

Solomon on Sex - Love That Never Dies

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April 15, 2012

Good morning Faith family. We are in the 13th, and final, week of the *Solomon on Sex* series. Before we dive into the text, I want to talk about the last 13 weeks. For some, this was a controversial series. Maybe you grew up in a church where sex, romance and marriage were not topics discussed from the pulpit. If the church did teach on it, teaching on it for 13 weeks was unheard of.

Was this series worth it? Was teaching on the Song of Solomon a wise choice for Faith Church? We paid a price for teaching this book of the Bible. Some left the church promising to return after this series; others left the church completely. I am sure you heard the negative press. Have you heard the positive? Let me share with you some of the results I know of.

One couple was living apart and their divorce paperwork was filed. Today they are together and growing in their marriage, in part, because of this series. Two men asked for help with pornography problems. One young woman broke off a relationship with her boyfriend who wasn't treating her as a godly man should. Local lesbians interacted with us through e-mail during this series, presumably from seeing the yard signs. Some couples living together chose to get married. One couple, realizing they needed more time together, moved away so he had a shorter commute. He realized he needed more time with his wife and family. I know of 14 individuals or couples that repented of sin or made significant life choices in the last three months in response to God's Word in this series.

We created a special website for this series called www.solomononsex.com. In the last three months, 4,500 pages were viewed on the site. An additional 460 pages of the site were seen by people in Russia, China, England and France. The most popular page on the site was the *Answers to Your Questions* with 1,554 views since January. The most popular questions were the ones labeled NC-17. Those were the questions we wouldn't touch in church, but they are the questions people wanted to find answers.

Another interesting statistic is our web videos. The most watched sermon in the series was the first, *God, Sex and Culture*. Fifty-six people watched it on the Internet. The second most popular Internet sermon video was *Give Me a Kiss*. Twenty-nine people watched at least a portion of it on the internet. The third most popular was *Sin in the Bedroom* with 21 people pressing the play button in their web browser. In the last three months, those three sermons were played 109 times. Those videos were suggested on web searches 1,893 times in the last three months.

If we expand our field of vision and look at all the Faith Church videos online in the last three months, 832 people pressed the play button. Faith Church videos were suggested by web searches 19,412 times in last three months. If we expand the time frame to the last 12 months, instead of the last three, we discover 2,182 Faith Church videos were watched in the last year. Faith Church videos were suggested on search requests 51,100 times.

This week, we transform our stage, cameras and lighting to take video to a new level. I am excited about the better communication we will enjoy in the

church and the ability to go multi-campus. I am also excited that we will deliver better videos on the Internet. The Internet is something more of use than I expected.

Let's switch gears and finish the Song of Solomon. Next week we begin a new series in the book of John. When we left Solomon and his bride, she creatively enticed him to get out of town. They needed a vacation in the country. Life was hectic. Their schedule was tearing them apart. They needed a marital sabbath. When we pick up the story, they are in the family minivan, or should I say chariot, leaving town for the weekend vacation.

Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved? Song of Solomon 8:5a (ESV)

The first thing we learn is bench seats are more biblical than buckets. They give you snuggle ability. The Shulammitte is snuggling with her hubby. No doubt, he has his arm over her shoulder as they drive down the road. Can you imagine how good she feels? She has Solomon to herself. They are out of town. They are on vacation.

What happens next is called car conversation. We all know that a road trip is a great time to talk for conversation. If it is just a husband and wife, their talk will be deep. They will talk about heart issues.

Car conversations are particularly good for guys. A road trip is about the only time a man will sit still and talk with his wife. Drive time is not just a good time to talk today, it was also a good time to talk in the ancient world.

A marital sabbath is a good time to reflect on your relationship.

Solomon begins the discussion.

Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor. Song of Solomon 8:5 (ESV)

They are apparently near her home. They pass a particular apple tree. It causes Solomon to reflect on their relationship. *Under that apple tree, I awakened you.* Some people think this means he they had premarital sex under the apple tree. That isn't what happened. The word, *awake* simply means to rouse from a state of sleep. It was under the apple tree their eyes first met. This is the apple tree where they experienced that initial spark of interest. It is where their relationship began. It is special tree because it is also the tree she was born under when her mother went into labor. She wasn't a first birth. Apparently there was no time for Lamaze breathing techniques. It was a quick delivery. Solomon reflects saying it was under the apple tree where her life began and it was under that same apple tree where their life together began.

Parents, one of the things we often neglect talking about with our children is how we met. We don't tell them about mom and dad's romance and dating. Our kids only know us as married adults. It is good to go back to where you met. It is good to bring the kids and share tell them the stories about how you met. Reflecting on how your marriage started is a way to strengthen it. It ties you back to the feeling you experienced at first. It is also something your kids will always remember.

A few years ago, we took our kids to Willow Creek Community Church where Cindy and I met in its singles ministry. We went to the very spot our eyes first met across the room. We went to the very steps where Cindy sat with gloves on her toes to keep her feet warm. Since she couldn't walk anywhere fast, I used

the opportunity for my initial conversation. You can imagine all the questions the kids asked that day. It was good for them to know mom and dad's dating stories. It was also good for us as a couple. Neither of us had any idea what God planned for us from that day forward.

Marital sabbath is a good time to talk over relational rubs.

While Solomon is in nostalgic mode, the Shulammitte uses the opportunity to share her heart. Their busy life didn't allow them to connect long enough for her to feel comfortable sharing on this level prior to this point. This is why a marital sabbath is important.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised. Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (ESV)

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm - In the ancient world, a way of administering your signature was by impressing a seal into wax. If you were a ruler, you kept your seal as a pendant on a necklace or you wore it on a bracelet. This seal was extremely important. It was your credit card, driver's license and social security card rolled into one. If your seal was stamped on a piece of paper, it was like signing your name to a check. It is was your word, and as a ruler, your word was law.

Can you imagine how the king guarded his seal? He slept with it. He showered with it. It never left his side. The Shulammitte wants Solomon to treat her like that seal. She wants to be treasured above all else in his life. In the busyness of their life, she isn't feeling loved that close to him. She isn't feeling

treasured. She isn't feeling valuable. That is what is on her heart. While she feels distant, that hasn't cooled her love for him one bit. Next, she shares how she feels towards him.

For love is as strong as death - She says her love for him is something she can't resist. Just as nobody can resist the power of death, she cannot resist the feelings of love she has for him. She can't fight them. She can't turn them off. She is in love with him.

Jealousy is fierce as the grave - She says her love for him is fierce. Nobody will come between her and Solomon. She will not let a person or obstacle tear them apart. She is not going to let any other woman get ahold of her man. She will not stand aside and let a busy life tear them apart. One unique word in this line is the word jealousy. I thought jealousy was a bad thing. Jealousy is not necessarily bad when it comes to rightful affections drifting to the wrong place. To give you an idea of how the word jealousy is used in another context, let's look at Exodus.

(for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), Exodus 34:14 (ESV)

Just as God has a righteous jealousy, because we should love him above all else, she uses the same word to describe how she feels about Solomon and her desire to be loved by him above all else. She has a right to be the first love in his life!

Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord - She is making an Old Testament reference to how God sometimes disciplined his

people. Sometimes, fire just came out from the Lord and instantly fried people to a crisp because they were unfaithful to him. God had a righteous jealousy.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Leviticus 10:1–2 (ESV)

How many of you saw the movie “Backdraft”? This is what we are talking about. These two sons of Aaron didn’t take their job seriously. They thought it was a game. They didn’t treat God as holy so one day God instantly flamed them out. Backdraft from the temple. This is how she feels about her relationship with Solomon. She will fight for him if she has to. She is not joking about this. This woman is a woman completely in love with her husband and fiercely protective of him. Nothing is going to take him away from her without a fight.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it - She is playing off the fire analogy. Yes, there are things in life that will try to snuff out their love. There will be trials, hurts, and failures. There will be times when it is hard to forgive. There will be times when they fail one another. Even if the trials are like a raging river over the raging fire of her love even a river would not be enough to drown out the burning love she has for him.

