

Song of Songs
for singles

AND MARRIED
PEOPLE TOO



lessons on love
FROM KING SOLOMON

Tim & Angela Little

Many books about the Song of Songs approach its message too broadly, ultimately proving to be unhelpful or resulting in confusion. *Song of Songs for Singles*, however, leads the reader to view the Song of Songs through the lens of seeing God's design for the daughters of Jerusalem. God's gentle provision and care give hope to the next generation of believers who walk in the way of the Lord. In a broken world, this book shines brightly as it plainly speaks of sex and intimacy as God intended. Tim and Angela tastefully encourage the older generation to invest in the younger, shaping their minds and affections in accordance with God's Word. With courage and wit, the authors address the dangerous perspectives of sex in our day, and they call the believer to find hope, identity, beauty, and life in Christ alone.

—**Sam Choi**

Pastor, Prior Lake Baptist Church, Prior Lake, Minnesota

An ancient Jewish sage claimed, "No one under the age of 30 should read the Song of Songs." Gratefully, Tim and Angela do not follow his poor advice. The reason they do not follow this unwise counsel is because they recognize what is often missed—that the wisdom of the Song of Songs is not only written to married couples who are encouraged to enjoy marriage intimacy now but also to singles who can look forward to experiencing intimacy within their marriage. Tim and Angela provide a desperately needed resource for believing singles in today's Christian world. As a single follower of Jesus, if you want to learn to navigate sexuality wisely, this book is a good starting place.

—**Mark McGinniss**

Assistant Seminary Dean,
Professor of Old Testament Literature, Language and Exegesis,
Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania

Sex is a topic many talk about but rarely from a biblical perspective. Tim and Angela address issues many singles wonder about and discuss but from a thoroughly biblical worldview. I have often thought that if the church does not teach the next generation about sex, young people will look for answers from somewhere else. *Song of Songs for Singles* will be a tremendous help and encouragement to all who read it. By walking the reader through the Song of Solomon and making practical application of it, Tim and Angela help equip the next generation to glorify God through their relationships.

—**Dr. Jim Tillotson**

President, Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary

Judaism and Christianity have been guilty of misconstruing the Song of Songs for centuries. By forbidding it from being read until an appropriate age or mystifying and spiritualizing its message, scholars have left Bible readers wondering how the book applies to the believer's life. Rooted in sound exegesis, *Song of Songs for Singles* unpacks the Song of Songs in a sound and practical manner. In a day and age when so many Christians lack biblical knowledge and wisdom regarding sex and intimacy, this book provides guidance that is both desperately needed and extremely helpful.

—**Dr. Patrick Odle**

President, Baptist Mid-Missions

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LESSONS ON LOVE
FROM KING SOLOMON

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ISBN: 978-1-960820-00-6 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-960820-01-3 (digital)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023907186

While the stories in this book are true, some of the names and identifying information have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.

First printing edition 2023

Faith Publications
1900 NW 4th St.
Ankeny, IA. 50023
faith.edu/publications

www.songofsongsforsingles.com

Song of Songs for Singles
and Married People Too:
Lessons on Love from King Solomon

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Front cover image and book design by Lance Young with Higher Rock Creative Studio

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
our children—Josiah, Zachariah, Daniel, Judah,
and Aliza.

We love you and wrote this book for you,
praying that you will love successfully.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	9
Acknowledgments	13
Introduction	15
CH. 1 The Song of Solomon Is a Song (of All Songs) (1:1–4)	29
CH. 2 Ignorance Is Bliss; Knowledge Is Power (1:1–4)	47
CH. 3 Is Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder? (1:5–11)	57
CH. 4 Do Not Disturb (2:7; 3:5; 8:4)	79
CH. 5 Awakening The Senses (1:12–2:7)	97
CH. 6 Finding Your Happily Ever After (2:8–17)	109
CH. 7 Love Made Me Do It (3:1–5)	125
CH. 8 I Now Pronounce You Husband and Wife! (Now What?) (3:6–5:1)	141
CH. 9 Falling Out of Love Is Just Another Excuse (5:2–6:3)	157
CH. 10 Love and War: It's All Fair, Right? (6:4–7:10)	171
CH. 11 You Can Recreate the Garden of Eden (7:11–8:4)	189

