

## **Heard It in a Love Song..**

Song of Songs Overview

(preached Pine Grove 7/19/15; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

Tonight, we are going to do an overview of Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon.

But after tonight, we are going to take a break for a few Sunday nights..

I imagine it will be 2 or 3 Sunday nights, not really sure yet..

Because for the past 3-4 months, the deacons and I have been working hard on amending our by-laws for church membership...

We meet every Sunday morning from 8-9:30 before each of you arrive to plan, pray, and lead Pine Grove Baptist Church...

We discuss ministry needs, we discuss people in the church who may have needs that we can serve...

We discuss issues as they arise, and really anything that needs to be addressed from the aspect of trying to serve the Lord's church...

And let me just say this....

That is a great blessing to me as a pastor to have men who are faithful to meet and show an interest in leading this church biblically.

I was so excited to know that they were meeting as a group of men even before I came...

And so I have simply been blessed to just sit with these men for the past year....

And learn from them and be encouraged by them, and share my ministry with them....

But the point of that meeting is not to just be a group of men who react to situations and then address them...

Part of our purpose is to be proactive in leading the church...

To try and see problems that may come up, and then find ways to prevent any issues in a biblical way...

Obviously, we can't address every situation, but we try to be prepared as best we can by looking ahead and planning...

For the first few months, a large portion of that hour and a half was spent discussing things related to church membership....

And so in the early part of this year, we looked at the current bylaws on church membership and felt

they needed some updating to address some issues we are facing as a church..

And for the past few months, we have worked through issues related to church membership...

Now, that is a difficult task because there isn't a section on church membership in the Bible...

You can't turn to Galatians 2 and read an entire chapter devoted to church membership...

It isn't there.

No that is not to say that church membership isn't biblical...

I would never say that because the Bible talks about membership in the local church in a number of places...

The challenge is to simply look at those passages and then form some guidelines for church membership...

Based upon what the Bible says about membership...

Now, no two sets of bylaws will be identical because there is no clear instruction on how to do them in the Bible..

However, we as the leadership of Pine Grove Baptist have tried to come up with a set of bylaws that reflect what the Bible teaches about membership...

The current set of bylaws on membership are solid, and I don't think much has been changed about them...

We just felt a need to go farther in some areas that what was already in place...

And here is the reason for doing this...

It's not my agenda to come in and do a membership overhaul...

However in the current climate in our nation and even in the world, churches need to be protecting themselves as much as possible from lawsuits...

The days of never thinking about suing the church are over...

We are going to see the number of discrimination lawsuits filed against churches sky rocket in the next few years..

Now, here is the balance to that....

We believe in the sovereignty of God here..

We trust the Lord to take care of us and guide us as long as we seek to obey Him and honor Him with our worship...

So on one hand, we know that God is certainly in control...

However, in the other hand, we want to be responsible to do what we can to protect the interests of His church...

I assure you that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Lord's church, but I also assure they are going to be knocking pretty loud in the days...

And one of the weak areas of many churches is that they do not have a well-defined church membership policy....

And that is going to be a huge problem and an open door for lawsuits...

And here is why....

If you open your doors to non-member use of the church, you open your doors to anyone desiring to use the church....

And then when you deny that privilege to a certain group, according to the courts, you are discriminating....

And that is where a lot of churches will find trouble...

So in an effort to shore up what membership means here and then to really define what a church member is, we, as the leadership of the church have taken some time....

To revise our bylaws of church membership...

And for the next 2-3 weeks, the deacons have simply asked me to walk through what we are going to present to you as our recommendation...

I am going to copy them and put them up on the screen, and we are going to work through them line by line...

So that you will be very familiar with what you will be voting on in a few weeks...

And that is a real long story to say that I will be going through that beginning next week on Sunday nights...

And it really works out perfect because the book of Song of Songs is really a nice place to take a break..

It is the final book of wisdom in the OT....

The rest of the books are the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi....

They are the men that God used to teach and instruct and call Israel back to serving Him when they wandered away....

We are going to benefit greatly from the prophets as we do overviews of those books...

Ezekiel and Daniel are two of my favorite book of the Bible along with Jonah and Malachi....

So, I am looking forward to getting to them...

But first, we need to finish up the wisdom books and then take a little break to address church membership....

Therefore tonight, we need to look at Songs of Songs....

And I do prefer that name for it, though if you call it the Song of Solomon, that is fine too....

Song of Songs just seems to better in keeping in line with other phrases like it in the Bible....

King of Kings....

Lord of Lords....

Holy of Holies...

Now, this is the 22<sup>nd</sup> book that we have looked at in our overview of the Bible series....

It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> book where Solomon has been the primary author of its contents along with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes...

And like I said, it is the last of the wisdom book...

Now just for my interest, how many of you have ever heard a sermon that was based out of Song of Songs...

That's interesting...

Song of Songs is never quoted in the NT, but that is not unique since Obadiah, Nahum and Esther are never quoted in the NT either...

Song of Songs also makes just one reference to God, though He is often seen in other parts of the texts...

