- A. This is an in-depth study of the Song of Solomon, with special emphasis on practical application.**
- B. Students will acquire a working knowledge of the text, be able to refute error which uses this book for its basis, and be able to teach these truths to others.**
- C. This course will help instill a proper (Biblical) view of marriage and sex.**
- D. This course will increase understanding on what loving husbands and wives do for their mates.**
- E. It will help students see marriage as a gift of God, full of beauty and holiness when conducted as God would have it.**

III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS.

- A. Required.**
 - 1. Bible (ASV, KJV or NKJV).**
 - 2. 6 video lessons.**
 - 3. Spiral bound course notes.**
- B. Optional: Any good (conservative) commentary on Song of Solomon.**

IV. REQUIREMENTS.

- A. Read the entire Song of Solomon at least three times.**

- B. View all 6 video lessons in their entirety.**
- C. Read the class notes in their entirety.**
- D. Complete all memory work (explained below).**
- E. Submit a term paper (explained below).**
- F. Take one written test.**
- G. Have a combined grade average of at least 70.**

V. MEMORY WORK.

- A. Memory verses must be written (or typed) from memory, then mailed to VBI for grading. Verses must come from the ASV, KJV or NKJV, according to what you indicated on your VBI enrollment application.**
- B. All verses must be written out or typed at one sitting. You may study more and start over if you make a mistake, but you must still start again from the beginning and write all the verses at one sitting.**
- C. For this course, the following verses must be memorized:**

Song of Solomon 8:6,7.
- D. Memory work is due when you mail VBI your written test.**
- E. Hint: A good method of memorizing is to write the verses on flash cards that can be easily reviewed throughout the course.**

VI. TESTS.

- A. There is one written test covering Song of Solomon.**
- B. When you near the end of the course, contact us and request the test.**
- C. When you receive the test, you have permission to look at it and study it.**
- D. However, when you take the test, you must do so completely from memory, with no help from notes, Bible, etc.**

VII. TERM PAPER.

- A. Write a paper explaining the five interpretations of Song of Solomon. Give applicable strengths and weaknesses of each view and indicate which of the five positions you think is correct.**
- B. The paper should be a minimum of four pages, typed and double spaced. If handwritten, the paper should be a minimum of six pages, single spaced.**
- C. The paper is due when you mail VBI your test and memory work.**

VIII. GRADING.

- A. Memory work, term paper, and test will be graded separately.**
- B. Final grade is based on an average of all assigned work, with the test counting twice.**
- C. You may request that a grade be explained or reconsidered, but in any dispute VBI will have the final say.**

IX. CREDIT.

- A. Credit will be issued, including a certificate, only after all work has been successfully completed, tapes have been returned (if rented) and all fees for this particular course have been paid in full.**
- B. We hope you enjoy and profit from your study of the Song of Solomon, and that this course helps in your journey to heaven.**

INTRODUCTORY POINTS

I. GENERAL.

- A. The Hebrew name for the book is “The Song of Songs,” meaning that it is the best of all songs.
- B. The book is a part of the KETHUBIM (writings) of the Hebrew Bible.
- C. There were four fragments of this book found at Qumran, which shows the great antiquity of the writing.
- D. The book is nowhere quoted in the New Testament.
- E. The book has three main divisions: before the marriage, the marriage itself and after the marriage.
- F. The setting seems to be in northern Palestine or Syria although some events take place in Jerusalem.
- G. Although the book is small (only 117 verses), it has a very large number of uncommon words. It contains 470 different Hebrew words (which is unusually high for this size of book). Of those words 47 are unique to the book itself, 51 words occur in other parts of the Old Testament five times or less, 45 words occur between six and ten times, and an additional 27 words occur between eleven and twenty times. This leaves about 300 common words in the Song of Solomon. What compounds this problem is that there are only eighteen verses which include words that are all familiar to Hebrew experts.

Lloyd Carr notes concerning this point:

In other words, more than one third of the words in the Song occur so infrequently that there is little context from which accurate meanings can be deduced, and two thirds of the verses of the Song have uncommon words. Hence, many of the proposals made in the various translations and commentaries are, at best, educated guesses; particularly in the case of those words which are unique to the Song, they may well be incorrect (Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, IVP, p. 41).

- H. The Song of Solomon has the speakers listed in the footnotes of most translations. This will aid the reader in knowing if it is the bride, the bridegroom or the chorus who is speaking. As will be discussed shortly, the groom is most likely Solomon himself and the bride a Shulamite maiden that captivated his love. Some have questioned

whether Solomon, with his 1,000 wives and concubines (8:12; cf. 1 Kings 11:3) could be capable of such commitment and love for one woman (see Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, Zondervan, 1978, p. 180).

While this argument might have some legitimacy with several modern commentators, it ought to be rejected on the following grounds:

1. Had it been written later in Solomon's life, it certainly could reflect feelings Solomon had early in his life.
2. Or, one might reason that late in Solomon's life he found the true greatness of monogamy (a point that is emphasized in Ecclesiastes, cf. Eccl. 9:9).
3. In addition, no compelling evidence exists within the book itself to introduce another character. The husband is treating his wife like royalty, with a royal ceremony, and a honeymoon that only the wealthiest could afford.

