

# THE SONG OF SOLOMON - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

### What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
  - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Do you think Solomon wrote this book? Which one of his many wives does this “song” refer to? (1 Kings 11:1-3) What evidence do we have that Solomon wrote it? At what time in Solomon’s life was the book written? There are more variations in the interpretation of Song of Solomon than any other book in the Bible. Why do you suppose that is? Would you have voted to include Song of Solomon in the Bible? Why? Or why not?

“The title of this book means “the most beautiful of songs”; in some translations, it is called “The Song of Solomon” (see 1.1).

“This book is a collection of songs, or poems, in which a woman and a man tell about their love for each other. Sometimes they speak to themselves, sometimes to each other or to friends, and in some of the poems they seem to be remembering earlier times in their relationship.

“The poems have been interpreted in different ways. Some have thought that the man was King Solomon himself. Others read the book as a drama: The woman was taken to the court of Solomon, but she was still in love with a man back in her hometown, and finally the two are reunited. Some interpreters believe that the man and woman stand for God and his people or Christ and the Church.

“But it is also possible to take the book as a collection of poems expressing the deep and powerful love that a woman and a man can have for each other. In fact, they may have been part of marriage celebrations in ancient Israel. As one of the poems says:

*“The passion of love  
bursting into flame  
is more powerful than death,  
stronger than the grave.  
Love cannot be drowned  
by oceans or floods;  
it cannot be bought,  
no matter what is offered.”* (Song of Songs 8.6b, 7) [CEV]

“The Song of Songs, meaning the greatest of songs (Song of Songs 1:1), contains in exquisite poetic form the sublime portrayal and praise of the mutual love of the Lord and his people. The Lord is the Lover and his people are the beloved. Describing this relationship in terms of human love, the author simply follows Israel’s tradition. Isaiah (Isaiah 5:1–7; 54:4–8), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 2:2, 3, 32), and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 16; 23) all characterize the covenant between the Lord and Israel as a marriage. Hosea the prophet sees the idolatry of Israel in the adultery of Gomer (Hosea 1–3). He also represents the Lord speaking to Israel’s heart (Hosea 2:16) and changing her into a new spiritual people, purified by the Babylonian captivity and betrothed anew to her divine Lover “in justice and uprightness, in love and mercy” (Hosea 2:21)....

“The use of marriage as a symbol, characteristic of the Song, is found extensively also in the New Testament (Matthew 9:15; 25:1–13; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23–32; Revelation 19:7–9; 21:9–11).” (New American Bible) See question #6 below.

“Based on its first verse, this book is known by two titles: ‘Song of Songs’ and ‘Song of Solomon.’ The genitive phrase ‘song of songs’ is the Hebrew way of expressing the superlative, i.e., ‘the greatest, best, or most beautiful of songs.’ In Latin the book is called *Canticles*, which means ‘songs.’ In the Hebrew Bible it is one of the five *megillot* or scrolls, which were read to the Jewish

people on feast days (the others being Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations).

“This book is attributed to King Solomon by its own testimony (1:1), as well as by rabbinic tradition. Though some reject Solomonic authorship and consider the phrase ‘which *is* Solomon’s’ a dedication rather than an autograph, evangelical scholars are generally in agreement concerning the text’s affirmation of authorship. Historical and linguistic arguments against Solomonic authorship have been shown to be inconclusive. In support of Solomonic authorship are these additional internal evidences: (1) the name of the Hebrew king appears seven times in the book (1:1,5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11,12); (2) these allusions to Solomon are closely tied to references to kingship and royal luxury (1:4,12,13; 3:6,9; 7:5); and (3) geographical references seem to indicate an undivided kingdom, with indiscriminate mention of localities found in both kingdoms as if they were one political realm (6:4).

“Solomonic authorship demands a tenth-century B.C. date. Jewish tradition considers the book a product of Solomon’s early years (cf. 6:8), before his excessive multiplying of wives and concubines due to political expediency and sensual indulgence (cf. 1 Kings 11:1–8).

