

Whom My Soul Loves

The Book of Song of Songs

Group Leader Guide



Contents



Week 1

Souls in Love: Dating, Marriage, and Romance

Song of Songs 1

Week 2

Souls with Sexuality: Social and Genital

Song of Songs 2

Week 3

Souls with Desires: Fantasies and Fears

Song of Songs 3

Week 4

Souls in Bodies: Healing and Goodness

Song of Songs 4

Week 5

Souls in Friendship: Heart and Mind

Song of Songs 5

Week 6

Souls for Glory: Meaningful and Momentary

Song of Songs 6

Week 7

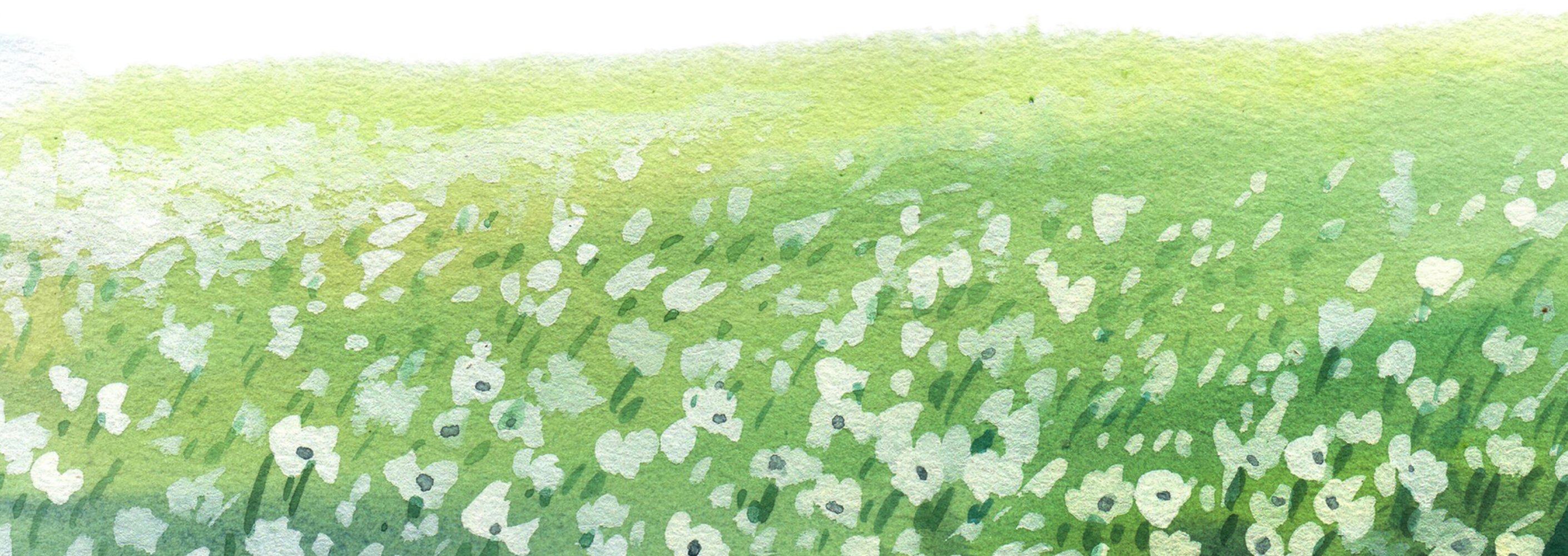
Souls with Boundaries: Liberties and Limits

Song of Songs 7

Week 8

Souls for Covenant: Exclusivity and Eternity

Song of Songs 8



Week 1

Souls in Love: Dating, Marriage, and Romance Song of Songs 1

Preparation

God is love. From creation, God has designed humanity to reflect his image. But this image was never meant to be fulfilled in isolation--the image is shared and shone in community. Namely, the love that God enjoyed as Father, Son, and Spirit is now enjoyed in marriage, family, and friendship. And this love, which Christ has for the Church, is particularly demonstrated in marriage.

We're called to love like God. Our love is always a reflection of someone else's love. While the woman says, "**your love is better than wine**" ... a still greater love persists in the background of this poetry (1:2). In our common sexual conception love is about a feeling, not a person. That is to say, we determine what and how we love based on emotions, urges, and desires. However, the song of songs points us to the love of love which is defined not by changing feelings but by eternal character.

Key Passages

- Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-13
- Romans 1:18-32
- Ephesians 2:11-22; 5:22-33

Relevant Resources

- Sexual Character (pp. 3-19, 91-109)
- Confronting Christianity (pp.153-174)
- The Deeply Formed Life (pp.128-147).

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 1
- How does the Trinity--Father, Son, and Spirit--demonstrate the true nature of love?
- What fears and discomfort are exposed in your heart and mind when approaching topics like marriage, sex, gender, and sexuality?
- How does the love of God bring comfort and healing to these fears and discomforts?