II. AUTHORSHIP.

Solomon is the most likely author because:

- A. It is claimed to have been written by him (1:1). Modern critics question the validity of this statement. But, as with other books that claim a certain writer, critics who question the stated author have the burden of proof. No satisfactory reason has been given to reject Solomon as the author.
- B. There is a love of nature that is consistent with other writings of Solomon (i.e. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes).
- C. There is an accurate knowledge of different locations in Israel. A king would certainly know very well the various places in his kingdom.
- D. There are various indications of royalty, i.e.
 1. 1:12 - ...while the king...
 2. 3:6-11 - ...traveling couch of Solomon...
- E. One Jewish tradition says that Hezekiah and his company wrote the Song of Solomon, probably meaning that they did some editing or publishing (Baba Bathra 15a).

III. DATE.

960 B.C. would be the logical date if Solomon was the author. Those who reject Solomon date it as late as 200 B.C.

IV. UNIQUE FEATURES.

- A. This is the only book of the Bible entirely made up of speeches, composed mostly of monologues with practically no dialogue.
- B. There is a continued appreciation of the beauties of nature. Vines, vineyards, gardens, and orchards are mentioned at least twenty times in the book.
- C. The name of God never once appears in the book.

V. FIVE MAIN INTERPRETATIONS TO THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

Because the Song of Solomon is a unique book among Old Testament writings, it has drawn much attention. In fact, some have observed that this little 117 verse book has received more attention than any other book. While this would be difficult to prove, it is nevertheless true that much research has been devoted to the Song of Solomon.

- A. **ALLEGORICAL** - This interpretation considers the Song of Solomon to be an extended metaphor, using the format of a relationship between two who serve as a teaching device. Thus, those who adopt the allegorical position consider the Song of Solomon to be about God's dealing with Israel, or is prophetic and refers to Christ's relationship with the church.

While the Bible does contain some allegories (cf. Gal. 4:24), there are several reasons to reject this position:

1. It strains the text. The book is much too graphic sexually to assume that it depicts Christ's and the church's relationship. Even though Eph. 5:23ff talks about "the bride of Christ" this book is simply too much on the graphic side to mean this.
2. It is alluded to nowhere in the New Testament, let alone applied to the church. It just seems logical if it was talking about this then one inspired writer would have so applied it.
3. Works that are allegorical usually give some indication or hint that they are allegories (cf. G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, IVP, p. 23). The Song of Solomon gives no indication that an allegory is being made.

- B. TYPOLOGY** - Some people do not make a distinction between this and allegory. However, an allegory does not recognize any historical value to a work. It does not consider it to be a factual account. Typology, on the other hand, considers there to be some historical value to the work (although some who adopt this view do not consider there to be any actual historical relationships), then also looks to seeing a type or pattern in the Bible. For example, Jewish interpreters would look to the Song as a parallel to Hosea and Gomer, and how their relationship illustrated the spiritual adultery committed by Israel against God.

Again, while it is not denied that the Bible does have types and antitypes (cf. Rom. 5:14), there are some difficulties with this viewpoint:

1. It, like the Allegorical position, strains the text with its graphic sexual references.
2. There is no New Testament reference to, or application of, the Song in this way.
3. Even the Jewish community was divided on this interpretation, and those who adopt it differ widely on what the various types might refer to, so any reasonable application is lost.

- C. DRAMA** - Origen (250 A.D.) was the first to suggest this interpretation (*The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*). Few commentators adopted this position until Delitzsch suggested it as a logical interpretation of the book. Since this time other writers have adopted this view.

Basically, this view looks at the Song of Solomon as a writing intended to be acted and/or sung. Generally, for a writing to be viewed as a drama, it must have the following elements: (1) Has definite beginning, middle and end; (2) Has logical progression to the story; (3) Clearly develops a theme and/or characters; and (4) Provides technical information for the director, such as who is speaking and various stage directions.

There are several weaknesses in this view:

1. The text of the Song of Solomon must be radically changed to fit the criteria of a drama.

“Considerable experience in theatrical productions and direction has persuaded me that the Song, as it now stands, is unactable. It would be virtually impossible to stage effectively

without major rewriting, and it lacks the dramatic impact to hold an audience” (Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, IVP, p. 34).

2. The style of drama is unknown to Hebrew literature.

- D. **LITERAL** - It interprets the book as it appears to be on the surface: the story about the feelings and desires of two young lovers. With this interpretation one is not burdened with the impossible task of trying to find logical allegories or go through the painstaking research to identify types. It also relieves one of the burden of rewriting the text in order to make it work as a dramatic play. In addition, it does not leave the reader searching for explanations to the erotic sections of the book.

As with the other interpretations, this one also has its problems. The foremost weakness is the reason such a sensual book is a part of God’s inspired Word. How does it fit into the Canon in this case? Not having one reference to God or to godliness or righteousness - what value does it have?

- E. **DIDACTIC MORAL** - This interpretation is similar to the literal view but the idea is that the book is written to teach certain moral principles. This is why it was read at the Passover: because most women would be present at this feast. It would be excellent to teach the husband and wife how they should feel about one another in spite of their individual imperfections. This is the most logical view, and it therefore provides God’s children with some directions about sex and marriage. Its purpose is to teach some very important principles about marriage. This puts to rest the idea that sex is wrong. Only *illicit* sex is condemned in scripture. God made mankind sexual creatures. The sexual relationship was a gift for people to enjoy within certain guidelines.

“The book then was intended as a commentary on Genesis 2:24 and a manual on the blessing and reward of intimate married love once Yahweh had lit the flame and given the capability of enjoyment” (Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, Zondervan, 1978, p. 180).

