

Solomon on Sex - Rekindled with Romance
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January 22, 2012

Good morning Faith family. We are in the fourth week of our study in the Song of Solomon. I hope everyone did last week's homework. If you did, I am sure you enjoyed a little extra passion in your marriage. Before we study the text, I want to talk about the best part of Faith Church; it is the people.

I know the title on this series is a little racy. I planned it that way. I want people who would never darken the door of a church and people who are struggling with marriage and sexuality issues to come to Faith Church. I want the title of this series to catch their attention. I want them to come here hoping we can tell them about a Jesus who can help them in their brokenness.

We made a website for this series because it is another way to tell more people about what is happening at Faith Church. The website is experiencing many hits. There are more than 1,800 pages downloaded from the site in the last three weeks. There are even people from neighboring communities talking about what is going on here.

People who have struggled with porn are coming clean. Just this last week two people came into my office to tell me they are making a commitment to come clean in this area.

Teenagers are getting the truth about sex and marriage from the church rather than from watching "Glee" and "The Simpsons." Young couples are getting excited about their marriages. Middle-aged couples are finding new life breathed into their marriages.

For all the amazing things that are happening, I know this series doesn't fit everyone. For widows and the elderly, this is probably not a series that is at the top of their list. But this is what I love about the mature people of Faith Church. Even if something isn't exactly what they want but it is helping other people, they put preferences aside and serve others. They understand what Jesus meant in John 13 when he took off his robe and put on a towel. He didn't insist on being served but he wanted to serve. He washed his disciples' feet. I love the people of this church who understand what Jesus meant when he said,

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. John 13:14–15 (ESV)

I love the way so many people in their 60s and 70s are excited about this series not for themselves but because they care about their children and grandchildren's marriages. I love it when a 70-year-old couple comes up to me later in the week and thanks me for the weekly homework on compliments because they had grown out of the habit of saying sweet things. I love it when people understand the Christian life is about serving.

It is not just the mature people who understand this. I love it when people show up early and stay late to work at the Ministry Connection center, the Welcome desk or the coffee shop. They understand it is not just a job, it is an opportunity to wash feet, just like Jesus told us to do. That shows real spiritual maturity.

I love this church. I love the Christ-like attitude of this body. It is such a joy to serve others to reach people for Jesus with you. I am so proud of you!

This morning, we will pick up on the theme of serving others as Christ told us to. We are going to look at serving one particular person, our spouse. When we serve our spouse, we make them feel loved, treasured and special. In a marriage relationship, we call serving our spouse romance. It is the giving of flowers, just to let them know they are loved. It is the writing of little love notes and stuffing them in the pockets of your spouse's jacket so they are reminded of your love in an unexpected moment. God-honoring, Christ-centered romance is really nothing more than serving our spouse as Jesus tells us we should.

As we prepare to look at the text, we need to remember that romantically serving one another is something this couple does well, very well. In fact, the Shulamite literally describes herself as "sick with love" because Solomon serves her with such kindness and love.

Many of you think lovesickness is something reserved for the beginning of a relationship. We think lovesickness is the sweet feeling we grow out of. Researchers tell us the reason couples grow out of lovesickness is because they stop doing the work of romancing one another; they neglect serving one another.¹

This morning, my goal is to get you sick. Not sick with a cold or the flu, but to get you lovesick all over again. I hope it is something you don't find yourself cured of any time soon.

¹ John Harlow and Brendan Montague, "Scientists Discover True Love," *The London Times*, 4 January 2009, at http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/relationships/article5439805.ece (accessed 8 January 2009).

As we turn to the text, we find powerful lessons on how to serve our spouse romantically. They are lessons that will work if you are 25 or 75.

How do I rekindle the romance by serving my spouse?

1. Create the right atmosphere.

Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful. Our couch is green; the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine. Song of Solomon 1:16–17 (ESV)

Last week our couple was in the marriage feast. The Shulamite was looking her best and Solomon was reclined on the royal La-Z-Boy, she was getting his attention with killer perfume. It looks like the party might be over because they are inside the house. They are in the bedroom. In that day it was customary for a king to build a special bedroom for his new bride.² The Shulamite sees for the first time the amazing bedroom he built for her. He was not content with boring white walls. He also didn't design a room that was just comfortable for him. He worked hard to create a bedroom that was comfortable for her. Solomon understood the importance of creating a romantic atmosphere in their bedroom. Guys, most of us don't understand this. Creating the right atmosphere is a powerful way we can serve our wives romantically. .

