

The Royal Love Song

*“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame”
(Song of Sol. 8:6, NKJV).*



In a world that is consumed by secular desires and a false representation of intimacy, I believe the Bible shows us how important intimacy is in a relationship. It not only gives us an explanation, but it shows us the proper application of love in books such as Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.

Introduction

Moving to the Rhythm of Love

Song of Sol. 8:7

Movement is instinctive when we hear a beat. In fact, psychologist Annett Schirmer has reportedly found that rhythmic sound “not only coordinates the behavior of people in a group, it also coordinates their thinking—the mental processes of individuals in the group become synchronized.”¹ The right song can cause the body to go into motion without a second thought.

Harmonious thought leads to harmonious action.

Dances of various forms exist. The rumba, the salsa, and the foxtrot are all styles of dance that have been developed over the years by different ethnic groups. Each has its own significance and its specific dance steps. One interesting thing about dance, though, is that while it can, in many instances, be done alone, persons seem to derive more pleasure from dancing with a partner. As the saying goes, “It takes two to tango.”

The concept of having coordinated thought patterns was found in the beginning when God created the world. There was perfect harmony among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When harmony exists between a man and a woman in the context of marriage, imagine the way they could move together. Harmonious thought leads to harmonious action. The Bible asks a thought-provoking question in Amos 3:3: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

God has given married couples a way of expressing their love for each other that is uniquely special between a man and a woman. Genesis 2:24 says, “They shall become one flesh” (NKJV). But while the consummation is awe-inspiring, the lead-up can be equally exciting. One has only to glance into the book Song of Solomon to find verse upon verse of a blossoming romance depicted in its pages. It spells out every touch, every kiss, and every sweetly spoken word between two persons who obviously care deeply for each other.

The world has made sex its own, but we must not let it steal the art of making love. God has given a wonderful love rhythm so unparalleled in its beauty that nothing in the world can tarnish it. God is the ultimate lover. And he has shown us how powerful words can be if spoken in just the right tone. No greater love music has ever been sung as when God said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you” (Jer. 31:3, NKJV). God’s words are love, His touch is healing, and His lips breathed the breath of life into man. If we follow the rhythm that God set for us, there can be no limit to the heights of passion in the marital context.

1. R. Douglas Fields, “The Power of Music: Mind Control by Rhythmic Sound,” *Scientific American*, Oct. 19, 2012, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/the-power-of-music-mind-control-by-rhythmic-sound/>.

Song of Sol. 4:1–7;
4:16; 7:1–9;
1 Cor. 6:15–20;
7:3–5;
2 Cor. 10:5;
Gal. 5:24–26;
1 John 1:9

Evidence

The Royal Wedding

The world watched the lovely marriage between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle on May 19, 2018, at Saint George's Chapel in Windsor Castle. Many people's hearts were swept away by the harmonious music that filled the room, the breathtaking ambiance of the ceremony, and of course, the joyous affection of the newly wedded couple. As Prince Harry and Meghan exchanged their vows in front of millions of viewers, they made a lifelong commitment to love and to cherish each other before God.

[Sexual impurity] hinders and flaws the image that God intended for humanity to experience within a marriage.

Marriage is a beautiful gift given to humanity by the Creator. With it come special challenges and blessings alike. When held in its proper context, it is a profound expression of love.

However, common misconceptions have led people to believe that the Bible is against sex. God's Word is not against sex itself but against the misuse of this precious gift. In fact, Song of Solomon describes a relationship between a young Shulamite bride and her beloved, who is believed to be King Solomon. The book expresses the beauty of a conjugal love in marriage between the couple (Song of Sol. 4:1–7; 4:16; 7:1–9).

Unfortunately, the misuse of this gift has led many into the devil's snare. Sexual impurity in this generation is publicized everywhere (e.g., TV, billboards, and music). It hinders and flaws the image that God intended for humanity to experience within a marriage. It opens deep wounds of broken relationships and increases loads of emotional distress that, sadly, many people experience.

When we allow our desires and passions to rule over God's plan for our lives, we can find ourselves in despair. Thankfully, we have a loving Savior who is able to redeem us. We can be sure that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NIV).