In this regard, consider the comments of two commentators:

“A frequent Old Testament term for the sexual union of a man and a woman is the verb ‘know’ (e.g., Gen. 4:1, etc.). It is worthy to note that the most intimate knowledge of another person is not on the basis of intellectual exchange or the discussion of theological ideas, but in the intimate, sexual union of male and female. In this light it should not be considered obscene that at least one book of the Bible

be dedicated to the celebration of one of the central realities of our creature hood. The song does celebrate the dignity and purity of human love. This is a fact that has not always been sufficiently stressed. The Song, therefore, is didactic and moral in its purpose. It comes to us in this world of sin, where lust and passion are on every hand, where fierce temptations assail us and try to turn us aside from the God- given standard of marriage. And it reminds us, in particularly beautiful fashion, how pure and noble true love is.” (Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, IVP, p. 34). “This is a piquant irony: here we are with all of our high notions of ourselves as intellectual and spiritual beings, and the most profound form of knowledge for us is the plain business of skin on skin. It’s humiliating! When two members of this godlike, cerebral species approach the height of communications between themselves, what do they do? Think? Speculate? Meditate? No. they take off their clothes. Do they want to get their brains together? No, it is the most appalling of ironies: their search for union takes them quite literally in a direction away from where their brains are” (T. Howard, *Hallowed Be This House*, Harold Shaw Pub., 1979, pp. 115-116).

With Solomon as the most likely author of this work, and the didactic-moral the most logical interpretation, there are some other passages of Solomon that are in harmony with his thoughts in the Song of Solomon. Note the comparison between these two sections:

Let your fountain be blessed
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
a lovely hind, a graceful doe.
Let her affection fill you at all times with delight;
be infatuated always with her love...
For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord,
and he watches all his paths.
(Proverbs 5:18-19,21)

A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a garden locked, a fountain sealed...
a garden fountain, a well of living water,
(Song of Solomon 4:12,15)

VI. THEME.

The beauty of wedded love. This book illustrates the intimate feelings and commitment between a husband and his wife.

A. Key words.

1. Beloved (33 times).

2. Love (18 times).
3. Beauty/beautiful (15 times).

B. Key verses.

1. “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16; 6:3; 7:10).
2. “He brought me into his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love” (2:4).
3. “How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine” (4:10).
4. “How beautiful and how delightful you are, My love, with all your charms!” (7:6).
5. “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me” (7:10).

SONG OF SOLOMON EXPOSITION

By looking at the recurring words, and considering the book as a whole, it is evident that the purpose of the book is most clearly stated in 8:6,7. The love between the man and his wife is a flame from God. This flame of love could not be extinguished nor exchanged. Neither could it be replaced by riches, position, or fame.

Chapter 1

- 1:1** By calling this the “Song of Songs,” Solomon is identifying this work as the best, or most beautiful, of songs. As noted in the introduction, the author clearly identifies himself as Solomon, and there is no legitimate reason to doubt this.

Beginning with this section and continuing through 2:7, the young couple speak of various aspects of their love; from excitement and desire, to self-doubt. Scholars have long debated whether their words are referring to their first experience as young marrieds, or speaking in anticipation of being wed.

- 1:2** ...kiss me... The young bride is looking forward to the loving kisses of her husband. It is certainly fitting for one, who is married according to the plan of God, to eagerly anticipate the sexual relationship. This is one of the many things found in the book that is a part of foreplay - (cf. kissing 1:2; touching 2:6; fondling 2:6; hearing the voice 2:14; seeing the person 4:9; and smelling him or her 1:3; 7:8).

...wine... The Old Testament warns about the misuse of wine (Prov. 20:1; 23:31; 31:4,6), but, nevertheless, it was a part of ancient celebrations.

- 1:3** This gentleman takes pride in his name and his appearance. He cares for his physical self. This passage serves as a useful example to men today to be concerned about physical appearance and the way they smell. Oil was often used as a base for perfumed lotions in the ancient world. So the man is putting on his aftershave! He wants to smell good.

...maidens love you... He is popular. Others can see he is a “good catch.”

- 1:4** When we take pride in ourselves we make our mates feel special when we give attention to her or him. If we try to make others like and respect us, and then give that attention to our mates, it will make them feel good and increase their self-esteem.

...the king... this seems to indicate the consummation of the marriage is at hand. The king Solomon is taking his bride into his chambers or his personal, private area (perhaps a bedroom) which is off limits to others.

...we will rejoice... the chorus is speaking this part. They join their voices to say this man is no “pretender”. He is loved for good reasons.

1:5 ...black... This is not the Hebrew word for one who is intrinsically black. It means she is a farm girl who has acquired a nice tan (verse 6 verifies this). This section illustrates the feelings of doubt the young bride has. She is lovely, but still questions if her husband/lover will find her desirable. It is up to the husband to erase all doubts.

1:6 ...sun has burned me... This proves she is a good worker. The sun has given her a blackness. People even stare at her because of it. “My own vineyard” refers to her own body which had not been pampered since she had so much hard work to do.

1:7 She is worried her lover might desire one of the cult prostitutes who veil themselves. Cult prostitutes would, at this time, come to the men. She is concerned one will catch his eye. She is insecure about the way she looks, and his loyalties to her. This is didactic because it is not uncommon for women to have periods of insecurities. A woman looks at herself, sees imperfections, and then thinks about her husband at his work. “Are the women he encounters on the job going to catch his eye?” is her concern.

1:8 The groom appropriately responds: “Why would I want anyone else?” He responds lovingly to her insecurity. Every good husband should sense this and try to deal with it.