CH. 12	
Beginning Love Correctly, Part 1 (8:5–10)	203
CH. 13	
Beginning Love Correctly, Part 2 (8:11–14)	227
CH. 14	
Are Things Different Now?	239
Appendix: The Song of Songs	257
Scripture Index	267

PREFACE

I (Tim) grew up in New York, while Angela was raised primarily in Iowa. God graciously allowed both of us to grow up in Christian homes. We placed our faith in Jesus at young ages and were baptized shortly thereafter. Neither of us dated in high school. We were regularly encouraged to live pure lives for the glory of God. Nevertheless, both of us were engaged to someone else in college. Years after those engagements ended, we met each other and were married in less than a year. God has now blessed us with five children—four sons and one daughter. Our journey is a good journey, but it has had some bumps. We were technically virgins on our wedding day, but we had struggled to uphold God’s standard of purity.

My most memorable moments in the Song of Songs were as a youth writing some of the verses on letters and anonymously mailing them to the girls at church camp. The Song was a joke to me; I treated it as profane literature rather than the Word of God. As I matured, I desired to study the Song but never had an opportunity. Later, that opening arose during my doctoral program, when I learned that one of my professors, Mark McGinniss, had written his dissertation on the Song of Songs. He suggested I write a paper on an Old Testament theology of sexual arousal from the Song of Songs for one of my classes, and thus began my study of the Song. As I studied the Song and talked to Angela about it, God equipped us to address the sexual dysfunction in our relationship. We knew there were problems in our relationship, but we didn’t know what exactly was wrong or how to fix it. Fixing the dysfunction took several years. Sin was destroying the intimacy that God desired for us to enjoy—sin that had started before we knew each

other. Sin that was ignored, buried, and never confessed. Sin that continued into our marriage. We were deceived by the world's lies and, therefore, failed to enjoy intimacy the way God designed it. While studying the Song of Songs, we recognized and confessed sin. Our repentance led to forgiveness and healing in our relationship.

During this study, I first learned about the adjuration refrain: "Do not stir up; do not even awaken love, until it pleases" (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). As I reflected upon this exhortation, the sexual dysfunction in our marriage, unconfessed sin, and the world's lies, I became convinced that singles needed to hear the message of the Song of Songs. I began talking to friends and pastors about it. As I explained our premarital struggle for purity, I quickly learned our struggle was far too common. As I discussed our sexual dysfunction, I learned that this struggle is also common. Angela and I have, therefore, become even more convinced that the church needs to teach singles about the Song of Songs.

As we began speaking and teaching the Song, we found the resounding sentiment surprisingly positive. Many believers have ignorantly feasted on the world's instruction concerning intimacy but have been left starving. Relationally famished believers crave God's instruction concerning relationships, marriage, and intimacy. We pray that the next generation has more mature memories of the Song of Songs than sending anonymous letters to girls at church camp.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

All ages can learn something from the Song. When our daughter was four years old, I was watching a movie with her and began reflecting upon the idea of romance that our culture was teaching her through that movie. I began thinking, "How young is too young? If the world is teaching my daughter what love is like when she is four, shouldn't

I be teaching her what the Bible says when she is four?" As a result, I decided to do a four-part series on "friends" from the Song of Songs for our K-6 children's ministry which I lead. I read the adjuration refrain to the children each night. All ages—even the very young—can learn something from the Song of Songs.