Our bodies are not our own (1 Cor. 6:15–20). When we submit ourselves fully to God, we will understand how to fully submit and express true love within the context of marriage (1 Cor. 7:3–5). Therefore, let us humbly put away the lustful passions and desires from our hearts and choose to live by the Spirit, in purity and truth (Gal. 5:24–26).

REACT

How can we remain pure while living in a world that focuses on selfishly appeasing sexual desires and passions?

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Logos *A Triangular Union*

Ps. 63:1;
Song of Sol. 1:2, 13;
2:6; 4:7-5:1;
5:10-16; 8:6, 7;
John 17:3;
Rom. 8:1-14;
1 Cor. 7:3-5; 8:3;
6:19, 20;
2 Cor. 10:5;

A Loving Knowledge (Song of Sol. 8:6, 7; John 17:3; Rom. 8:1-14; 1 Cor. 8:3)

Some statistics state that over 70 percent of marriages end in divorce. This begs the question, Why? Many factors are at play, which would be a separate topic, but even if divorce does not happen, many forces are trying to break up this precious union. I have learned that if Satan cannot destroy, he will distract. Marriage has been at the core and foundation of societies since the union was created, and a triangular union, with God at the top and husband and wife filling in the triangle, has proved to be the strongest. If this is the case and marriage is so important, why is this topic something that oftentimes goes without notice? Many times, we do not talk enough about the topic of marriage and sexuality within our church settings. But because young people are being bombarded with false messages and what seems to be appealing, it is crucial that we talk about these topics from a biblical viewpoint.

The highest form of human intimacy is shared between a husband and wife.

Love at the Right Time (Ps. 63:1; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 10:5)

Most often, young people struggle with the idea of sexual intimacy and whether marriage is even necessary because society pounds into us through popular culture and social media that we do not need to make a commitment. We are also led to believe that we can have whatever we want when we want it because we should do whatever makes us happy. Unfortunately, too many of us have bought into this false message because we have not found our identity in Jesus yet; if we do not know who we are or who we are meant to be, then anyone will do.

It is crucial to develop in your relationship with your loving Creator and be made whole in Him before you look to join with another. If two broken people come together expecting to complete each other or fill in the gaps, they will be forever disappointed because the only One who can truly fill us and satisfy every desire of our hearts is the One who made us and who knows us so intimately. Only when we have fully surrendered our hearts to Him and chosen to grow into His image can we even consider connecting our lives in marriage with another. Marriage is a beautiful institution, established by God, that, when we allow the Creator of it to step in to fill the gaps, can truly be a blessing and a light to those around us.

The Expression of Love (Song of Sol. 1:2, 13; 2:6; 4:7–5:1; 5:10–16; 1 Cor. 7:3–5)

Song of Solomon is very descriptive of the intimacy shared between the Beloved and the Shulamite. The Bible includes this book to demonstrate to us what sexual intimacy within the context of marriage is—there is freedom to express one’s love for the other and complete surrender without any shame. The highest form of human intimacy is shared between a husband and wife, falling short only of the intimacy we may experience with the Creator of it all. Oftentimes, we become uncomfortable in reading these details, especially since the cultural context would not fit the descriptions that we would use, but at any rate, they give a beautiful picture of marriage. It was always God’s desire for marriage and intimacy to occur and for us to experience pleasure within that relationship; “therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). When two individuals experience sexual intimacy outside the confines of marriage and separate their union, it is as if a piece of them is taken with the other because of the oneness that should occur in only marriage. Because we live in a world of sin, many of us have fallen in this area of sexual intimacy and perhaps gone against what we knew to be right, or perhaps we are just finding out the truth about a godly picture of marriage and wondering, *Is there hope for restoration?*

Safeguarding the Creator’s Gift (Ps. 103:12; Isa. 55:7; John 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24; 1 John 1:9)