1:9, 10 He calls her “my darling”, a phrase which occurs nine times, and always used by the husband (1:9,15; 2:2,10,13; 4:1,7; 5:2; 6:4). The husband uses this phrase, in addition to words of praise, for her physical beauty. To illustrate her beauty, he compares her to his mare. He intends to make two points with this illustration:

A. An unbridled mare among the bridled horses of Pharaoh would cause a great deal of excitement! Equally, her sex appeal excites him greatly.

B. The bridles of the horses were elaborately ornamented with gold, silver, jewels, feathers and brightly colored fabrics. Her beauty reminds him of these animals. She apparently wears jewelry that adorns her face, and a beautiful necklace as well. Notice how the bride, like the groom in verse 3, has taken her appearance very seriously. She desires to look her best although she knows she is not perfect. Wives today should also do their best to enhance their

beauty for the sake of their husbands. They will appreciate the efforts, and their self-esteem will be increased because their wives believe they are worth the efforts to make themselves beautiful... *just for them.*

1:11 The chorus joins in saying they will provide the bride with beautiful jewelry. Perhaps these are some of the royal household, the female servants who would have the responsibility of caring for the king's new bride.

1:12-14 The bride responds by making three comparisons of her encounter with her husband (the king) with three different perfumes: (1) Nard is a costly ointment from plants grown in India; (2) Myrrh, also a costly perfume, comes from the sap of trees. She wears the myrrh in a pouch next to her skin; (3) Henna is a common Palestinian (from Engedi, on the western side of the dead sea) shrub that gives a beautiful fragrance when crushed. The bride is expressing that having her husband near, even all night, is like the sweet smelling perfumes she uses.

1:15 The bridegroom responds to her encouraging words with an equally encouraging response. She is beautiful to him. He comments that her eyes are like doves. This statement is somewhat obscure. There are two very different ways of viewing this point: (1) Her eyes, although the dull gray of dove's eyes, are nevertheless very beautiful to him; or (2) Her eyes have a deep, penetrating gray color and thus are strikingly beautiful. He makes this comparison again in 4:1 and she describes his eyes in the same way (5:12). He also mentions that her eyes are like the pools in Heshbon (7:4), which were deep reservoirs of water. It is apparent that her eyes (and his) are very beautiful and appealing to the other. Whether others would concur with this assessment is unknown. But it really does not matter. What is most important is what one's mate thinks.

1:16, 17 The bride's response. His insistence that she is beautiful encourages her to comment that he is handsome. She also notes that he is pleasant, perhaps giving the idea that he is charming (NIV), lovely (RSV) or delightful (JB). She also notes that they are able to make love in some beautiful places. In gardens and in forests are some of their favorites romantic locations.

Chapter 2

2:1 ...Sharon... is a coastal Plain running south from Mt. Carmel. It is a very fertile land where roses were grown in abundance. Many translations note in the footnote that this is literally "crocus" with possible meanings of narcissus, iris or daffodils. Thus, we are left with some difficulty as to with what exactly the bride is comparing herself. Many commentators refer to

this, and to the lily in the next clause, to argue that the bride is once again considering herself to be quite plain.

...lily of the valley... The word for “lily” does not refer to our white, bell-shaped plant of the same name. Although difficult to identify with any certainty, the bride does seem to see *some* simple beauty in herself, but no more than that. Perhaps what beauty she does see in herself is because of the praise of her husband. She responds to his words, “you are beautiful”, and then feels so because of him.

2:2 ...like a lily among the thorns... The husband uses her word for herself, and demonstrates that her beauty is equivalent to “a lily among the thorns.” In his opinion, his is the prettiest girl around.

2:3 Here again the bride speaks. She enjoys the feeling of making love. This text is believed by most commentators to be talking about the satisfaction of love-making and how it compares to a good tree which gives forth satisfying fruit. The apple (or apricot) has an aromatic aroma and a sweet taste.

...in his shade... A weary traveler would find comfort and protection in the shade of the tree. Some see in this a reference to the sexual position with the man over his wife.

...his fruit was sweet... She could here be referring to love-making, but the exact meaning is unknown. Perhaps the sexual experience was pleasing to her, like the sweet taste of ripe fruit.

2:4 ...banquet hall... is literally a “house of wine.” Some see this as an idiom referring to the place where wine is grown (vineyard), or the place where wine is stored. This idea has strong support, since the two lovers have many encounters in gardens and forests. Regardless, this verse does not provide any worthy basis for the song often sung in churches today referring to the Christian’s relationship with Christ. It is, however, *totally unacceptable* to consider Christ taking His disciples into a “house of wine.” According to some translators, the concept seems to be that of possession. The banner flies over that which belongs to the owner. The mention of love as that “banner over me” has two possible meanings: (1) What makes her his “possession” is the fact he loves her; and (2) Understanding banner to be “wish”, indicating his desire for her is to make love.

2:5 Apples were thought to be an aphrodisiac and, combined with raisin cakes, will provide her with the strength for more love-making. She says she needs these because she is “lovesick”.

- 2:6 This verse obviously has sexual overtones. One hand is under her head - most likely showing they are lying down - and the other hand is embracing her; a term used elsewhere by Solomon to refer to the sexual union (Prov. 5:20) and here probably signifying his caressing or fondling her.
- 2:7 This verse occurs two other times (3:5; 8:4). It speaks of the restful sleep after a satisfying, sexual experience. Perhaps she is not so “lovesick” now. The groom is speaking. He does not want her to be awakened.
- 2:8 Here comes her “Superman,” “leaping tall buildings!”
- 2:9 The bridegroom goes from place to place to get the best view of her.
- 2:10-13 “Now that the weather is more pleasant, let us go out and find a place to make love.” (She quotes him. He had earlier invited her to make love. Now she is ready.)