“This poem or song, which is never quoted directly in either the Old or New Testaments, is a unique literary masterpiece which is full of figures of speech and descriptive imagery. In the Hebrew Bible it is located in the third section known as the Writings (*kethuvim*, Heb.). Its abrupt changes of speaker and setting sometimes make the dialogue and plot difficult to follow. The song is a type of Semitic wisdom literature, and parallels the Book of Proverbs in many ways. As is true of much Hebrew poetry, the book is characterized by parallelism, the stating and restating of an idea in close context. **Key images in the book include wine, the garden, the kiss, various spices and fruits, and countryside or pastoral metaphors. Of special note is the fact that the name of God does not appear directly in the book.**

“The literary form and original context of the Song have been understood in various ways. The Song has been seen as a drama, a collection of Syrian wedding songs, a collection of pagan fertility cult liturgies, or an anthology of unrelated love songs. Basically all approaches can be seen to utilize generally one of three methods: (1) The **allegorical** view understands the book as a poem describing the relationship between God and Israel or between Christ and the church. Each detail is interpreted in a symbolic manner. This approach often finds as many interpretations as interpreters, which shows its dubious value. Genuine allegory will usually yield basically the same interpretation to its varied interpreters. (2) The **typological** view differs from the allegorical by keeping a historical foundation and by finding analogy not in all subordinate details, but only in the main outlines. The proponents of this view acknowledge the mutual love between Solomon and the Shulamite, but go beyond that to consider the divine analogy with its more elevated and spiritual meaning as being the more important. (3) The **literal** or **lyrical** view is one which takes the poem at face value, assigning the simplest and most natural interpretation to the text. Some who hold this position maintain that the poem is therefore merely a secular love song expressing human romantic love at its best without spiritual lesson or theological content. They value the Song only as a divine sanction upon marital love and a timely warning against perversions of marriage popular in Solomon’s time. However, there is also the option that the poem is a vital expression in frank but pure language of the divine theology of marriage as expressed in the love between husband and wife in the physical area, setting forth the ideal love relationship in monogamous marriage. Even the most intimate and personal human love is according to divine plan and as such is bestowed by God Himself (cf. Genesis 2:18–25; Matthew 19:4–6). The richest and best of human love is only a foretaste of the matchless, greater love of God. In this book, the scarlet thread of redemption is revealed, as man, through seeing and experiencing the purity and holiness of earthly love in marriage, gains a better and clearer understanding of the eternal, heavenly love of Christ for His church.

“The climax of the book, and therefore the key to the Song, is found in 8:6,7, where the incredible power and value of love is described. All events, discourses, and images in the book find their

importance and worth summarized in these two verses. The Song closes as a beautiful affirmation of God's pleasure in physical love between a man and a woman. Their relationship is to be unique and cherished. They are to value monogamy, permanence, understanding, and self-giving. Mutual satisfaction is their goal as they cleave to one another. Sexual intimacy is to be an anticipated time of union, joy, and pleasure. It is to be enjoyed often and with God's blessing. Seeing one's spouse as beautiful in appearance and character will enhance the marriage and foster its growth into old age. Such a description of marriage certainly provides a beautiful analogy of the relationship which should be nurtured between (1) God and His church, and (2) God and the individual believer." (*Believer's Study Bible*)

