

# Intimacy

## A TRADITION OF INTIMACY AND LOVE

Focal Verses • SONG OF SOLOMON 4:8-5:1A

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DISCUSS the beauty and wonder of love in a committed relationship; REFLECT on our attitude about love and commitment; and EXPLAIN how to build a relationship that honors a marriage commitment.

### In Focus

Craig and Miriam, both attorneys, celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary in two different hotels in two different states. They expressed their love via text message, each too busy to place a call. When they finally caught up with each other a week later, celebrating their anniversary was the last thing on their minds. Miriam's major elite athletic client was in a paternity suit, while one of Craig's corporate clients was embroiled in a messy federal probe.

They both were working when they got the news. Craig's best friend had died in a fiery car crash along with his wife and son. Miriam and Craig felt crushed. This friend was the same one who had set them up for a blind date in college. He recently reminded them to slow down and refocus their priorities. "Tomorrow is not promised," he warned them.

The accident was a wake-up call for Miriam and Craig. Finally, they felt compelled to act on their friend's advice.

*Many priorities compete for a couple's attention, but nothing is as important as their devotion to God and each other. Building a relationship that honors a marriage commitment helps couples outsmart the "little foxes" that destroy marriages. The Song of Solomon gives us a godly perspective on intimacy in relationships. How do you prioritize for your most valued relationships?*



### Keep in Mind

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits"  
(Song of Solomon 4:16, KJV).

## Focal Verses

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**KJV Song of Solomon 4:8** Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

**9** Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

**10** How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

**11** Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

**12** A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

**13** Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,

**14** Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

**15** A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

**16** Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

**5:1a** I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse:

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## The People, Places, and Times

**Weddings and Marriage.** Compatibility and romance were not necessarily essential to marriages in Solomon's day. In biblical times, couples did not meet, date, fall in love, and then marry. Rather, marriage was a vastly different four-step process that had little to do with emotional involvement. First, fathers chose their sons' brides. Indeed, marriage was an arranged contract between two families who sought alliances with each other for various reasons, such as to enhance a social, territorial, or financial position. Second, to seal the contract, the bridegroom's father paid a "bride price" to the bride's family. Third, the couple became betrothed to each other after their parents ratified the contract either verbally (pre-exile) or by signing a covenant (post-exile). The year-long betrothal encompassed the groom-to-be's preparation of the home and the couple's abstinence. Sex between the couple was forbidden, as was sex with other individuals (Deuteronomy 22:13-21; 23-24;

28:2). Fourth, after the successful completion of the betrothal, the couple fulfilled their legal (and social) responsibility to marry. Wedding feasts—elaborate events that often lasted a week—provided ample opportunity for family and friends to applaud the new alliance and celebrate the marriage consummation.

## Background

Son of King David and Bathsheba, Solomon was part of the lineage of Jesus. He was the third king of Israel. He reigned in Israel for 40 years. Israel was at peace during much of Solomon's reign. During that time, Solomon became renowned for his unequalled wisdom, vast wealth, and impressive Temple construction project (which took seven years to complete). Of the three, wisdom was Solomon's greatest claim to fame. Solomon's wisdom was a gift of God, drawing worldwide acclaim (1 Kings 4:34). Some of Solomon's wisdom is contained in the three thousand proverbs—wise sayings—and more than one thousand songs he wrote. While the

authorship of the Song of Solomon—also dubbed the “Song of Songs”—has been debated, many scholars attribute it to King Solomon. By Solomon’s day, many men had strayed from God’s one-wife design for marriage. Most had multiple wives. Few, however, could attest to having as many as Solomon. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:1–13). Concubines, considered to be secondary wives, held lower social rank than women who bore the title “wife.” The foreign women in his life influenced Solomon’s worship of foreign gods. However, he may have had a change of heart later in life (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

## At-A-Glance

1. Invitation to Love  
(Song of Solomon 4:8–9)
2. Love Expressed (vv. 10–15)
3. Love Cherished (4:16–5:1a)

## In Depth

### 1. Invitation to Love (Song of Solomon 4:8–9)

Song of Solomon remains a text to which Christians can turn for encouragement as they contemplate love and commitment. Every marriage begins with an invitation to love, the point at which a relationship becomes more serious and leads up to the exchange of vows. In today’s text, the groom-to-be issues the invitation to love and awaits his beloved’s response. He invited his beloved, “Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon. Come down from Mount Amanah, from the peaks of Senir and Hermon, where the lions have their dens and leopards live among the hills” (Song of Solomon 4:8, NLT). Then he utters the words that have enthralled women for centuries: “You have captured my heart, my treasure, my bride”

(from v. 9, NLT). Many singles wonder if they will ever find the suitable mate, while couples wonder how to revive a stalled marriage.

Consider the following: No two men or women are exactly alike. That is why there is no “one size fits all” formula to finding or keeping a mate. Also, it is important to acknowledge that many Christians skip to the altar without first asking God, “Is this the one?” Inviting God into the mate selection process has helped many couples make the right decision. Struggling couples can seek God’s help, committing to biblical principles—not worldly wisdom—to renew their commitment to each other.