This may also mean something else. She may be saying, “This is the springtime of our lives and we should enjoy it now.”

- 2:14 Some believe this is the groom speaking, although it is difficult to tell with certainty. The NASV considers this to also be the words of the bride. If this is the case, then she loves his body, *but* she is also interested *in privacy*. The sexual relationship is a private thing between two individuals. It may be enjoyed out-of-doors, but it still must be enjoyed in private.
- 2:15 This is a difficult text. This may be an invitation to make love while she is still in the mood. What can ruin the mood? It can be ruined just like foxes ruin a vineyard. It is important when one mate is interested in love-making, that the other person try to get into the mood. The desire can pass quickly. See notes on verse 17.
- 2:16 This verse seems to indicate that the groom responded to the bride’s plea of verse 15.

...My beloved is mine... This is a key phrase (6:3; 7:10). They belong to no one else but each other. Certainly Solomon would have done well to have continually acknowledged this truth and not turned his affections to other wives. The New Testament often speaks of the unity shared by man and wife (Mt. 19:6; Heb. 13:6). Here the bride has the confidence that he belongs to her. Should not every wife live with this same confidence? Also, she leaves no doubt in his mind that she is his. He need not concern himself that she might have intentions of being unfaithful to him. When individuals make commitments to one another, they also make commitments to God. God sees and knows what people do, and whether they are indeed faithful. The road to unfaithfulness begins when one does not control lusts. This is why Job said what he did (Job 31:1), and why

Jesus taught so strongly against lust (Mt. 5:27,28). The words - "I belong to you" - are only words unless he or she intends to back up the statement with diligent effort to remain faithful. The foundation for this is to control one's lusts (Jas. 1:13, 14).

...he pastures his flock... the image of a shepherd to illustrate the duties of a king for his people (cf. 2 Sam. 5:2). Solomon has taken his job as king very seriously and has done his best to meet their needs.

- 2:17 Relating to the last thought of verse 16, she is saying, "Now that you have done your work of taking care of the flock, take care of my needs." As Paul instructed in 1 Cor. 7:3-5, the husband and wife need to consider their bodies the possessions of their mate. This selflessness is vital to a healthy relationship.

Chapter 3

- 3:1 The bride speaks here. This section (1-5) is probably a dream sequence in which she is remembering past romantic encounters while longing for another. She will not rest until she finds it.

...whom my soul loves... again indicates the dedication the bride has for her husband. She is totally devoted to him. When he is away she is not thinking of - or desiring - another. Her desire is for him and him only.

...I sought him... Why the groom is absent is not stated. Some have suggested that as king, Solomon was busy with the affairs of his kingdom and thus delayed in returning to his new bride.

- 3:2, 3 She searches the city (probably Jerusalem), inquiring of the guards if they have seen her husband.

- 3:4 With "true love" the old saying is true: "absence makes the heart grow fonder." When we have a good thing, we really miss it and hold tightly to it when we get it back. We are unwilling to let it go.

...mother's house... just possibly the closest place where they can make love together. She is longing for an opportunity to make love, so brings him to her mother's house.

- 3:5 Again the repetition of the man telling everyone to be quiet so she can sleep peacefully after a satisfying sexual experience. Whereas she had trouble sleeping before (verse 1), she is now content and resting peacefully.

- 3:6 The chorus describes a royal wedding procession. The groom is well prepared, having put on the perfume pleasing to his bride.

- 3:7, 8** The specific mention of Solomon has given many commentators problems. Some delete the name altogether while others try to translate the name into some comparable meaning. The reason for this is they refuse to believe that a polygamist like Solomon could be the subject of this section. However, the Hebrew text is clear here. Solomon is clearly the one whom the chorus is singing about. He has a very impressive entourage. He has sixty mighty men, reminding one of the bodyguards of David (2 Sam. 23:8-39). Scholars have observed the mention of Israel shows that this poem was written before the division of the Northern and Southern kingdoms in 922 B.C. (Carr, *Song of Solomon*, p. 110).
- 3:9** Solomon appears, riding in a very impressive chair made of the finest wood. It is not clear whether this is being wheeled (a chariot) or carried.
- 3:10** A modern application of this section would be to describe a person's car, but here it is a chariot or transported throne. Every man of every time has some type of transportation he brags about.
- 3:11** The text again mentions Solomon (as it will again in 8:7,12), and determines that it is his wedding day. On his head he has a special wreath (not the same word for the royal crown), which was given to him by his mother on this special day. He is coming, looking magnificent, and everyone is extremely impressed!

Chapter 4

- 4:1** The bridegroom speaks in this section through verse 15. As previously mentioned (1:15), and to be repeated again in verse 7, his bride is, in his eyes, beautiful. Beginning with this section the text becomes more erotic. Whereas before he merely stated she was beautiful, now he will describe what he finds about her that is so beautiful. In this section seven parts of the woman's appearance are going to draw comment.

- A.** He describes her eyes. As before (1:15; cf. 5:12) they are like the eyes of a dove. Again the intent of this may be that though others may not consider these deep gray-colored eyes beautiful, he does.

...veil... an indication of marriage in this text. Usually a woman would wear a headdress, but not a veil. The veil was worn (1) During engagements (Gen. 24:65), or (2) At actual wedding celebrations (Gen. 29:23-25). The one variation to this is where Judah thought Tamar was a harlot because she had a veil on (Gen. 38:13-15). In that case the veil served to hide Tamar's identity.