There are also no great teaching sections in Song of Songs where we learn about God....

Again, that is not a big deal.

There are other OT books that don't directly teach great truths about God.

However, all these concerns have led to problems for the interpretation of Song of Songs...

And because of that, there are some really bad sermons that have been preached from it...

There are some really bad books that have been written about it...

That's why we need to address an issue even before we get into Song of Songs, and it deals with how do we interpret the Bible...

I have taught on this before when we did a series on how to study the Bible last fall, but I want to go back there tonight for just a minute to remind us of how we need to read the Bible...

You see the problem with the book of Song of Songs and also with the book of Revelation is that a number of people interpret them allegorically...

I have put a fuzzy picture on the screen here of what that means...

A literal interpretation takes the Bible at face value...

What the text says is what it means...

There is no hidden meaning or interpretation that you have to look for...

IT means what it says...

An allegorical approach to Bible interpretation says that the words cannot be taken literally, and that the reader needs to look beyond the words to get the meaning...

For instance, we read in the book of Jonah that Jonah was tossed overboard into the sea...

And God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah from drowning in the sea...

The one who is looking for hidden meaning says that the sea represents the world that God's people are tossed into and the great fish....

Represents the Word of God that comes and swallows us and saves us from drowning in the world....

And if I say that loud enough....

That fish is the Word of God sent to save your soul!!!

Then I can convince you that what you just read is not to be taken literally...

Instead, you need to look beyond the words to discover the meaning....

Do you know what it means when it says that Jonah was tossed over into the sea and God sent a fish to swallow him...

IT means that Jonah was tossed overboard and God sent a great fish to swallow him...

We take it literally.....

The right interpretation is the interpretation that makes sense in the context...

If the plain sense makes the most sense, then seek no other sense...

Now, are there passages in the Bible where we need to understand as figures of speech and things like that?

Sure, but they are far less common than most people realize...

And the problem that Song of Songs has endured for years is that most people have wanted to allegorize the words of the book....

They want to imagine something that is not there....

They want to see this as a love poem that God has written to his people...

Describing His love for them....

Now, that begs a question...

Does God love His people?

Oh, you bet He does....

He loves them with an everlasting love.

How do we know that?

Is it because we have found hidden meaning in the words of Song of Songs that tell us that?

No, it is because God has plainly told his people that over and over in the Scriptures....

### **Psalm 100:5**

*For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.*

### **Romans 8:38-39**

*<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

God clearly states his love for his people in these verse and others...

I don't need a spiritualized interpretation of Song of Songs to teach me that...

So, the first thing we must decide in looking at Song of Songs is to interpret it literally...

The next hurdle is to arrive at a proper literal interpretation of it....

And the outline that I have provided on the screen reflects a literal interpretation of all 8 chapters of Song of Songs...

And I think it is going to help us get the most from the book when we seek to understand it from a literal perspective....

The outline looks like this....

***I. Leaving - Finding a Wife/Husband (1 - 3)***

***II. Cleaving- Marrying a Wife/Husband (4 - 5)***

***III. Weaving -Enjoying a Wife/Husband (5 - 8)***

And the purpose of Song of Songs is to offer God's perspective on romance and marriage.

Now, can we look at a man's love for his wife and see a picture of how God loves his people and how Christ loves the church...

Sure, we can.

But we need to remember that Song of Songs is primarily giving us a picture of how God blesses love and romance and marriage...

That happens in the lives of two people who first love Him and then love one another...

And the lesson is clearly this...

Dating, romance, marriage and intimacy are beautiful and enjoyable if done in accordance with what God has designed...

It is when men and women step outside God's design for these things that sin occurs and the whole picture is ruined...

So, what I want to do in the brief time that we have left is to show you the sequence of events in Song of Songs...

And then make a few observations about where this book fits in the Bible, and we will be done...

The first thing we must do is establish the setting for the events of this book....

And so take your bibles and turn with me to Song of Songs 8:11...

***11 "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;  
He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers.***

Strangely enough, you have to get to the end of the book to figure out where all the action is happening...

But it seems that Solomon must have owned a vineyard north of Jerusalem in the hill country of Ephraim...

The woman of Song of Song of Solomon is called a Shulammite, which would mean that she was from Shunem...

You can see from the picture here of what a modern vineyard in Israel looks like...

And then you can see where Shunem was....

And then is an actual picture of that area...

Not completely sure that the vineyard was here, but putting all the verses together in Song of Songs...

This seems like a real possibility....

Well, according to that same verse, Solomon has leased that vineyard to a family....

Most likely composed of a mother at least 4 children.

## **I. Leaving - Finding a Wife/Husband (1 - 3)**

According to chapter 1, there are at least two sons, a daughter, and a little sister to them all...

And the family would work the vineyard to earn a living and then give some of the profits to Solomon for its use...

Now, if you read chapter 1, you will see that the oldest daughter was forced to work in the vineyard more than any of the children..

Similar to the famous fairy tale of Cinderella...