While the Song has a message for all audiences, our book is not written for children but for high schoolers and above. While the Song is primarily directed to single, marriageable ladies, it contains a message for young men as well. As we wrote *Song of Songs for Singles*, we imagined what we would approve of our young teenage son reading. Writing from this perspective has obvious disadvantages. For example, we will not answer some questions because to do so could unintentionally awaken the sleeping desires of the innocent. Those desires need to sleep (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

If you are older or already sexually experienced, you may be reading along and be thinking, "Yeah, but what about such-and-such?" The Word of God has answers for all of your questions, but we will not answer them here. Our book presents a picture of what intimacy is supposed to be more than it is a digression into the mess. The Song of Songs teaches the truth concerning intimacy so that you will be able to identify its counterfeits. Too often we Christians spend so much time examining the counterfeit that we forget what the genuine looks like. Just as a bank teller learns to discern counterfeit currency by studying the genuine, so also will the Song cultivate your affections for the genuine, thus preparing you to identify the counterfeit. Perhaps you have transgressed God's boundaries concerning intimacy. The Song encourages you to pursue purity going forward and gives guidance on how to successfully maintain purity.

We are glad you are reading this book, and we do believe you can truly benefit from it. Some will think we are being too descriptive. Others will wish we were more descriptive. As we will argue in chapter two, we do not believe the problem is too little information but, rather, too much. Talk to your parents or mentor if you want more information. It may be appropriate for you to get more. But trust your parents/mentors! If they say you do not need any more information right now, believe them and trust their judgment. When you are tempted to find more information through other sources, say no! This temptation is your flesh. Mortify the flesh (Col 3:5). Kill that desire. Set your mind on things above (3:2) and exhibit the virtues of the new man (3:12).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people assisted us in the publication of this book. First, Mark McGinniss introduced us to the Song of Songs, sharpened our interpretation of the Song, and encouraged us to write on the Song. Many colleagues, pastors, friends, and family also sharpened our thinking and encouraged our hearts. Andy Stearns and Charlie Carter, my (Tim's) colleagues on the Thinklings podcast, were a sounding board on and off the air for the last several years. I tell my children that Doug Brown is my Gandalf. My wise colleague, mentor, and friend who tempers, directs, and encourages me. Everybody needs a Gandalf in their life, and I am grateful for him. Several people donated funds to make this publication possible. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you to the administration of Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary, who supported our publishing efforts. Finally, we thank the college students who have pushed us to think about how the biblical teaching of the Song of Songs confronts the modern believer in Jesus the Messiah.

INTRODUCTION

SONG OF SONGS FOR SINGLES

Song of Songs teaches wisdom concerning intimacy. This small book of the Bible was not an afterthought but one of the sixty-six divinely inspired books that God intentionally placed in the Bible. It is one of the most overlooked, misunderstood, abused, misinterpreted, and ignored books of the Bible. Because Song of Songs concerns intimacy, it is often argued that the Song is for married couples only. I (Tim) was talking to a friend and mentioned writing this book, *Song of Songs for Singles*. The friend chuckled and said, “That should be an easy book to write! All you need is a nice cover and a bunch of blank pages.” His joke reflects the sentiment of most people. Singles should not read the Song, and the Song does not apply to them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Song of Songs teaches everyone wisdom concerning intimacy.

Some singles themselves have concluded that the Song of Songs is irrelevant to them. One college student remarked, “That is one of those books that I always skip over because I don’t know what to do with it.” Eric Demeter writes, “[Singles] need holistic teaching on how to develop a healthy Christian sexual ethic [set of moral principles] based on Scripture.”¹ Demeter is correct, but he, along with most authors of Christian dating books, writes with an apparent ignorance of the Song of Songs. These authors argue for a specific ethic based more upon experience, statistics, and anecdotal (based on reports or observations) wisdom than the Word of God. God gave the Song to teach a sexual

1 Eric Demeter, *How Should a Christian Date? It's Not as Complicated as You Think* (Chicago: Moody, 2021), 136–37.

ethic, and singles need to study it so they know what God says concerning relationships, love, marriage, and intimacy.