She says their couch is green. What is special about that color? She grew up in the country where everything was green. Solomon decorated the bridal chamber in green to make his country bride feel comfortable in the city. The beams of the house were cedar. In that part of the world, the choicest cedar

² Joseph Dillow, *Solomon on Sex*, pg. 26.

grew in the mountains of Lebanon; this was the area of the country the Shulamite came from.³ Pine is also green. It would make her feel very much at home.

Solomon served his country bride by giving the bedroom an extreme home makeover so it would be comfortable for her. That is romantic. It is serving her.

Let's get practical, what is your bedroom like? If it is like most bedrooms in America, it is a place to throw things so the living room looks better when company comes over. It is a place to stick piles of random stuff. It is the one room in the house that looks better with the lights off rather than on. That is not particularly inviting. Guys, are you seeing an opportunity to romantically serve your wife?

Homework: Guys, give your wife the cash and freedom to transform your bedroom into a place she finds romantic and inviting. Not only will this mean you have to free up some cash, it will probably mean you need to help her with some painting, hanging of curtains and organizing of the closet.

You might think this is too practical of an assignment, but it is biblical. In marriage, we are to serve one another. When the Shulamite saw the romantic bedroom that was decorated for her, do you think she felt served and loved? Imagine what she would have felt like if she walked into the bridal chamber and it was a man-pad with dirty underwear hanging from the bedposts and a NASCAR Quaker State Racing poster with a woman stretched out on a car hood hanging on the wall. It wouldn't be romantic. She wouldn't feel served.

³ David Jeremiah, *Song of Solomon: What the Bible Says About Love Sex and Marriage*, pg. 64.

2. Quench your mate's insecurities by ruthless exclusivity.

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women. Song of Solomon 2:1–2 (ESV)

She compares herself to two flowers. The first is the rose of Sharon. When we hear rose, we think of a soft-petalled, long-stem, red rose from the florist. We think of something red and romantic. That is *not* what she is thinking. The rose of Sharon is a wild autumn flower.⁴ It grows out of season and when it grows it appears out of place. That is how she sees herself in the big city marrying the king. She feels out of place. She is just a simple country girl marrying the wisest, richest and most powerful man in the land. This is a case of opposites attracting.⁵

Not only does she feel out of place but she doesn't see anything special about herself. She is just a lily of the valley. These are the common hill flowers that cover the landscape. In our day, a similar flower would be the dandelion. They are common flowers and there is nothing special about them. That is how she feels when she compares herself to other women.

If you were the Shulamite, wouldn't you feel insecure? Wouldn't you be waiting for Solomon's bubble of love to pop? Would this romance feel too good to be true? Wouldn't you be expecting Solomon to come to his senses and leave you for a more sophisticated woman? Wouldn't you expect your heart to be shattered? She feels like a nobody marrying a somebody.

⁴ David Jeremiah, *Song of Solomon: What the Bible Says About Love, Sex and Marriage*, pg. 65.

⁵ Joseph Dillow, *Solomon on Sex*, pg. 30.

How does Solomon help her through her insecurities? He doesn't berate her for having them. He doesn't degrade her. He picks up on her insecurities and soothes them. He soothes them by assuring her of his exclusivity. He tells her that she may be a lily but to Solomon she is like a lily among thorns. Try giving your wife a thorn bush instead of flowers this year on Valentines Day. It won't go well. It does not produce the same effect when you put your nose close to sniff. He says other women are not attractive to him. They are like thorn bushes compared to her.

He assures her he has eyes for her alone. Does he mess this up later in life? Yes! Is he on track at this point? Yes! He tells her he is a man of ruthless exclusivity when it comes to his affections.

This week, Cindy and I reflected on this. Some of our friends, who married at the same time we did, were not couples of ruthless exclusivity toward one another. They developed friendships with the opposite sex in the office. In social situations some wives allowed themselves to connect emotionally with other men. There is a trail of hurt and a few divorces. Where did it come from? They didn't insist on ruthless exclusivity in their relationship. The only way a marriage can flourish is when a couple has that kind of exclusivity. If you don't have ruthless exclusivity, it is a romance killer. It can become a relationship killer.