One thing I do know is that once we have made the decision to change, God is faithful and He can restore. Whether we have had a failed marriage or have had sexual intimacy outside of marriage or are looking to remove feelings of shame within a marriage when it comes to sexual intimacy due to our dark past, God can renew and there is hope! This beautiful gift, although misused by the enemy, is a gift that can be redeemed. If we come to Him with the remnants of what could have been, He can re-create and heal our wounded hearts. If we face shame and guilt, He can take those feelings and separate them “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12). If we are struggling in our sin and know that we need to change and are feeling condemnation, He empowers us to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11) because He doesn’t condemn us and wants us to live a life of holiness and wholeness. Whatever our situation, there is hope because we serve a God who cares for us and created so many beautiful things for us to enjoy, including the gift of sexual intimacy in our marriage. As we study this week’s lesson and continue to grow in this area, may we remember that “He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it” (1 Thess. 5:24, NKJV).

REACT

1. In what ways has my viewpoint of sexual intimacy been marred by society?
2. Which areas of my life have I not fully opened up to God and allowed our intimacy to grow?

Testimony *Behind the Scenes*

Gen. 2:21–25;
Song of Sol. 8:4;
Amos 3:3;
Hos. 11:8, 9;
2 Cor. 6:14

One of the most extraordinary gifts God has blessed humanity with is that of relationship. The marriage relationship, in particular, is the most intimate of all (Gen. 2:21–25). The inexplicable ability of two separate beings to become one is an incomprehensible concept. It is a sheer mystery how both husband and wife can maintain a keen sense of individuality without hindrance to the unique oneness established through the consecration of marriage.

God wants to experience spiritual intimacy with His people.

Unfortunately, marriage has become so glamorized by Hollywood that many no longer contemplate with precaution the character of the one they are partnering with for a lifetime. Instead of asking the nagging question, “So when are you getting married?” perhaps we ought to spend more time praying for our young people. “It is from the marriage hour that many men and women date their success or failure in this life, and their hopes of the future life.”¹ In spite of the challenges that may exist within the marriage relationship, there is no need to be fearful. “It is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities.”²

The special bond between husband and wife can be firmly knitted through their sexual experience (Song of Sol. 8:4). The Bible uses the imagery of nature to present a PG13 version³ of the sexual exploits of the Shulamite bride and her beloved, who is believed to be King Solomon. In fact, throughout Scripture God likens His relationship to His people to that of the marriage covenant. The book of Hosea presents a clear example of the extent to which God is willing to go to honor His covenantal agreement with Israel (Hos. 11:8, 9). It is evident that God wanted a relationship that superseded the outward verbal expressions of commitment. God wants to experience spiritual intimacy with His people as well. Likewise, in a marital relationship, it is essential that couples achieve spiritual intimacy (2 Cor. 6:14; Amos 3:3). Spiritual intimacy can develop through praying for each other and worshipping and reading God’s Word together.

REACT

1. When contemplating marriage, what is the most important thing for individuals to consider?
2. Is spiritual intimacy an asset to marriage? Why or why not?

1. Ellen G. White, “Unwise Marriages,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 2, 1886.

2. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 356, 357.

3. PG13 is a rating used by the Motion Picture Association of America film rating system. It means, “Parents strongly cautioned—some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.”

Isa. 54:5;
 Matt. 9:14–17;
 Mark 2:21, 22;
 2 Cor. 5:17; 11:2;
 Eph. 5:27;
 Rev. 19:7

How-to *A Blessed Marriage*

As she rises from the pool, water droplets plaster her hair to her face. A white towel is wrapped around her shoulders as triumphant applause explodes from the congregation. It is a celebration that we have been most blessed to witness: the baptism of a new follower of Jesus Christ.

You can experience the beauty of marriage to Christ every day.

For the Bible-believing Christian, baptism is a marriage ceremony for the new believer who has chosen to dedicate the rest of his or her life to Christ, who has publicly declared one's love for Him. The deeper we enter into our covenant with Him, the more we will find that His love for us, His chosen Bride, is stronger than ever (Isa. 54:5; Rev. 19:7). You can experience the beauty of marriage to Christ every day by simply applying these principles to your daily life:

Throw out your tarnished robes. Before we put on our new garments approved for the new occasion in our lives, we first have to disrobe of the less appealing dress. Out with the old; in with the new (Matt. 9:14–17; Mark 2:21, 22). Maybe true love is hard for you to picture because your parents were divorced or you suffered abuse as a child. Despite the pain of your past, God doesn't love you any less. Wear your new robes proudly.