If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised - There is no way a man could buy the love she has to offer. It is freely given to Solomon. The love she has for him is priceless. You could offer her a billion dollars to leave Solomon but it wouldn’t interest her. He is worth more than anything.

Now, I would like to ask the guys to be honest. Raise your hand if you would like to be married to a woman that loved you as passionately as the Shulammitte loved Solomon. This woman claims she has a love that will never die. Every one of us would like to have a spouse that loves us with that kind of undying love. If you are a man, and you do not have your hand up, go to the doctor and get your testosterone checked. This woman is the ultimate romantic.

As the book closes, it gets very practical. It answers the question, “How can a young woman cultivate this kind of undying love toward her husband?” I think it is also safe to say, “What would make a young man have undying love for his wife?” If you are parents, or you are a young adult, you want to pay close attention.

How can we help our children bring undying love to their marriage?

Bring them up in a home that protects them from relational scars.

We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. Song of Solomon 8:8–9 (ESV)

Earlier in the series, I mentioned the Shulammitte had a little sister. Many scholars believe this verse tells us the Shulammitte had a younger sister. This week, as I studied, I now believe this isn't talking about the Shulammitte's sister. I think it is talking about her. It is another flashback in the book. At this point in their vacation, they are home with her family. This is a reflection talking about a choice her brothers made when she was young.

First, notice the Shulammitte's father is no place in the picture. Perhaps he passed away. She was a young woman growing up without a father. That is a

dangerous situation. Young women crave fatherly affection. If they don't have affection from their father, they will find it from boys that will use them and break their hearts. Apparently, the Shulammitite's brothers were in charge of the family and the farm. At this point, the Shulammitite was young. She hadn't reached puberty. The older brothers took responsibility for protecting her. They prepared her for her marriage by protecting her. They described how they would treat her based on her character.

If she was a wall, that is, a young woman who protects her chastity, they would build on her a battlement of silver. That means they would decorate her. It is a way of saying they would compliment her and encourage her.

Just a word to older brothers. Protecting your younger sister is part of your responsibility. Look out for her. If a guy wants to take her on a date and you know his character is not good, it is your job to protect her. Of course, the number one protector is Dad. Fathers, it is our responsibility to protect our daughters. It is our responsibility to love our daughters. It is our responsibility to love our daughters like a good dad should so she won't go looking for the love she doesn't find at home.

What would the Shulammitite's brothers have done if she was open to boys? If she was a door, they would have treated her differently. If she was boy-crazy, they would have enclosed her with boards of cedar. They would not let her cultivate a relationship with a man of bad character. While she was young and naive, they wouldn't let anyone use her. They protected her.

Why were they doing this? Were they mean brothers? No! They were protecting her for her husband. They were not just protecting her for her husband, they were loving her. In this series, we ran across statistic after statistic that told us the more men a woman is involved with, the more she attaches her heart in a relationship then tears it away, the lower her level of physical and emotional satisfaction in marriage. To help ensure the Shulammitte would be a woman fiercely loyal and totally in love with her husband, they protected her heart. While the other ladies were out dancing, dating and breaking up with their boyfriends, she was home with her family. It sounds like they were mean; in reality, they were loving her by protecting her. You may remember from the beginning of the book that she didn't think she was beautiful because she was darkly tanned. She spent all her time working on the family farm. That wasn't a way her brothers hated her, it was a way they loved her.

As a young adult, make wise dating choices.

I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;.. Song of Solomon 8:10 (ESV)

Not only did her family protect her from sexual pressure around her but when she grew into a young woman, she made her own wise choices for purity. Apparently, she was very beautiful, but she didn't date around. She resisted the pressure to always have a man in her life. Imagine what she was like. She was gorgeous and she was single, by choice. She kept boys who were friends at the distance of friends. She protected her heart from becoming attached to a man she shouldn't develop a relationship with.