Week 2



Souls with Sexuality: Social and Genital Song of Songs 2

Preparation

God is one. Like and unlike were made one in creation. Invisible with visible. Infinite with the finite. Heaven with earth. Male with female. This initial character of creation reveals God's heart to bring together what at first seems opposed. Upon further consideration, and with time, we realize what God brings together produces wholeness or consummation. When Adam was alone, creation was not yet complete--he needed Eve. God has always been a God who brings unity and wholeness, that's because at his core he is one within himself as Father, Son, and Spirit.

We're called to oneness like God. Men and women belong together; in community, friendship, and marriage. This is in large part due to our gender and sexuality. Whether single or married; male or female; young or old; we all are designed as sexual beings. Women need men to embody the fullness of God's image. Men equally need women. The bride celebrates, **"My beloved is mine, and I am his"** (2:16). However, our increasing tendency is to make our personal sexuality and sexual orientation about ourselves, rather than a community reflection of God himself. According to the Bible, our sexuality and gender are about God, not about us.

Key Passages

- Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-13
- Romans 1:18-32
- Ephesians 2:11-22; 5:22-33

Relevant Resources

- Sexual Character (pp. 3-19, 91-109)
- Confronting Christianity (pp.153-174)
- The Deeply Formed Life (pp.128-147).

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 2
- How do we see the unity of God demonstrated through the Bible?
- In what ways are we divided as men and women? How has this division affected you personally?
- How does Jesus restore unity between people? How about within your own soul?

Week 3



Souls with Desires: Fantasies and Fears Song of Songs 3

Preparation

God is at peace. God's emotions and behavior are always perfectly balanced with self-control, humility, and love. He is not at war within himself. He is never working out deep-seated pain or trauma. His serenity is not circumstantial or tired or mere fleeting feelings. His nature is peace. His default disposition is peace. He is at rest, never hustling to achieve, accomplish, or become what he is not perfectly already.

We're called to peace like God. We are often at war with our desires, trapped in a never-ending quest to satisfy the ever-changing and escalating urges of our flesh and hearts. Beauty, attraction, and emotion blend creating anxiety and tension we often try to pacify in destructive ways like manipulation, pornography, and emotional unhealth. As the bride drifts off to sleep, she fears **"I sought him, but found him not"** (3:1,2). Many of these expressions of peaclessness come from deep pain from personal experience and harmful cultural liturgies. In Christ, we can live with peace, not ruled by our fears and fantasies, but ruled by God's unhurried affection.

Key Passages

- Psalm 85:8-13
- Proverbs 3:13-18
- John 14:25-31
- Matthew 6:25-34
- Romans 5:1-5
- Colossians 1:15-20

Relevant Resources

- The Meaning of Marriage (pp.192-218)
- The Mingling of Souls (ch.3)
- The Deeply Formed Life (pp. 148-169).

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 3
- What does it mean that God is at peace? How do we know he is at peace?
- How are you experiencing anxiety in your sexuality, sex, or romantic relationships?
- How does Jesus' death and resurrection promise peace in every area of your life including sex?

Week 4



Souls in Bodies: Healing and Goodness Song of Songs 4

Preparation

God is whole. There is a certain myth that suggests creation completed God. In particular, we often presume that God made people because he was lonely or wanted someone to share life with. However, Scripture is clear that in the beginning, God was perfectly fine. He needed nothing. He needed no one. Therefore he does not create to receive wholeness, he creates to bring or give wholeness.

We're called to wholeness like God. Our bodies are beautiful, but they are broken. Some of our beauty is obvious. The man lists aspects of his bride's physical appearance that captivate him: eyes, hair, teeth, lips, cheeks, neck, breasts, and more (see 4:1-5). Some of our brokenness is clear. But other aspects of our beauty and brokenness are less apparent. Nevertheless, because of our sin, we all lack a certain aspect of wholeness. We need healing. We need things that have been separated to be rejoined. We need to be freed from unhealthy attachments. In Christ, our heart, mind, soul, and body are brought together.

Key Passages

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Mark 12:28-34
- Romans 12:1-2

Relevant Resources

- The Deeply Formed Life (pp.128-147)
- The Mingling of Souls (ch. 5)

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 4
- What does it mean that God is whole?
- How is your heart, mind, soul, and body divided? In what ways are you prone to divide the heart, mind, soul, or body of others?
- How does the gospel bring wholeness? How are heart, mind, soul, and body brought together?

Week 5



Souls in Friendship: Heart and Mind Song of Songs 5

Preparation

God is a friend. Throughout the Bible, God is described as a friend. Abraham was a friend of God. God calls Israel his friend. Jesus is a friend of sinners and he lays down his life for his friends. Friendship is divine. Friendship is the act of sharing life, especially when that sharing is costly.

We're called to friendship like God. Romance seems possessed by the idea of becoming more than friends. And yet, friendship is at the center of meaningful dating and married partnerships. The bride says, **"This is my beloved and this is my friend"** (5:16). What's more, throughout the poem she shares her love with her community; her friends. When romantic love isolates a couple, their friendship and friendship with others suffer. Godly community is balanced between the vortex of our marriage and the beauty of sharing life with others.