Renew your commitment daily. Marriage vows don't stop at the wedding. You don't just say "I do" at the ceremony and then go on to live a life separate from your spouse. No, your commitment to your wife or husband is one that you must live out daily; otherwise, your declaration of love is meaningless. Show the world you are married to Christ by how you live your life.

Remember God's love for you. It's hard to be in a place where you feel neglected, unloved, and uncared for. Sometimes this can result from being neglected in childhood, being bullied as a teen, or having a friend or family member betray you. Whatever the case may be, take comfort in knowing that God's love for you does not depend on how others have treated you in the past. In fact, it surpasses that every time. Don't let go of His love because when you're hanging off the edge of a cliff, God is your only lifeline, and He's still holding on to you.

REACT

1. What are some ways you can reflect your marriage to Christ, so that others may see?
2. How does your love for God translate over to your understanding of what a marriage should look like?

There are people in this world (some reading this lesson) who do not have a “traditional” family. You might be single; maybe your parents passed away or you were in foster care at a young age. I know of people who became Christians and their family disowned them—that might be you. Some of you might have seen your name in the sentences above, and that is OK. Belonging to the scenarios above does not make you less than kin in the family of God. Everyone has a place in the family of God.

There is more to who we are than our sex.

The story of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1 and 2 is a great place to start to gain an understanding of our sexuality. Sexuality is not just a physical interaction but a continuous and spiritual experience. One of the first points we notice when we go back to this story is that there was a man and a woman, Adam and Eve. We primarily use this origin story to glorify marriage, and there is nothing wrong with that. Unfortunately, if we stop there, we miss the full beauty in the creation story.

Adam was alone because there was no one else like him, so God formed a woman, Eve, to make Adam (humanity) whole. Eve was female, and Adam was male, but that was not the extent of their differences. Maybe Adam liked rice and Eve loved beans. While the example is arbitrary, I hope you understand the point: every human being is unique, but our uniqueness does not derive from and is not limited to our sexual organs. There is more to who we are than our sex. Imagine if more people thought like that—just because I am a woman does not mean I will be like every other woman. In fact, it is our differences that make us valuable members of the body of Christ.

Truly, how can we connect with others and be in community with them if we cannot embrace what makes them different? I think we are not as inclusive as we should be as Christians. God is calling us into a deeper relationship, not through sameness or stereotypes but through the valuing of diversity, life stories, and experiences.

REACT

1. Think of one person in your life who can bring you closer to God.
2. In what ways can you honor God through your relationships?

Exploration *Out of This World*

CONCLUDE

Marriage is like the flowers that grow and bloom in springtime. It is truly a time of joy and a time of singing. We know that most flowers don't appear in the wintertime or even in the fall; flowers appear at their appointed time and with the right conditions of the soil. The same is true with the gift of marriage and sexual intimacy. When we receive this gift in the appointed time and follow sound biblical counsel, it can be a taste of heaven on earth.

CONSIDER

- Drawing the things you believe would produce a happy home and sharing it with your classmates.
- Asking an older married couple about the joys of marriage and what they have done to maintain their marriage.
- Reflecting on what it means to have a marriage that is a taste of heaven. Write your reflections in a journal.
- Reading the first paragraph on page 106 in *The Adventist Home* with a friend. Closely examine and discuss it.
- Searching the topical index on egwwritings.org to see what other things Ellen White says about marriage and sex. Record the excerpts that stand out to you for your future reference.
- Singing hymn no. 652 in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, "Love at Home," and meditating on the verses and chorus.
- Praying for God's hands to lead you to a heavenly union at the right time and with the right person.

CONNECT

Ephesians 5:22–33; Matthew 19:4–6; Hebrews 13:4–7.

Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home; Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce; Mind, Character, and Personality*, chaps. 23–25.

Nancy L. Van Pelt, *To Have and to Hold* (Southern Publishing Association, 1980).