Many Christians over the centuries have also interpreted this book as an allegory for the marriage between Christ and His Church. In Ephesians 5, Paul said that the relationship between Christ and the Church is reflected in biblical marriage.

### 2. Love Expressed (vv. 10–15)

Solomon eloquently enumerates the bride’s endearing qualities. By doing so, he reminds us that love needs expression. How can married or dating couples express love verbally? First, meditate on a beloved’s good or sweet qualities! Second, extol a spouse’s physical attributes. For example, Solomon talked about the sweetness of his bride’s lips. Third, consider the beauty, joy, and value that your beloved adds to your life.

Sometimes the root of an inability to express love is one or more of the following “little foxes”: (1) **Past experiences.** These include verbal abuse, childhood sexual or physical abuse, a failed marriage, or even wrong advice. Many husbands believe “real men never share their feelings,” while many wives heed, “Girl, do not let that man know how much you love him.” Whatever the cause, couples can look to God for healing and wholeness, knowing He designed marriage to be the place for couples to experience satisfying

love. (2) **Harsh words.** Sometimes familiarity breeds contempt in marriage as evidenced by how a wife speaks to her husband and vice versa. The apostle James warned, “The tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire” (from James 3:5, NLT). Couples are reminded: “Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (Ephesians 4:29, NLT). (3) **Family and friends.** Marriages do not play out in enclosed gardens out of the presence of other people’s eyes, ears, and comments. Nonetheless, while couples need trusted advisors at different seasons of their marriage, they should rely only on individuals who honor confidentiality. These include friends, family members, church leaders, or marriage counselors who seek the couple’s best interests.

### 3. Love Enjoyed (4:16–5:1a)

Solomon’s poetic words whet the appetite for building a marriage that honors a marriage commitment. Acknowledging the following makes this an attainable goal: (1) **True love surpasses all else.** After the honeymoon, couples need to continually prioritize as they remember the “why” of love and execute the “how” of love. (2) **True love is satisfying.** It quenches emotional and physical thirsts, thus eliminating the need to sip from any other fountain. (3) **True love is physical.** Solomon celebrated the beauty of sex in the confines of marriage. It is passionate and fulfilling. Marital sex catapults a couple back to the Garden of Eden where love is freely given and received, and where there is the vulnerability characteristic of being “naked and unashamed.” (4) **True love is faithful.** A husband needs to know he can trust his wife and vice versa. Infidelity is a sin and a serious breach of one’s wedding vows. First Corinthians 13:1–13 offers additional insight into the attributes of true love. (5) **True love is a mix of sweet and bitter herbs.**

Only in fairy tales do couples live happily ever after without disagreements, trials, or struggles. Health concerns, financial problems, and other issues impact relationships. The key is to assure that external situations strengthen, not weaken, marriage commitments.

It is important to note that Song of Solomon is applicable for singles, as well. For example, the analogy of the “enclosed garden” reminds singles to reserve intimacy for marriage and to seek other ways to express love to each other. For single women this means: (1) keeping her garden closed; (2) the Song of Solomon, which is told mostly from the viewpoint of the woman, includes references to her lover’s physical attributes, but it also calls for us to look beyond physical attributes to a man’s heart; and (3) not buying into society’s “ticking clock” mantra. For single men this entails: (1) not pressuring a woman to open her garden; (2) looking beyond physical attributes to a woman’s heart; and (3) expressing love in non-physical ways.

### Search the Scriptures

1. What did Solomon’s beloved do to him (Song of Solomon 4:9)?
2. List some of the things Solomon had to say about her (4:10–15).

### Discuss the Meaning

Solomon expressed his feelings for his bride without detailing exactly what occurred in the privacy of their bedroom. What lessons can couples learn from his example? How can couples sidestep questions that are an invasion of marital privacy?

### Liberating Lesson

Romance is often talked about in entertainment, social media, and the arts, but rarely in the church. Song of Solomon reminds us that God created and celebrates romance and love between husbands and wives. Why

don't we talk more about romantic love in churches? How can we talk about it more in ways that are faithful and healthy?

### Application for Activation

Couples seeking to improve their marriages can take lessons from this text. Solomon and the woman knew how to verbally bless each other. Likewise, dating singles headed for the altar can begin today to build a strong foundation for marriage by using uplifting words. One Scripture worth remembering is Ephesians 4:29. Commit it to memory and live it out—beginning today. If you have been guilty of demeaning your husband or wife, ask for forgiveness.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Amana. A-MA-na.  
Calamus. KAL-a-mus.  
Camphire. KAM-fir.  
Hermon. HUR-mon.  
Saffron. SAF-run.  
Shenir. SHE-ner.  
Spikenard. SPIK-nard.

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 106

2 Kings 18–19  
Psalm 44:1–8

### DAY 107

2 Kings 20–22  
Psalm 44:9–16

### DAY 108

2 Kings 23–25  
Psalm 44:17–22

### DAY 109

1 Chronicles 1–2  
Psalm 44:23–26

### DAY 110

1 Chronicles 3–5  
Psalm 45:1–4

### DAY 111

1 Chronicles 6  
Psalm 45:5–12

### DAY 112

1 Chronicles 7–8  
Psalm 45:13–17

## Notes

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