READING THE SONG OF SONGS

The Song is wisdom literature, which means it is better studied than merely read. After studying a passage, you can find value just reading it. But simply reading through the text will likely leave you scratching your head. Wise men of old wrote in riddles to encourage thinking. The Proverbs of Solomon were written to help a person “understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles” (Prov 1:6). Sages wrote in a way that made the reader think. One young man sat in my office, where we began a study of Song 2:8–17. After studying it for a bit, the young man said, “I didn’t understand any of this just reading it. It makes sense now.” You will need to think about the Song. Angela and I pray this book will guide you.

The Song teaches not only a young, naïve reader but also an older, experienced reader by using veiled figures of speech that both reveal truth and conceal truth. A young, naïve audience will not understand the true meaning of some of the figures of speech, while an older, more experienced audience can be exhorted and instructed by them.

The Song can shape the reader’s affections by describing Edenic (unspoiled, idyllic) love through two characters—the ideal husband and the ideal wife. Young men should seek to marry a woman like the “Song of Songs wife.” Young women should seek to marry a man like the “Song of Songs husband.” Unfortunately, we don’t live in the Garden of Eden anymore. You are not a sinless Adam/Eve, and you will not marry a sinless Eve/Adam. You live in a real world with real sin and real hurt. The Song presents the ideal, but it also teaches the reader how to live in the real; that is, in a broken, sin-filled world.

The Song of Songs addresses singles—particularly women. Throughout the Song, Solomon instructs the “daughters of Jerusalem” (Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5, 10; 5:8, 16; 8:4), who are single females. The end of Song 1:3 states, “Therefore the virgins love you.” These women are of marriageable age, but still unmarried (cf. Gen 24:43; Isa 7:14). They are sexually pure, inexperienced, and waiting to be married. These virgins are the “daughters of Jerusalem,” who appear throughout the Song. These virgins love the husband of the Song of Songs because he is the type of guy they should want to marry. He represents a godly, ideal man. If the Song is truly a book that only married people should read, why do single, marriageable girls find such a prominent place in the book? Why does the female lover regularly exhort the daughters of Jerusalem (Song 2:7; 3:5, 10; 5:8, 16; 8:4)? Why do the virgins love the husband of the Song (1:3)? The church has failed Christian singles, particularly young women, by telling them not to read or study this biblical book and has thus denied them biblical instruction concerning friendship, love, marriage, and intimacy.

ROLE OF PARENTS AND CHURCH LEADERS

God has blessed us with five children. Like most parents, we want the very best for our children. We pray they grow in the fear of the Lord,



DIGGING DEEPER

The idea that Song of Songs is *primarily* written to single young ladies is not a new interpretation. Sparks explains, “The Song of Songs originated as a wisdom composition, as a collection of love songs edited to teach young Jewish women propriety in matters of love and sex,” Kenton Sparks, “The Song of Songs: Wisdom for Young Jewish Women,” *CBQ* 70, no. 2 (April 2008): 278. O’Donnell similarly states, “The primary target audience is the unmarried, specifically single young women, ‘the daughters of Jerusalem,’” Douglas Sean O’Donnell, *The Song of Solomon: An Invitation to Intimacy*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2012), 23.

mature, marry, and enjoy intimacy as a gift from God (Eccl 3:13). If God calls any of them to a life of singleness, we pray they wholly devote their lives to the ministry of the Lord and glorify Him with their calling (1 Cor 7:32). Singles who devote their lives in service to God recognize their unique calling to serve the Lord (7:32–35). No matter what God has planned for our children, they can learn what God teaches concerning intimacy from the Song of Songs.

Parents are the primary instructors in a youth's life (Deut 6:6–9; Prov 1:8). If you are a parent, we encourage you to read this book and teach the Song of Songs to your children. While you could give this book to your child to read alone, as a parent, you cannot be replaced. Your child needs you. In fact, Song 8:2 presents the mother teaching her daughter about intimacy. Nevertheless, some parents are hesitant. Teaching about intimacy can be awkward, embarrassing, and uncomfortable for both parents and children. Furthermore, many Christian parents have themselves failed sexually and, therefore, feel disqualified to instruct their children.