"The writer implies that he had 60 queens and 80 concubines (Song 6:8), but the Shulammitte maid, whose marriage the Song celebrates, surpasses them all (Song 6:9,13). Solomon's harem later increased to 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:1,3); therefore, Solomon evidently composed the Song during the early part of his reign. 'Shulammitte' is probably equivalent to Shunammite, as suggested by the LXX (see 1 Kings 1:3). Shunem was a town in the territory of Issachar (Joshua 19:17,18), some 7 mi., ca. 11 km.) east of Megiddo (cf. 2 Kings 4:8-37). Several speakers appear in the Song, though where each enters is not always clear, especially in the English translation, which does not give the gender of the speakers as does the Hebrew. In view of the difficulty, even in the Hebrew text, of tracing the logical connection between the different parts of the poem, some have considered the Song to be an anthology of love songs, perhaps by different authors, rather than a single work by one author writing with a unified plan. However, the unity of the book seems indicated by the fact that Solomon's name is prominent throughout (Song 1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12), and by the recurrence of similar words, illustrations, and figures throughout (Song 2:16; cf. 6:3; 2:5; cf. 5:8). Furthermore, the bride's family—her mother and brothers—are consistently mentioned, but never her father (see Song 1:6; 3:4; 8:2)." (*SDA Bible Commentary*)

"One famous Jewish Rabbi, Akiba, claimed that, "The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies". Nearly 1200 years later, Bernard of Clairvaux was in substantial agreement with this verdict since he preached 86 sermons on the first two chapters. No book in the Bible has been subject to more varied assessments as to its worth, or as to how we ought to understand it. For that reason we must pay a little more attention than usual to such issues in this introduction. . . In the third century of the Christian era the great biblical scholar Origen of Alexandria in Egypt found in the Song four characters: the bridegroom who is Christ; the bride who is the Church; the friends of the bridegroom who are either angels or the prophets or the patriarchs of old; and the friends of the bride who stand for the souls of believers. . . " I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of the vexations of the flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel the passions of this bodily nature, to refrain from reading the book and the things that will be said about it ". To guard against such misunderstanding, every detail of the book was pressed into service to provide spiritual guidance, and very different guidance could be gleaned from the same detail. Take the reference to " doves " in 1:15. Since the dove was a bird noted for its fidelity to its mate, Origen took this to refer to the Church faithful to Christ and mourning for him when he is absent. Bernard of Clairvaux, however, stressed the solitary retiring habits of the dove and used the text to encourage Christians to sit solitary and have nothing to do with the world's crowds. Even John Calvin, who was not normally given to finding allegorical meaning in Scripture, felt that this was the only way to handle this book. . . So many marks of a typical allegory are missing from this book that it is hard to believe that it was written as an allegory, and it is always a dangerous game to give an allegorical interpretation to something which was not intended as an allegory. Given the absence of such clues as to how to approach it as an allegory, the book has too easily become a happy hunting ground for those who wish to read into it their own spiritual views, for reasons that have nothing at all to do with the Song of Solomon. . . It has also been argued that the Song of Solomon is to be understood as a *cultic*

*drama* or liturgy, celebrating the union of a god and goddess of fertility; which god and goddess depends upon whether we trace it back to Babylonian or Canaanite sources. The book is thus concerned with the recurring triumph of the forces of life over death, the annual victory of fertility over barrenness, upon which the continuing well-being of an essentially agricultural community depended. Since the king played the role of the god when this liturgical drama was enacted in the Temple, this accounts for the appearance of Solomon in the poems and indeed the traditional linking of the entire book with Solomon. The typical emphasis in such a cultic drama is, however, on the sexual act and the concept of fertility. This is not central to the Song of Solomon. It is not divine love, but *human* love and its longings and its fulfillment, its fears and its delights, which is described with a wealth of detail and poetic charm in this book. There is moreover no real evidence that a cultic drama of this pagan type was ever part of worship in the Jerusalem Temple, even in its worst days of apostasy. (*Daily Study Bible*: article on Song of Solomon: Intro)