Key Passages

- Isaiah 41:8–10
- Matthew 11:18–19
- James 2:21–26

Relevant Resources

- The Meaning of Marriage (pp.134-169)
- Sexual Character (pp. 25-38)

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 5
- How is God a friend to us?
- What's the role of friendship in romantic relationships? What's the difference between Christian friendship (and community) and secular friendships?
- How does Jesus' friendship bring comfort and correction to our friendships (especially our friendships with the opposite sex)?

Week 6



Souls for Glory: Meaningful and Momentary Song of Songs 6

Preparation

God makes himself known. God is not known unless he reveals himself. Therefore to know anything about him is to have experienced his power, grace, and love. God speaks to make himself known. God acts to make himself known. God draws near to make himself known. But more than anything God engages us in relationship through the Incarnation of his Son. Through the Incarnation we know the fullness of God's grace and truth--we have seen God. Knowledge of God is an act of self-giving.

We're called to make ourselves known like God. One of the ways the Old Testament talks about sex is through knowledge. When Matthew says of Mary that Joseph **"knew her not until she had given birth to a son,"** he's talking about sex (Matthew 1:25). Similarly as the couple is walking through orchards and gardens, they are expressing the joy of seeking and looking upon one another (6:1,13). This is what makes sex so meaningful. It's a special way of knowing and being known which is uniquely shared with our spouse. In the same way, God's covenant is a meaningful way to know and be known for God's people. You see, when we make ourselves known we are giving ourselves.

Key Passages

- Matthew 11:25-30; 16:24-28
- John 1:1-18
- Ephesians 5:22-33

Relevant Resources

- Sexual Character (pp. 53-60)
- The Meaning of Marriage (pp. 219-236)

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 6
- How does God make himself known?
- What do our relationships with the opposite sex (romantic or platonic) reveal about God that our same-sex friendships don't? Why do you think God desires for some knowledge of ourselves to be revealed only in marriage?
- How does Jesus' own self-giving make us safe to give ourselves in love and sex?

Week 7



Souls with Boundaries: Liberties and Limits Song of Songs 7

Preparation

God is love, but love is not God. While God reveals himself most clearly through his love, love itself is not divine. Paradoxically, God is infinite but he has boundaries. That is to say, God is everywhere but God is not everything. While the covenant relationship through which God blesses and reveals himself through his Son is fundamentally about love, that does not make love itself central to our life and purpose.

We're called to love like God and worship him, not love or sex. Sex is meant to be expressed with liberty and limitations. Yet through the Fall, we have ignored love's limits (modernism) or we have made too much of them (moralism); we have disregarded love's liberties (legalism) or we have indulged in them (lawlessness). Either way, we need healing. While many suppose a godly marriage takes off the limits of sex, a healthy marriage lives within boundaries. While many others think sex should be enjoyed with every consensual liberty, soon these supposed freedoms become bondages. The same is true with our various ideas and definitions of love. That's why the woman summarizes her courtship with the man as encouragement, "***I adjure you ... that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases***" (8:4).

Key Passages

- Deuteronomy 17:14–20
- Matthew 5:31–32
- Romans 1:18–25
- Ephesians 4:17–24

Relevant Resources

- Sexual Character (pp. 53–60)
- The Meaning of Marriage (pp. 170–191, 241–244)

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 7
- What's the difference between "God is love" and "Love is God"?
- What God-given liberties do you experience through love and sex? How do godly limitations enhance the beauty of love and sex?
- How did Jesus limit himself for our liberty? What impact should this have on our sexuality?

Week 8



Souls for Covenant: Exclusivity and Eternity Song of Songs 8

Preparation

God makes promises. At his heart, God is a covenant-making God. Before the foundation of the world Father, Son, and Spirit agreed on the redemptive covenant. That is, before creation God knew his creation would kill itself. Therefore he made a promise within the community of the Trinity to bring about the rebirth of all things through the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, Jesus Christ. Along the way he makes this promise clearer and clearer to his people through his spoken and Incarnate Word. God is a God who makes and keeps promises.

We're called to make promises like God. Many have begun to disregard marriage as a broken and antiquated system that does little more than provide a couple with a piece of paper and tax benefits. However, the Bible teaches us that making covenants is part of what it means to reflect God's image. In marriage, we demonstrate God's faithfulness while keeping in mind that marriage is a momentary reflection of our eternal covenant with God. The newly married bride celebrates "**Set me as a seal upon your heart, for love is strong as death**" (8:6). To be sure many points of pain and suffering persist because of unhealthy marriages. These need to be named and repaired. But the gift of marriage is meant to daily remind us of the promises God makes and keeps forever through Christ.

Key Passages

- Genesis 2:15–25
- Matthew 19:1–12
- Luke 20:34–40
- Revelation 21:1–4

Relevant Resources

- The Meaning of Marriage (pp. 21-49)
- The Mingling of Souls (ch. 8)

Discussion Time

- Read Song of Songs 8
- What covenant has God made with us through Christ?
- How is marriage meant to reflect this covenant? How has this reflection been distorted?
- In what ways does the gospel bring clarity to the distortion and repair to our broken relationship with marriage and sex?

Whom My Soul Loves

The Book of Song of Songs



CHURCH IN THE **SQUARE**

© 2024 All Rights Reserved