The issues concerning intimacy are too multifaceted and varied to be addressed in a single book. *Song of Songs for Singles* can give you confidence in what the Word of God teaches concerning intimacy regardless of any mistakes in your past. Let the Word of God teach your child; you are simply God's instrument for instruction. Let God use your mistakes for His glory. We believers serve a merciful God who is ready to forgive. Humble yourself, repent of your sin, be cleansed, and walk in newness of life. If you need help, Jesus equipped His church with pastors who can guide you by the Word of God. Commit to attend a Bible preaching church. After dealing with your own sin, you will be better equipped to guide your child into Christian maturity. This book

is not enough. Your son/daughter needs you. If you do not teach your child about intimacy, someone else will, and it is likely that someone else is already teaching your child.

Our fallen world has created countless broken homes where young people mature without godly parents to guide them in the way of truth. However, God ordained not only the family but also the church to help guide people into Christian maturity. If you are single, get involved in a church that preaches the Bible, and find a mentor. Seek a godly Christian of the same gender who can guide you through the journey of life. Contrary to popular belief, your love life is other people's business (more on this later). The people close to you will be affected by the decisions you make. Humble yourself and draw close to both your physical family (if possible) and your church family. Submit to the biblical authorities God has placed in your life, because this book cannot replace personal counsel from those authorities. We pray our book serves as a supplement to guide you in making wise decisions based upon the Word of God.

Your love life is other people's business.

SEX IS A BIG DEAL

Sex is a big deal. You've probably heard this message on multiple occasions, but it bears repeating because it is true. If you mess up sexually, you could contract a sexually transmitted disease, get someone pregnant (or get pregnant), burden yourself with shame and guilt, destroy your walk with the Lord, destroy the other person's walk with the Lord, hurt the ones who love you, heap financial burdens on yourself and/or others, create destructive habits, and a host of other maladies. Sex really is a big deal.

Sex is also a big deal because it is a very powerful desire. The biblical book of Proverbs warns young men how the desires for money and sex can destroy them. Multiple times the wise father admonishes his son to avoid immorality (Prov 2:16–19; 5:1–20; 6:20–35; 7:5–27; 9:13–18). The sage (wise man) explains that the one who walks on the path of immorality walks on a path that leads to death (2:19–20). Immorality is more than an intimate encounter; it represents a definition of life, and the end of that path is death (9:18). You see, sex really is a big deal.

SEX ISN'T A BIG DEAL

Sex is a big deal, but how big of a deal is it really? It certainly feels like a big deal! The world claims that sex is a really big deal, in fact, the epitome (embodiment) of happiness. The desires within you probably communicate the same message. The world argues that you are a sexual being, and if you haven't had sex yet, you haven't even lived. To the world, sex is a REALLY big deal. But it is not just the world that promotes this message: it is the world and the flesh and the devil. They communicate that sex equals happiness and that if you haven't experienced it, you cannot be happy.

This equation of happiness with sexuality has caused many of the world's ills. If sex makes a person happy, then the sooner someone enjoys it, the better. As a result, the world has encouraged children to discover themselves sexually. The Song teaches, however, that a person should not prematurely awaken love (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). People of the world claim that if sex makes someone happy, that person should enjoy it as much as possible and with whomever he/she desires. Of course, they say, sexual expression must only be fulfilled between consenting individuals. But, as they see it, if the experience is consensual, it is normal and good. As a result, sexual expression that is selfish, contrary

to nature, and dangerous has been not only deemed good but also celebrated, leaving broken and confused people in its wake.

Furthermore, the world wants to silence people who say that sexual desire should be repressed. After all, they are infringing on others' happiness. How dare they! This includes the purity movement of the last generation. Many pastors and speakers encouraged young people to refrain from sex until marriage. Now that these young people are adults, many of them are angry. They think these pastors and speakers ruined some of the best years of their lives that they could have spent in sexual expression and, thus, happiness.