Incidentally, this goes both ways. Look what the Shulamite says to Solomon.

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men... Song of Solomon 2:3 (ESV)

For her, he sticks out from other men. When you walk through the woods, an apple tree is different. It is out of place. Unlike other trees that are just standing there, an apple tree refreshes you. The Shulamite tells Solomon that other men are just trees but he is the tree that stands out from the rest. He is the only tree that refreshes her.

Here is your homework: If there is a person of the opposite sex you have a slight attachment to, this week, you need to cut that relationship off. You don't have lunch with them. You don't talk about your marriage or family with them. This week, everyone who is married needs to assure their spouse they have a heart of ruthless exclusivity toward them.

3. Be generous with your private praise.

...With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. Song of Solomon 2:3 (ESV)

What is happening here? Scholars are all over the map on this verse. Some think she is enjoying his presence. Others think they kiss because the fruit is sweet to her taste so their lips must be touching. Other scholars think the marriage is consummated. Some scholars have explanations for what is happening that we will not talk about in church. There are many things this little poetic line leaves our imagination wondering, but there are some things it reveals. First, the scene appears private. It doesn't appear public. Second, she finds great delight in him and she loves to tell him about it. In marriage, the Shulamite is not a very inhibited woman. When she says his fruit is sweet to her taste, she is saying he is her candy bar and she has a serious sugar craving when she is around him. He is her delight. Ladies, what is your favorite dessert?

A chocolate bar? A peanut butter Cup? A fancy dessert? The application is clear. God-honoring romance involves lots of private praise. Ladies, tell your husband that sitting in his presence is more satisfying to you than the chocolate you love.

Here is some homework: Ladies, what is your favorite dessert? This week, eat your favorite dessert. Share it with your husband. As your eyes are rolling into the back of your head with sugar delight, tell your husband he is more thrilling to you than the chocolate that has you in ecstasy. Don't do it unless you really mean it. If you are serious, it will be a compliment he will never forget.

4. Be generous with public praise.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Song of Solomon 2:4 (ESV)

She was generous with her private praise, now he is generous with his public praise. He brings her to the banqueting house. The footnote for the alternate translation is *the house of wine*. We don't know exactly where he takes her but we know it is a public place. When he is hanging out with the shakers and movers of the land, he proudly holds his bride at his side and tells everyone what a wonderful woman she is and how deeply he loves her.

What is happening with this banner? Those of you who are a little older will remember the famous hymn that went with this verse. Let me explain it. A banner displays a message. In ancient battle, it flew over the troops of a king to identify them. In public, Solomon is not flying a literal banner. He is flying one figuratively because he is publicly proclaiming his love for her to the world. He wants everyone to know how much he loves this woman.

You can picture her holding his arm at this public dinner. As people come to him asking about business and politics he keeps turning the conversation to praise his amazing wife. You can almost begin to sense the waves of emotion washing over her as Solomon talks about her in publicly with more enthusiasm than his favorite hobby or sports team.

Here is your homework: First, in public, make sure to introduce your spouse. Second, seize the opportunity to tell others how much you love her. Maybe it is the culture we live in, but guys will talk about sports and cars and the weather, but rarely do I hear them talk about their love for their wife. Guys, take this seriously, if your wife knows you are complimenting her in public, it is an instant 5,000 points on the romance scale. Remember, there is nothing new here. It is just humbling ourselves to serve our spouse.

How give you an example of how I did this? You look for an opportunity to slip it into the conversation. For example, last week, I arrived late to the YMCA to exercise with Cindy over lunch. As I checked in, the woman behind the counter reminded me I was a little late and my wife was waiting. I saw the opportunity and pounced on it like a cat. I said, “Yes, I am running late, but I am so thankful to have a wife that is patient when I am not on time.” That kind of stuff is serious fuel in your relational gas tank.