This book is unique in Scripture. It raises a lot of questions in the minds of those who care about what the Bible says about God. In a world where sex was adulterated and perverted as a part of religion, this book suggests that God's true plan is for one man and one woman to see and experience something wonderful in each other. That special "someone" is to fulfill a very important position in the mind and heart of the one who loves him or her. God designed even our bodies to contribute to this most important of human relationships. Then He designed us to be attracted to each other in an enduring way to form the basic unit of human civilization. He intended that union to be so close and intimate that the two are to become "one flesh". That relationship is supposed to be private and personal. We do not usually talk about it to others outside of the relationship. But that relationship has been the inspiration and subject of more great literature and music than any other. How detailed and explicit should we be in talking about it? Different cultures have had very different answers to that question. Solomon was so excited about his lover that he decided to write a love poem about their relationship. Then he chose to make that love poem public. God apparently decided that this was an important enough topic that Solomon's love poem became a part of Scripture. God no doubt helped Solomon and his lover express their ideas about each other. God then chose to hold up this example for the world to see in contrast to the practices that formed such a basic part of the fertility cult religions of the surrounding nations.

We may have some problems with the explicit language and word pictures used. We may not even understand exactly what each part of the story referred to in the original context. But we can certainly agree that it is closer to God's ideal than the multitude of perverse variations, using both male and female "prostitutes" that were being practiced in other religions in Solomon's day.

Solomon certainly wandered far away from God's ideal for his life. But this brief poem gives us a glimpse into the idealism that was such a part of Solomon's early life. Thus it rounds out for us the picture that we have of Solomon's life and times. As such it is an important part of Scripture and it provides us with a lot to think about as we compare our own relationships today.

2. Why does Song of Solomon, which is apparently a story of youthful human love, come after Ecclesiastes? Isn't that the same kind of contrast we see in Judges/Ruth? Does it not provide a nice balance after reading Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes?

It appears that these four books of poetry are arranged in order of length. There does not seem to be any great theological importance to the order we have in our Bibles. In Hebrew Bibles the order is somewhat different. In the section known as "the Writings" the order of the books is: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

3. Can we truly learn anything about God from a book that never mentions God even by name (compare Esther)?

"If the Bible is the book about God, then one may well ask what a narrative about human

sexuality has to do with theology. This is an even more potent question when one observes that God is never mentioned in the entire text (except possibly in 8:6) nor are there any references to prayer, worship, or piety. In this respect it bears similarities to the Book of Esther, which also does not mention God. Nevertheless, Esther is a story of the redemption of God's people and includes episodes of prayer, fasting, and thanksgiving. Such themes are notably absent from Solomon's poetic story, making it unique among the books of the Bible.

"To resolve this difficulty, it is important to remember that the Bible not only describes who God is and what God does, it also tells us what God desires for His people. The Song of Solomon provides an example of how God created male and female to live in happiness and fulfillment. People are created as sexual beings. It would be wrong to suggest that the full experience of our humanity is impossible apart from sexual union in marriage, since this would disqualify the widowed, divorced, and the celibate—including our Savior who was celibate. At the same time, God ordained marriage from the beginning of creation: man and woman were to become one flesh (Gen. 2:25).

"Because of its emphasis on human love, this book presents an extraordinary variety of expressions for love, perhaps the richest selection in all Hebrew Scripture. But within this celebration of love, the book condemns unchaste relations outside of marriage—and in particular, sexual experimentation before marriage. Indeed, this book may contain the Bible's strongest argument for chastity before marriage. Ironically because of its explicit language, ancient and modern Jewish sages forbade men to read the book before they were thirty (and presumably kept women from reading it at all). We cannot ignore the sexual content of the book, but we can appreciate the context in which it is placed—a godly marriage. The Song of Solomon is necessary reading not only for the married, but for young people who want to understand God's design for marriage." (*Nelson's Study Bible*)

This book says a great deal about God. While we may even be embarrassed by some of its explicit language, God isn't! He invented all of the subject matter! And He wants us to appreciate what He made for us.

4. There are allusions in the Bible to 20 or more other books that are not preserved in our current Bibles. (See examples in Study Guide for 2 Chronicles) Why did the Jewish fathers who first put together the Hebrew Canon include the Song of Solomon? Why do we keep it today? Does it say something about life in God's universe, and of the feelings He wishes people to have for each other?