The world's view that sex equals happiness is a myth, but a popular one. Enlightenment philosophers argued that the goal of human existence is to be happy. Sigmund Freud then applied this goal to sex.² The myth seemed rather believable; after all, God made sex enjoyable (Song 5:1). We don't intend to diminish the reality of your feelings or experiences. Sex may be a very important thing to you. It certainly feels like a really big deal. Your feelings and desires are real, but are they true? If sex makes us humans happy, our sexualized world should be in a constant state of euphoria. But very few people are happy. The world has taken something good and enjoyable that God created and twisted it.

Freud's research has been debunked multiple times over. Sex is certainly not the source of happiness; it will never satisfy; it is a lousy god. Purity pastors and speakers encouraged young people to wait until they were married, then they could have all the sex they wanted, and it would be great! I applaud them for their emphasis on self-denial before marriage, but what about self-denial after marriage? Many young

2 Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 203–6.

people who waited for marriage became disillusioned and unhappy because marital sex did not satisfy them the way they thought it would. Marital sex is certainly not the source of happiness; it will never satisfy; it is a lousy god.

Sex really isn't a big deal. Jesus lived a celibate life. Paul, similarly, lived a celibate life (1 Cor 7:7), and Paul even encouraged others to remain celibate so they could attend to the things of the Lord (7:32). Contrary to the world's message, a person can live a fulfilled and happy life as a celibate individual who is devoted to "the things of the Lord." Sex really isn't a big deal. The family, however, is a big deal. God ordered the world a certain way, and the family is an important part of that order. Ancient cultures recognized the importance of the family and created laws to protect the family. The Old Testament Law similarly valued the family and regulated sex in a way that would protect the family (Deut 5:6–21; 22:13–30; 24:1–5; 25:5–12). Some of these laws seem odd to us today, but they were instituted because God valued the family more than He valued a person's sexual inclinations. In His day, Jesus taught the Pharisees the permanence of marriage, particularly in relationship to sexuality (Matt 19:1–12). Jesus' instruction on this issue led the disciples to conclude, "It is better not to marry." But Jesus' high standard for marriage remained consistent with Old Testament teaching concerning marriage and divorce that protected the family.

Finally, sex really isn't a big deal. But a person's relationship with God is a big deal. Ecclesiastes 7:20 teaches that there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and does not sin. That includes you. You are a sinner, and your sin makes God angry (Isa 13:9). One day God "will punish the world for its evil," and He will do that by making "mankind more rare than fine gold" (13:11–12). As sinners, you and I justly deserve God's wrath. The prophet Isaiah, a godly man, cried out before the

presence of God, “Woe is me! Because I am destroyed! For I am a man of unclean lips, . . . and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of armies” (6:5). Even this godly man in the presence of the perfect God deserved to die. Similarly, you and I deserve death.

The wrath of God is a concept lost on modern sensibilities. We don’t like thinking about an angry God, much less one that is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present. Nonetheless, the God who created this world (Isa 40:26–28) and sustains your life (42:5) is the God who cannot learn anything because He already knows everything (40:13–14), and that includes everything about you: “You know my sitting down and my rising up; you understand my thought from afar” (Ps 139:2). And this God who knows everything about you, who created the world and sustains your life, is angry with you because of your sin. And you are concerned about . . . sex? You see, sex really isn’t a big deal.

Two categories of people exist in this world, the ones who have everlasting life, and the ones who will not see life because “the wrath of God abides” on them (John 3:36). If you have never confessed your sin to God and believed in His plan of salvation, then the wrath of God abides on you. The most important decision you need to make is not whom you will marry, but whom you will believe. Jesus bled on the cross so you can be reconciled to God and have peace with Him (Rom 3:24–25). The Holy Spirit indwells the one who believes in Jesus for salvation, and He empowers that believer to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Rom 8:1–11). This redeemed and Spirit-indwelled believer is dead to self, but alive to God (i.e., a living sacrifice, Rom 12:1).