- B.** He now describes her hair. He says her hair is like a flock of goats (indicating that the entire head was not covered with the veil). Most Palestinian goats have long, wavy black hair.
- ...on Mt. Gilead... When one stood at the bottom of a hill and goats were coming down, it appeared as if the mountain were moving. Her hair has this type of look - active and flowing.
- 4:2 C.** His attention is now shifted to her teeth. He makes the following observations:
- 1.** They are brushed and white.
 - 2.** They “bear twins”, indicating the symmetry and perfection of her teeth.
 - 3.** She has a mouth full of teeth; there are no spaces.
- 4:3 D.** He considers her lips. He observes that they are like a scarlet thread, indicating she had used some kind of lip coloring. Cosmetics were common in ancient times. In noting her lips, he considers her mouth to be lovely (delightful or enchanting).
- E.** While still viewing her face, he mentions her temples. The idea here is most likely her cheeks, which have a reddish color (from pomegranate which was a red fruit), are discernable behind her veil.
- 4:4 F.** He describes her neck. To him it is like the beautiful tower of David that projected up from the houses below (cf. Neh. 3:25). The “row of stones” pictures the protecting wall built around the tower. He is admiring the beautiful necklace surrounding her neck, as if to protect it. This necklace also has beautiful and colorful ornamentation like the battle shields of the warriors.
- 4:5, 6 G.** He describes her breasts. The idea of symmetry (cf. verse 2) is repeated here. The “two fawns,” “mountain,” and “hill” are her breasts.
- 4:7** Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. He wants her to know just how very beautiful she is in his eyes. “Do not change a thing.”
- 4:8, 9** ...my sister, my bride... He calls her his sister four other times (4:9, 10,12; 5:1,2). This is a phrase symbolizing a permanent relationship. A sister will always be a sister, and his bride will always be his prized possession no matter what happens in life. She will *always* be his “bride.”

...single glance... She looks at him with that “wanting you” look in her eyes (“bedroom eyes”). He observes her and finds her desirable.

4:10 He appreciates the way she looks and smells - all done in order to please him!

4:11 Her lips are enticing, her words are sweet, and she smells good too! The word for garment (in Hebrew - SALMA) is not the usual word for clothing (BEGED). Very likely this indicates something like a negligee.

4:12 She is a beautiful thing but can be entered only by the one to whom she belongs. She is a locked garden. This indicates that she has never been seen before. She is pure and clean - a virgin.

...garden... This is a metaphor representing the female sexual organs.

4:13, 14 ... nard and sapphron... She is like a well kept garden. He appreciates her efforts and says so.

4:15 Prov. 5:16 uses this same imagery. It is our idea of a garden spring. It is describing the sexual life of a husband and wife. One needs to drink from his own cistern! This girl had not defiled herself with sexual experiences before her marriage.

4:16 The bride now responds. If her “garden” is the sexual organs, she has probably perfumed herself.

...his garden... She welcomes him to come and have sex. Her body belongs to him and, therefore, his to come into and enjoy.

...choice fruits... He compares her to a garden, and she says, “Come and eat and enjoy.”

Chapter 5

5:1 ...I have come... He responds to her in 4:16. The verb indicates something that started in the past and is continuing.

...my wine and my milk... This is another verse having many sexual allusions. “Honeycomb” in the Hebrew can also be described as a “thicket” or a bramble”. In ancient near eastern love poetry there is frequent use of “honey” and the “thicket.” They are used as metaphors for the female genitals.

...O lovers... It seems the groom is asking others to participate in his garden. How can this be?

- A. He has described her as a beautiful garden and is going to her. The wedding guests encourage him to do so.
- B. The couple is encouraging all the guests to go and enjoy the pleasure of love-making.

Notice that all the restraints are removed in the marriage bed. There are no negatives with sex here. You can lust for your mate. It does not defile the marriage bed.

5:2 There are two interpretations.

- A. She is dreaming and all of this is a dream sequence similar to the one in chapter 3:1ff. Even if this is a dream, it still suggests some kind of problem in the marriage relationship as discussed in B. below.
- B. Another way to look at it is that this is a lapse in the marriage relationship - the sexual relationship. One mate is desiring to have the other, but the other is not returning that desire. Since this is a book that has a didactic nature, it could be the point that he is trying to make. All couples have times when something is lacking or someone is not being fulfilled. That may be the case here and, if so, then the point is that it is common for this to happen. If it does, then the marriage can run into serious difficulties unless something is done about it, and both partners work on that problem and try to get it resolved.

...damp of the night... She may still be dreaming this or awakened from her dream. ...dew... He has worked hard all night and is ready for enjoyment. But he needs her to open the door.

5:3 ...opening the door... This perhaps indicates her unwillingness to respond to him. If this is a dream, then it demonstrates that the bride is unwilling to put herself to any kind of inconvenience, even for her lover. If it is real, then she just simply refuses to get up to open the door for him, offering weak excuses such as not wanting to dirty her feet.

5:4 In all probability she has drifted back to sleep, and is now dreaming of an exciting sexual encounter with her husband. The hand is sometimes used as a euphemism for the male sexual organ (cf. Isa. 57:8), and has been found to be used in this way in many ancient cultures' love poetry. If this is the intended meaning here, then this is the clearest reference to the physical act of sexual intercourse.

5:5 ...I arose to open to my beloved... He had earlier asked her to open the door and, whether real or in her dream, she refused. Now, having become

sexually aroused, she rises to open the door. She has prepared herself for him by applying some perfume.