"Its right to a place in the sacred canon was debated as late as New Testament times, and it is of interest to note that the New Testament never quotes from it or alludes to it. The book claims Solomon as its author, and in view of the fact that he is known to have composed 1,005 'songs' (1 Kings 4:32) there is no reason why he could not have written 'the song of songs, which is Solomon's' (Song 1:1)." (*SDA Bible Dictionary*)

We know that Martin Luther questioned the canonicity of four New Testament books: Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation. Why didn't he challenge this book? Did he find some special meaning or redeeming grace in it?

5. If Solomon wrote 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32) and this is the best of them all (this is suggested by the Hebrew name of the book), why don't we sing it or at least use it more often? Is this the only "song" from Solomon that we have preserved (compare Psalms 72 and 127)? Why are we even embarrassed to read it out loud? Why did the Jews refuse to let anyone under 30 read it (according to the early church fathers)? Why did ancient Jews read it on the 8th day of Passover? To whom?

The Jews regarded this as a song about God's love for His people. This is what, they believe, led Him to rescue them from Egyptian bondage. Thus it is read as a celebration of Passover and its memories of the Exodus. Only men over thirty were allowed to read it or probably even listen to it!

6. Is it true that God's love for His people is well illustrated by marriage?

"The Song of Solomon reveals three qualities of love between a man and a woman: self-giving, desire, and commitment. In all these ways love reflects the greater love of God our Creator. God delights in us and gives Himself to us. God desires us wholly for Himself. God feels deeply both the pain and pleasure of His relationship with us. Although it is not proper to attribute sexuality to God, there is an analogy between the love we experience in marriage and the love that God has for us. The Old Testament prophets compare the love of God for His people to the love of a bridegroom for the bride (e.g., Jeremiah 2:2 Hosea 2:14—20). Christian marriage, according to Paul, should be modeled on the most perfect expression of such love, the self-giving love of Christ for His church and its willing response (Ephesians 5:22,33). The climax of the Song of Solomon is the praise of vehement and faithful love (Song 8:6,7)." (*New Geneva Study Bible*)

Look at some of the ways in which the Bible compares God's love for His people and marital love:

**Isaiah 5:1,2:**

- <sup>1</sup> Let me sing a lovesong to my beloved about his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.
- <sup>2</sup> He dug it up, removed its stones,  
planted it with the choicest vines,  
built a watchtower in it,  
and made a winepress in it.  
Then he waited for it to produce good grapes,  
but it produced only sour, wild grapes." (*God's Word*)

**Isaiah 54:4-8:**

- <sup>4</sup> Do not be afraid—  
you will not be disgraced again; you will not be humiliated.  
You will forget your unfaithfulness as a young wife,  
and your desperate loneliness as a widow.
- <sup>5</sup> Your Creator will be like a husband to you—  
the Lord Almighty is his name.  
The holy God of Israel will save you—  
he is the ruler of all the world.
- <sup>6</sup> Israel, you are like a young wife,  
deserted by her husband and deeply distressed.  
But the Lord calls you back to him and says:
- <sup>7</sup> "For one brief moment I left you;  
with deep love I will take you back.
- <sup>8</sup> I turned away angry for only a moment,  
but I will show you my love for ever."  
So says the Lord who saves you." *Good News Bible*

**Jeremiah 2:2,3,32:**

- The Lord told me <sup>2</sup> to proclaim this message to everyone in Jerusalem.  
"I remember how faithful you were when you were young,  
how you loved me when we were first married;  
you followed me through the desert, through a land that had not been sown.
- <sup>3</sup> Israel, you belonged to me alone;  
you were my sacred possession.  
I sent suffering and disaster  
on everyone who hurt you.

I, the Lord, have spoken.”