Belief is the foundation of the Christian life. Belief is the foundation of a Christian sexual ethic too. Further, belief in Jesus is a wholehearted thing. You cannot experiment or try it. You must be “all-in.” James wrote, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God”

(Jas 4:4). Solomon similarly wrote, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7). The Song of Songs teaches a sexual ethic rooted in the fear of the Lord. This fear of the Lord kind of sexual ethic rejects the world’s sexual ethic. When the world, the flesh, and the devil tempt the Christian with real desires and feelings, the fear of the Lord instructs the believer to believe in the truth of God’s Word. Without belief, people find the sexual ethic in the Song foolish, for “the unspiritual man [unbeliever] does not receive the things from the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him” (1 Cor 2:14). Furthermore, if you as a Christian do not believe your life is a living sacrifice, then the Song of Songs will not make a lot of sense to you. As you begin this study, I encourage you to believe. Cast your sexuality before the Lord and say, “God, whatever you say I should do, that is what I will do.” Recognize that your life is a living sacrifice and do not live for your pleasure, but for God’s glory. Sex will never make you happy; it really isn’t a big deal.

STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Solomon wrote Song of Songs as a sage. Wise men like Solomon spoke in enigmas (something hard to understand) and riddles. Because of the Song of Songs’ enigmatic character, interpretations abound. Therefore, we begin by discussing how to read and interpret the Song. Many people shy away from the intimate content. They “sanctify” the book by making it an allegory of God’s love for Israel or Jesus’ love for the church. In this chapter we defend a regular biblical hermeneutic (principle of interpretation) of the Song of Songs and analyze the major characters of the Song (Solomon, Shulamite, etc.).

The second chapter discusses some keys to a thriving relationship. Song 1:2–4 shapes the affections of singles by presenting an intimate relationship that every couple would want. Rather than telling young

ladies to “not marry a bad guy,” the Song presents a beautiful intimate relationship, which a young lady can enjoy if she marries a good guy. Many marital intimacy issues stem from a wife’s failure to trust her husband. Sometimes she doesn’t trust him because he is a jerk! It will be easier for a young woman to enjoy intimacy the way God designed it if she marries a trustworthy man. So chapter two discusses how to identify a good reputation and how to examine your own spiritual state. This chapter also discusses the maxim “knowledge is power.” The Song can shape young men’s affections by presenting a woman whom every young man would want to marry and by teaching them the value of a good reputation and the power of knowledge. Not all knowledge is good knowledge, so the Song teaches young men what they do and do not want to know.

Women, on the other hand, regularly struggle with image insecurities. The Song corrects both female and male readers’ understanding of human beauty. Every single adult should prioritize internal beauty, but too often the conversation stops there. In chapter three, we analyze Song 1:5–11 and develop what the Bible teaches about human beauty. The Song teaches singles how to enjoy beauty as a gift from a good God.

Three times the Song of Songs wife speaks directly to young women (and indirectly to all readers), encouraging them to “not awaken love.” Chapter four examines this refrain and guides singles concerning not just the physical side of a relationship but also the emotional side. Too often, Christian leaders have only encouraged singles to not have sex before marriage. The Song of Songs instructs the reader not only to remain pure before marriage but also to not even awaken love.

In chapter five, we step back to Song 1:12–2:6 and talk about how married lovers awaken love. Intimacy according to the way God made the world employs all the senses, and the most powerful sense is hearing. The couple flirt back and forth, awakening love. While many within the Christian community find flirtatious speech innocent, the Song teaches that it awakens love.

Song 1:1–2:7 presents a rather ideal love, but Song 2:8–3:5 teaches a real love. Every married couple will have to work through issues in this world, and the central couple of the Song is no different. In chapter six, singles learn from the lovers that marriage does not mean couples have sex whenever they want. Situations and sin come between a husband and wife, destroying intimacy. This chapter teaches singles the importance of marrying a believer and knowing how to deal with sin.

It is easy to love the one who loves us in return, but what about when someone has sinned against us? What if the one who should love us has offended or betrayed us? Song 3:1–4 teaches an assertive, Christ-like kind of love through the Song of Songs wife, who provides a striking representation of biblical love that fights for love even when a spouse is struggling.