- 5:6** Since the husband had been earlier denied he left, no doubt feeling depressed and rejected. This shows just how important it is for both parties to consider the sexual needs of the other. It does happen that one partner is interested in sex but the other is not. The one who is not needs to be considerate of the needs of the other (and yield to their desires), or at least offer some legitimate reason why he/she is not interested in sex at this time. Otherwise, the partner might take it personally and this could lead to yet further problems.
- 5:7** Cf. 3:3 - She searches in vain for her bridegroom. The watchmen find her, strike her and hurt her, whereas they did not do so before. She ends up being the victim of those whose duty it is to protect her. Maybe they hit her because she would not stop looking and was not supposed to be out at that time of night. In the process she loses her shawl and the guards see her in a state of undress.
- 5:8** She instructs the daughters not to tell him what she has done. Her running out and encountering the watchmen was embarrassing. She does want him to know, however, that she now desires him, for now she is “lovesick.”
- 5:9** The daughters ask for a description of the one she seeks. Some translations (JB and NIV) understand this verse to mean the bride has implied her lover is better than all others, and these girls want to know what is so special about him that she thinks he is the best.
- 5:10-16** The description then comes. There are many ancient poems describing the female, but this is one of the few in all of ancient literature in which the male is being described.

As he described her body (4:1-6), she enumerates eight features of his body.

- 5:10** He is handsome. He is very handsome. There are a number of implications of “ruddy.” It has to deal with skin color (reddish), but can also mean short and stocky. David was ruddy. Cf. 1 Sam. 16:12.

...outstanding among ten thousand... exaggeration. She is saying that if ten thousand men were standing in a row, he would be the handsomest.

- 5:11, 12** **A.** She notes that his head is beautiful and valuable. The reference to gold could be a reference to jewelry he is wearing, or that he has a nice tan.
- B.** She notes that his hair is black and wavy.

- C. She describes his eyes as deep set eyes and penetrating. His eyes are not bloodshot.
- 5:13 D. His cheeks are strong and anointed with a sweet smelling perfume.
- E. His lips are like flowers that smell like costly ointment. (He does not have bad breath!).
- 5:14 F. She is impressed with his hands. They are strong and laden with jewelry. The plural here would eliminate the euphemistic meaning suggested in 5:4.
- G. His abdomen is strong and muscular. He is not overweight. (No “love handles” here.)
- 5:15 H. His legs are as solid as the pillars of the temple, and as beautiful as pure gold. He is solid like the mighty trees of Lebanon.
- ...cedar... They are very strong.
- 5:16 In addition to these notable physical characteristics, her husband is also a good conversationalist. He speaks words of love and romance to her. His speech is full of sweetness.
- ...my friend... The best possible relationship is that of lovers *and* friends. Happy is the husband whose spouse is his good friend! (And vice versa!)

Chapter 6

- 6:1 She had been looking for him, and had described him. Now the chorus would like to see him for themselves.
- 6:2 Because he is a working man, he has been taking care of business. She has probably realized where he has gone - to their special, secret place.
- 6:3 She repeats that she is totally his, and he is totally hers. Their relationship is stable. She trusts him while he is away at work, pasturing his flock. She also, in spite of the trouble in chapter 5, reaffirms her love for and commitment to him. It is important, especially after a couple encounters difficulties, for each to reaffirm their love for one another.
- 6:4 This is the second description by the groom of the bride’s body. This time he praises four of her physical features. Again, it is important to note that

although she had earlier rejected him, he is quick to forgive and return to his words of love and praise for her.

...Tirzah... is an ancient Canaanite city in Samaria which eventually was adopted by Jeroboam I to be his capital. It is a very beautiful area which, no doubt, is Solomon's reference here.

6:5 A. He again notes the power of her eyes, which confuse him, perhaps indicating mixed messages he receives when he looks into them.

B. The black wavy hair is again mentioned.

6:6 C. Her beautiful white teeth, all perfectly aligned and without one missing, draw his praise.

6:7 D. Her temples, again, are that rosy red color he finds appealing.

...sixty queens... At this point Solomon has not yet reached the awesome number of one thousand queens and concubines.

...maidens... In Hebrew - ALMA - does not strictly mean "virgin," but "sexually mature;" a girl of marriageable age.

6:9 Even the queens and the concubines think she is a thing of great beauty.

6:10-12 The kings and the concubines were wondering, who is this beautiful girl? The groom quotes what they said, and proudly answers, "My wife!"

6:11 From what the groom says, then she was correct in verse 2. He did go to the garden.

6:12 Most commentators agree this is the most difficult verse in the Song. Some suggest it has an idiomatic meaning totally lost to the modern student.

6:13 The girl is a Shulamite. Shulam is near Mt. Tabor in Galilee, nine miles west of Megiddo. David's nurse (Abishag) came from this area (cf. 1 Kgs. 1:1-3).

...why... The husband inquires why they are so interested in seeing this girl. The reference to the dance has caused some commentators to believe the onlookers are asking her to dance nude - or nearly so. This interpretation seems unwarranted by the text. Regardless, he is going to describe her to them in chapter 7.

Chapter 7

7:1-9 He becomes creative in this third description of her body. In this listing, he notes nine qualities of her body.