5. Plan a romantic time together.

Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. Song of Solomon 2:5 (ESV)

How is this couple’s romance progressing? It is happening. She is sick with love. Her knees are shaky. Her emotions are running on high. She can’t

believe she is so treasured and loved. She is emotionally burning calories. She is exhausted. She needs to stop for snacks to get her blood sugar elevated. If you were to circle a word, circle the word *sustain*. She is hungry because all this romance took time. This is not a microwave relationship. This is a crock-pot relationship. Godly romance takes time. It is investing in your relationship with your spouse. It is sitting with your spouse. It is caring enough to listen. It is ignoring the cell phone when it rings. It is not bringing your laptop or a book to read when you go on a date. It is giving your exclusive attention to them. This couple will stop to enjoy a meal together so they can spend more time. I think that is where we need to take our cue and apply the text.

Homework for this week is to enjoy a date night. I am guilty of this. I don't take Cindy on enough dates. I need to take her out of the house so we can enjoy a cup of coffee and split a pastry together; just to spend time. This week, I will do my homework. I hope you do too. Guys, enjoy a romantic date night to the glory of God. It doesn't have to be fancy.

6. Feel free to touch; it means so much.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me! Song of Solomon 2:6 (ESV)

When he finally touches her, she is thrilled. What is happening in this verse? Some scholars have interesting explanations. I won't go through them. After this verse, the scene abruptly closes. The curtains are drawn and the details of what transpires is left shrouded in mystery.

While we don't know the details of the touch, we know she loves to be touched. It makes her melt when he supports her head with his hand. She loves

it when he wraps his arm around her. I am sure she also loves holding his hand and walking together in the woods. I am sure she loves it when he runs his fingers through her hair. His touch means so much.

When Solomon gently touches her, he sends the message that she is safe, special and loved.

The homework is to gently touch. As married couples, serve each other by sending a romantic message with your touch. I am not talking about the bedroom stuff. I am talking about real life touch. When you are driving in the car, reach over and hold a hand. When you are sitting at a sports game watching your kids play, gently reach over and rub a sore back.

WARNING: Kindled romance can easily get out of control.

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. Song of Solomon 2:7 (ESV)

The curtains are drawn. The scene closes and the Shulamite addresses her friends who are single. Romance between a man and woman can be very powerful. It has left the Shulamite sick with love. Romance is more intoxicating than she imagined.

She warns the singles not to stir up romance until the right time, the right place and to save it for the right person. The right time, place and person are your wedding night.

Most singles are asking, "How far can we go? Where is the line?" That is the wrong question. It is not, "How far can I go?" but "When is the right time, place and person?" The more you awaken yourself sexually, the more powerfully your sexual appetite will demand to be satisfied.

The Bible is clear to wait until marriage. I need to explain what this means. Waiting doesn't mean you will do everything but one final act before marriage. Waiting means not doing anything you wouldn't do with a sister. That draws the line early. That is the right thing to do. Why does the Bible draw the line so early? The appetite for intimacy is more powerful than we realize. The more you unleash it, the more it will demand to be satisfied.

Our culture expects everybody to meet and rush into romance. It strips people of their identity outside of intimacy. Folks, when you marry a person, you are not just marrying a body. You are marrying the whole person. When you prematurely awaken the physical component of your relationship, it will become such a strong passion that it becomes difficult to know the rest of the person. After you get married, you discover physical intimacy is a good part of marriage but it is a small part of marriage. Living with, serving and loving the rest of the person is what you will do for most of your life.

Some of you may be convicted by these words on "waiting." Perhaps you are all too aware of your past and regret you haven't lived up to God's design. The good news is called *the gospel*. No matter where you have been or what you have done, God promises to forgive you. His son, Jesus Christ, died in your place to pay for your sin. Right now, he is holding out his hands of forgiveness. If you will ask Jesus' death for sin to cover your sin and ask him to be the head of your life, God promises to forgive you for everything and make you into someone new.

I know some of you have been following Christ for years. You began well, but you failed Christ miserably again and again. The good news is that God's mercies are new every morning. Each morning we begin again like we did the first morning of our Christian life. We cling to the cross asking for more mercy, because we are more aware that we need his mercy when we see there is nothing good in ourselves.

That is the gospel, we begin with grace for our sin, we are sustained every day by God's continuing grace in spite of our sin. Jesus always has more grace than we have sin.

Questions and Answers

It is time for us to get to the Q&A portion of the message so I am going to invite my wife up.



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