Song 3:6–5:1 describes a wedding and honeymoon! In chapter eight we discuss the bride's focus on the wedding day and the groom's anticipation of the wedding night. The Song provides guidance to newlyweds on how to begin love correctly.

Song 5:2–6:3 discusses a common issue within marriage, sexual incompatibility. Intimacy for men and women is different. In chapter nine, we discuss the nature of true biblical love regarding sexual incompatibility.

Chapter ten analyzes Song 5:2–7:10 and warns brides of the temptation to weaponize intimacy in the marriage relationship. The wife's selfish act in Song 5:3 has an ancient root in the Garden of Eden. In Song 6, the couple is at war. The Song of Songs wife teaches young brides how to fight for the exclusive love that God designed in creation.

The Song of Songs wife recreates the Garden of Eden in Song 7:11–8:3. She is not a timid or hesitant lover, but bold and assertive. Chapter eleven discusses how to recreate the Garden of Eden through the various places, times, and fruits of love.

The world corrupts a person's affections, but the Song transforms those affections through the renewal of that person's mind (Rom 12:1–2). Specifically, Song 8:5–14 cultivates a believer's affections for God's design for intimacy. Chapters twelve and thirteen explain why not awakening love is so important and teach singles what to look for in a spouse. The Song ends with the young man searching for the Song of Songs female lover. The believer who truly wants to marry well will likely find the Song of Songs lover. Usually, couples do not experience intimacy according to the order of creation (the way God designed intimacy to work) because they want the wrong things. The Song concludes by shaping the reader's affections for God's design for intimacy.

Obviously, you and I don't live in the days of the Old Testament. Jesus and Paul chose lives of celibacy, and Paul encouraged the Corinthians to follow his example. Are things different now? In chapter fourteen we discuss the instruction from the New Testament and offer some final thoughts on how a Christian can love successfully.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why should we study the Song?
2. How should we study the Song?
3. Who are the two primary characters who teach truth in the Song?
4. Who is the primary audience of the Song, and how do we know that?
5. Why don't most parents teach their children about intimacy (therefore abdicating the role to someone else)?
6. Why is your "love life" everyone's business?
7. How old do you have to be to learn about the Song?
8. Why is sex a big deal? Why is it not a big deal?
9. What is the foundation of the Christian life and sexual ethic?
10. How does the fear of the Lord relate to your sexuality?

Love. Breakup. Pain. Repeat. Love is a fire, and playing with fire gets you burned. While the Bible provides answers to singles' questions concerning love, marriage, and sex, those answers are found in a book of the Bible that singles are regularly told to avoid. The Song of Solomon, contrary to popular opinion, primarily addresses singles (not married couples), teaching them wisdom so they can love successfully. It teaches that love is a fire, a fire best left unlit until the appropriate time.

King Solomon loved many women whom he thought would bring him peace and pleasure. Instead, his attempts at love brought him pain and misery. He thought he could play with fire, but he got burned. Reflecting on his failures, he wrote his best song, the Song of Songs, to unmarried men and women and taught God's design for love so they can love successfully. Instead of listing "thou shalt not" commands concerning sex, Solomon shapes the affections of singles so that they *want* to love God's way. *Song of Songs for Singles* helps unmarried people understand and apply the wisdom of Song of Songs, preparing them to find love and less likely to get burned.

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An ancient Jewish sage claimed, "No one under the age of 30 should read the Song of Songs." Gratefully, Tim and Angela do not follow his poor advice. The reason they do not follow this unwise counsel is because they recognize what is often missed—that the wisdom of the Song of Songs is not only written to married couples who are encouraged to enjoy marital intimacy now but also to singles who can look forward to experiencing intimacy within their marriage. Tim and Angela provide a desperately needed resource for believing singles in today's Christian world. As a single follower of Jesus, if you want to learn to navigate sexuality wisely, this book is a good starting place.

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CHRISTIAN LIVING / Relationships
ISBN 978-1-960820-00-6

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