Did she desperately want a man in her life? Of course! She wanted a man but she was committed to waiting for the right time and the right person. She understood that allowing her heart to become enmeshed with the wrong man would only hurt her, not help her.

then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. Song of Solomon 8:10 (ESV)

This tells us that what Solomon found so attractive about her was not just her extreme beauty but she was a woman who saved herself for marriage. She wasn't just saving one final act for marriage. She was saving all of her charm and even all of her heart for marriage.

When she met Solomon, he didn't need to get a number to date her like he was waiting for a pound of hamburger at the deli counter. She kept herself available for the right man at the right time. Some of you think you need plenty of experience with the opposite sex before you marry. This books tells us, you don't need lots of premarital experience. In fact, the more you save yourself for your wedding night, the tighter you will bond in marriage. Sexual chastity is like marital superglue! It is the foundation a love that never dies is built upon. Young ladies, the best thing you can do for your future marriage is to save yourself for your wedding night. Young men, the same applies to you. Don't awaken love until it is time.

Some of you already know this story, but it fits so well, I need to tell it again. When I met Cindy, I thought she was beautiful. What I found incredibly attractive is that after becoming a Christian, she didn't date for three years. Of course, she wanted to date. She was lonely. Plenty of men were asking her out.

Why did she stay single? She promised God she wouldn't date someone that didn't love Jesus and she wouldn't date the kind of person she couldn't marry. Three years was a long wait. It was very hard. She tells me that she looks back and realizes three years of singleness was God's way of loving her. It was God's time of recreating her and clearing the men of her younger years out of her heart so she could bond to her husband in marriage. Those three years were God's way of laying down marital superglue into her heart.

A smile and some humor

Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred. Song of Solomon 8:11–12 (ESV)

Here is a little fun. The way Solomon and the Shulammitte probably met involved him visiting one of his vineyards. Just like land is leased to farmers today, vineyards were leased to farmers in that day. The farmer paid the land owner a thousand pieces of silver for use of the land; they kept 200. The Shulammitte told Solomon that she is like a fine vineyard. It was up to her who she gave the vineyard of herself. She playfully said to him, you can have all the profit of my vineyard. You have the thousand pieces of silver. In other words, you have me. Just remember, make sure you pay the keepers of the vineyard their 200 pieces of silver. Who kept her vineyard pure for her husband? Who kept the soil of her heart pure so she would be a woman that is fierce loyal and deeply in love with her husband? Her brothers! She playfully looked at Solomon and told him he owes her brothers \$200 for their caretaking of her vineyard.

O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it. Song of Solomon 8:13 (ESV)

Now that they are in the Shulammitte's hometown, everyone wants to talk with her. Solomon leans over and whispers into her ear. "Let me hear it." With a twinkle in her eye she looks at him and says...

Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices. Song of Solomon 8:14 (ESV)

In other words, let's hurry up and get out of here you stud. Remember our plan? We want to get away and make love. That ends the book.

Conclusion

What an incredible love story! This week, as I thought about the story, I kept thinking about the incredibly deep and resilient love the Shulammitte had for Solomon. I think everyone wishes that somebody would love them that deeply, passionately and wholeheartedly. Some of us are blessed with healthy marriages in which our spouse loves us with feelings similar to the feelings the Shulammitte had for Solomon. Others are either not married or our marriage is, stressful.

Wouldn't it be a fresh breath of air if all of us could be loved like this? Then I realized: We are. God loves us more than the Shulammitte loved Solomon. His love for us cannot be quenched. It cannot be bought or earned but is freely and undeserved. Just as we could see the Shulammitte's love for Solomon in her stubborn refusal to let him go, we see God's love for us in Jesus, through his willingness to die on the cross in our place.

Next week, we begin the Gospel of John. We are going to look at God in the flesh. Today we leave one love story. Next week, we begin another. We begin a greater love story that any of us can experience. Today, Jesus stands with his arms open, waiting to forgive you, to love you and restore you. No matter what you have done, no matter how many times you have failed, his arms are open wide, because Jesus loves you more than the Shulammitte loved Solomon. Will you turn to him?



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