<sup>32</sup> Does a young woman forget her jewelry, or a bride her wedding dress? But my people have forgotten me for more days than can be counted. (*GNB*)

**Jeremiah 3:20:**

20 “But like an unfaithful wife,  
you have not been faithful to me.  
I, the Lord, have spoken.” *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

**Jeremiah 31:32:**

<sup>32</sup> It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant. (*GNB*)

**Ezekiel 16 and 23**

**Hosea:** Hosea’s whole book is based on this idea.

**Matthew 9:15:**

<sup>15</sup> “Jesus answered, ‘Do you expect the guests at a wedding party to be sad as long as the bridegroom is with them? Of course not! But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.  
*Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

**Matthew 25:1-13:** The Parable of the Wedding Feast

**John 3:29:**

<sup>29</sup> “The bridegroom is the one to whom the bride belongs; but the bridegroom’s friend, who stands by and listens, is glad when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. This is how my own happiness is made complete.” *Good News Bible*

**2 Corinthians 11:2:**

<sup>2</sup> “I am jealous for you, just as God is; you are like a pure virgin whom I have promised in marriage to one man only, Christ himself.” *Good News Bible*

**Ephesians 5:21-33:** The love of a husband and wife should be like the love of Christ for the church.

**Revelation 21:2:**

<sup>2</sup> And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband.  
*Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

It should be apparent from all of this that God working through Biblical writers finds many parallels between marriage and His love for His people. This should be an inspiration to both married couples and to the church!

7. After reading this Song through, are you encouraged to use portions of the Song of Solomon as key texts? Is there a special meaning in many of the details? If you allegorize or interpret every detail, what would you do with Song of Solomon 6:8? Who are the “sixty queens and eighty concubines”? Is God asking us to speculate on any number of potential meanings that could be derived from this book? Compare Song of Solomon 3:6-10. What is implied by Song of Solomon 3:10, *TLB*, “...With love from the girls of Jerusalem!?”

Surely a careful reading of the book would suggest that it should always be taken as a whole and never chopped up into little pieces to be separated and speculated on. It has been suggested that the book forms a giant chiasm. A Chiasm is a poetic device in which a poem is organized so that

as you read along you are carried deeper and deeper into the heart of the poem. At the center of the poem (in this case Song 4:16-5:1) is the key idea of the poem and then the reader is led back up out of the poem step by step. The steps down are somewhat parallel to the steps back up. (See appendix)

The most obvious meaning is probably exactly what Solomon intended. We sometimes have trouble with that because of our inhibitions. If Adam and Eve were God's original masterpieces here on planet earth and He put them in the garden—where we all should be still—and He dressed them in beautiful light so they could be naked and unashamed, it should be clear that God doesn't share our inhibitions!

8. Do you think it is right that a book about human love should have a place almost in the center of the Bible? How could it be so exalted in the Scriptures? Is it all right to love the beautiful? Did the Holy Spirit inspire Solomon to describe his feelings for this girl that he loved? Is God a highly personal individual Himself? Does He want our relationship to be of this quality?

See question #6 above.

“From a modern Occidental point of view it may be difficult to account for the Song of Songs' finding a place in the sacred canon. For centuries, apparently, even many Jews were not certain that it deserved a place alongside the other inspired works, though the Jews have generally interpreted it as a spiritual allegory of God's love for ancient Israel. The allegorical pattern of interpretation was followed by Hippolytus of Rome in the 3d cent. A.D., and Origen, who lived in Palestine and is known as the father of the allegorical method of the interpretation of Scripture. According to Origen, the king represents Christ, and the Shulammite maid His church, or perhaps individuals within the church—a spiritual relationship that recurs frequently in the NT (Eph 5:25–33; Rev 19:7–9; 21:9; etc.). However, careful students of Scripture generally look upon the allegorical method of interpretation with caution, in view of the fact that this method almost inevitably lends itself to the fanciful opinions of the interpreter. A safe approach to the interpretation of the Song of Songs would seem to be to consider it simply as what it purports to be—a poetic narrative commemorating Solomon's love for a lovely country maid—and to consider that it found a place in the sacred canon by virtue of its exalted idealization of marriage as ordained by the Creator, albeit with a rich Oriental fervor that tends to puzzle the Western reader. It is possible, however, to draw lessons of spiritual value from the book without necessarily considering these lessons as the intent of Inspiration in the composition and canonization of the book.” (*SDA Bible Dictionary*)