- A.** Her feet are beautiful.
- B.** The curves of her hips are like the work of a fine craftsman.
- C.** Her navel is round, and apparently scented.
- D.** Her breasts are like two fawns, indicating perfect balance and symmetry.
- E.** Her neck is long and precious like ivory.
- F.** Her eyes are deep-set, like the pools of Heshbon.
- G.** Her nose is perfectly formed, like the tower of Damascus.
- H.** Her head is like Mount Carmel, a beautiful extension of the land of northwestern Palestine.
- I.** Her locks are decorated with colorful threads

7:6 Again the groom openly expresses his satisfaction with her body. She has many charms; characteristics that he finds appealing and attractive.

7:7, 8 After having described her beautiful body, he wants to enjoy it by having a sexual encounter. He wants to climb her body, caress her breasts and enjoy the sweet smell of her mouth.

7:9 The first line of verse 9 is still the words of the groom. He repeats what she had earlier said about his kisses (1:2). He now says he feels the same way about her kisses.

She responds by saying she wants to be satisfying to him and his desires.

7:10-13 She says she will go with him anywhere and they will find a place to make love. She has saved herself for him, and keeps herself physically attractive for him.

...saved up for you... This girl is not one who brings to their relationship all sorts of sexual experiences. He is going to enjoy her as one who is fresh and new. All who enter into marriage would like their partners to be virgins.

Chapter 8

8:1 ...brother... She wishes they could have been together always. Brothers and sisters have the advantage of growing up together. They may kiss and embrace one another without anyone thinking it inappropriate. It is, however, unthinkable for children, not being siblings, to do this.

8:2,3 In earlier years the mother had been the bride's teacher. She taught her daughter (as all good mothers do) the "facts of life." Now the bride longs for the sexual embrace, and knows just how she wants her husband to make love to her. Notice how she verbalizes what she wishes him to do. She wants to take him to her "schoolroom" and show him how well she learned what her mother taught her.

8:4 The bridegroom says (for the last time) not to awaken his bride after love-making.

8:5 Again the chorus enters, observing the couple who are obviously very much in love with each other. The woman leans against her beloved as they walk through the wilderness.

It is difficult to know exactly what this section refers to. It is possible that, in some way, the groom is expressing his thankfulness for the pain her mother endured in giving birth to his beloved. Perhaps this location under the tree is near to where the bride was born.

8:6 ...seal... They let everyone know they belong to each other and are devoted to one another. Their love is as strong and compelling as death, for when death calls no one can resist it.

... jealousy... is not used here in a negative sense, but conveys the idea that they share strong feelings of possessiveness. This is apparent from earlier statements (cf. 2:16; 6:3; 7:10). "Sheol" is the abode of the dead and, again, like death, is an irresistible force which permanently possesses its inhabitants. So also, when one falls in love, strong feelings of jealousy are often a part of that love. No one wants to share their mates' love with others. They want *all* of that physical affection for themselves. This is, of course, God's plan for the marriage relationship.

...the very flame of the Lord... The NASV takes this Hebrew word to include the name of Yahweh. In all probability this is not correct. Other translations seem to have the better sense of this word: RSV = "a most vehement flame"; NIV = "a mighty flame"; NEB = "fiercer than any flame." In all probability this verse is saying that love is like a large fire that has an unquenchable flame. This would also fit with the first part of verse 7.

8:7 True love is something that endures. Even though life may present its quenching waters, this kind of love cannot be quenched.

...give all the riches... As an illustration, the groom compares love with riches. Even if one were to offer all he owned for Solomon's bride's love, those riches would be despised (and thus rejected). Her love, or any married person's love, is not for sale. Such love is reserved and restricted for that one special person.

8:8,9 This is a difficult text. Perhaps this describes the bride's younger sister. Her body has not yet matured and developed, and the couple are concerned as to what to do about making sure she does not engage in a sexual relationship before she is ready.

The couple vow they will care of her and educate her until she is older. They are going to go to great lengths to "barricade" her (protect her) so that she will remain a virgin until the appropriate time. Sex is again viewed as a pleasurable thing, but *only for those who are married*. How many parents today are willing to go to such great lengths to keep their children pure?

8:10 ...peace... While the little sister may not be developed and ready for love, the bride is. He finds complete satisfaction (peace) in her embrace.

8:11,12 Solomon may rent out his vineyard to others (who pay a thousand shekels of silver for its produce), but her "vineyard" is not for rent. She vows that her vineyard (i.e., her body) is at *her* disposal, and she chooses to give it only to Solomon.

8:13 Solomon desires sex and is jealous because others hear her sweet voice but he does not. Now he wants to enjoy her presence.

8:14 "Come. Here I am," is her response. It is fitting and appropriate that the book would close with yet another invitation to make love. This is the purpose of the book: the beauty of wedded love.

Qualities Of An Ideal Marriage From the Song of Solomon

1. The man and the woman are learning to be totally captivated with each other (1:15-17; 2:10-14; 3:6-11).
2. Each partner is developing a love and contentment with the physical attributes of the other (5:10-16). He is content with her body, and her body only (even if it is not perfect - cf. 1:5,15).
3. Verbal appreciation for those physical attributes is often expressed (1:8-11; 4:1-15; 5:10-16; 6:4-9; 7:1-9).
4. Each partner longs for the affection of the other and desires the love of no other (1:2-8; 2:3-6; 8:1-3). They make known to the other when they want to make love (2:10-14; 4:7-16; 7:11-13; 8:14).
5. Each appreciates how they are better because of the other (1:12-14; 8:10).
6. There is a feeling of “total commitment” to each other (2:16; 6:3; 7:10; 8:5-7).
7. There is a genuine care and concern for the other (3:1-4; cf. 2:7; 8:4).