In fact, she worked so hard that she was frequently sunburnt and failed to take care of her own body....

Look at chapter 1, verse 6...

***<sup>6</sup> “Do not stare at me because I am <sup>[h]</sup>swarthy,  
For the sun has burned me.  
My mother’s sons were angry with me;  
They made me caretaker of the vineyards,  
But I have not taken care of my own vineyard.***

So, this is a girl forced to hard labor and it has taken a toll on her body...

However, Solomon came one day to check on the vineyard and this young lady caught his eye, and he began to talk to her...

Now, the language of Song of Songs is a little hard to read...

And even to understand as the language of two people who are interested in each other....

But that is exactly what it is in the opening three chapters of this book...

The two of them begin a courtship....

Solomon talks sweet words to her to win her heart...

Now, these are not sweet words like we would use today..

Like, “I think you are pretty” or things like that...

Look at verse Ecc. 1:9...

<sup>9</sup> *“<sup>[k]</sup>To me, my darling, you are like  
My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.*

He just called her a horse, and while we may see that as an insult, this culture was very familiar with horses, and Pharaoh would have the best horses...

The most beautiful horses...

So, to Solomon, his beloved was like a mare...

And this kind of language goes back and forth among Solomon and his beloved all throughout the book...

In Ecc. 2:16, we see where this dating stage moves to a serious point when Solomon's beloved says this...

<sup>16</sup> *“<sup>[w]</sup>My beloved is mine, and I am his;*

This exclusive commitment to one another would be a sign of coming marriage...

And that occurs beginning in our next section...

## **II. Cleaving- Marrying a Wife/Husband (4 - 5)**

Though I have divided this section beginning in chapter 4, the wedding day begins in 3:6 when Solomon heads to get his bride and take her to Jerusalem...

In 3:11, we see the first mention of a wedding...

In chapter 4, we see the word “bride” and we see the consummation of the marriage there between Solomon and his beloved...

This section also contains more of this very interesting romantic talk...

In 4:1, Solomon tells his beloved this....

*Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Mount Gilead.  
<sup>2</sup> “Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has <sup>[d]</sup>lost her young.  
<sup>3</sup> “Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
And your mouth is lovely.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.*

And though, these are strange sounding in our culture, this was highly complimentary and romantic in the days of Solomon....

And if we learn anything about relationships, it is the value of a compliment to our spouse...

Words are important, and our speech to our spouse needs to be kind, gentle, and complimentary..

The wedding is celebrated and the marriage has begun...

And the final section of Song of Songs is the enjoyment found in marriage..

### **III. Weaving -Enjoying a Wife/Husband (5 - 8)**

After the wedding is over, we find the last section in chapters 5-8 on the enjoyment of being married....

Now, what is interesting is that Song of Songs does not sugar coat marriage..

People often look at this book and think, that is all just a fanciful look at dating and marriage...

That's not real world...

Well, chapters 5 and part of 6 are very real world because Solomon and his wife have a disagreement.

Solomon then leaves the house, and his wife searches for him....

Eventually the two are reunited, and their love overcomes the argument...

And the end of chapter 6 through chapter 8, we see the couple reaffirming their love for one another....

And then we find more romantic language between the two of them well into their marriage....

That goes all the way to the very end of Song of Songs in chapter 8...

## **Conclusion**

What are some conclusions that we need to reach about Song of Songs?

What does it teach us and where does it fit into the big picture of Scripture?

***1. Dating and marriage are great blessings of the Lord to be enjoyed in the boundaries that God has set.***

God has made us relational creatures...

He created woman for man to prevent him from being alone..

Companionship and love are to be enjoyed in this world...

Marriage also creates the opportunity for man to carry out God's plan of multiplying and filling the earth...

God's design of marriage is perfect.

Man's destruction of marriage is perpetual.

***2. Marriage is a life long commitment that requires constant work.***

Marriage is the joining of two sinners who now are brought into closer contact than when they were single..

Conflict occurs because both hearts are fallen...

Because of that marriage must be a constant submission to one another..

Couples should leave their rights when they recite their vows...

The great irony is that Solomon eventually lost the battle for a good marriage...

Most likely, Song of Songs was about his first marriage....

And though he started on the right foot, he eventually violated his commitment and ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines....

And what a great tragedy that was...

What do we learn from that example?

Marriage takes constant work, and you can't do it in the strength of your flesh, you must constantly ask God to make you a better husband or wife...

IF anything, marriage demonstrates our need to be constantly growing in our life to be more like Christ.

A final principle form Song of Songs would be this....

***#3 – WE need to resist the urge to spiritualize the Bible when we interpret it.***

Song of Songs is about the relationship between Solomon and his first wife...

It is a good model of dating and marriage done God's way, and nothing more....

Song of Songs definitely teaches us about marriage, but it also reminds us that the best way to interpret the Bible....

IS to take the plain sense of what God has written and resist the temptation to imagine something that is simply not there...

It is fine to draw comparisons from the text, but the true and right interpretation comes from a literal interpretation of God's word....

Let us pray.