Didn't God invent sex and marriage? Who made us in such a way that we are attracted to each other? Is that sinful? Is it inherently wrong? God knows that we need every means possible to try to understand His love. Ideal human marital love is probably the closest parallel that we know and so God uses it.

9. What would happen if you read this book to your family for worship and then asked your teenage son to pray? What do you think he would say? What would God want him to say?

Should we follow the Jewish tradition and not allow anyone under thirty to read this book? There are many parallels between passages in this book and poetry from the ancient fertility cult religions. In their case, it is considered a part of their religion, but to us it seems almost pornographic. How can we get our children to see the sexual relationship as something wonderful and God-ordained and created by Him in an environment where sex is used and abused in every way possible? How did we get from the beautiful relationship created by God for Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden to living in a society where sex is primarily used or perverted and sold for advertising and personal gratification?

No doubt Satan realized the potential benefits that God could bestow on us through the marriage relationship and that is why he has done everything possible to distort, confuse, and pervert our



ideas on the subject. In the great controversy, any means that God might use to benefit us and to teach us something is going to automatically be a target for Satan to destroy. In our day, it is almost impossible to rediscover God's original plan if one is continually exposed to the counterfeit Satan version. But God's original plan has not lost its power and those who have been able to experience even a part of the benefits of it will turn away from the counterfeit immediately.

10. Even if we manage to discover something of significance about marriage, human love and sexuality in this book, what does it say about God's role in the cosmic conflict? Is Satan involved in this book in any way?

Which came first: marriage, human love and sexuality, or sin? Does Satan understand human sexuality? Since Satan has wanted so much to be like God, especially to be able to create like God, is he (Satan) jealous of our ability to procreate? Does that have anything to do with his efforts to pervert this God-given power? Does Satan understand our feelings for each other, especially our feelings of sexual love in the marital relationship? Does our ability to procreate help God in any way to answer Satan's accusations in the great controversy? How? Does dealing with our children (like raising teenagers) teach us anything about Satan or about God? About sin and rebellion? About the challenges God faces in trying to reach us and communicate with us?

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**Appendix: CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON**

**Song 1:2—2:2**

- Wife's desire for her husband (1:2)  
Solomon named (1:5)  
(A) "My own vineyard" (1:6) (A)  
Silver (1:11)  
"My breasts" (1:13)  
Evaluation of her (favorable) (1:15, 16)  
Cedar (1:17)

**Song 2:3-17**

- The apple tree (2:3-5)  
Charge to the Jerusalem girls (2:6, 7)  
(B) The beloved visits her home (2:8, 9) (B)  
His invitation to an outing (2:10-15)  
Marriage covenant formula (2:16)

**Song 3:1—4:15**

- Dream I, search-encounter (3:1-4)  
Charge to Jerusalem girls (3:5)  
(C) Praise of Solomon's procession (3:6-10) (C)  
Wedding scene (3:11)  
Praise of bride's beauty (4:1-7)  
Praise of bride's character (4:8-15)

**Song 4:16**

- (D) Her invitation (4:16) (D)

**Song 5:1**

- (D<sup>1</sup>) His response (5:1) (D<sup>1</sup>)

**Song 5:2—7:9**

- Dream II, encounter-search (5:2-7)  
Charge to Jerusalem girls (5:8)  
(C<sup>1</sup>) Praise of Solomon's person (5:9—6:3) (C<sup>1</sup>)  
Praise of bride's character (6:4-10)  
Dance of Mahanaim (6:11-13)  
Praise of bride's beauty (7:1-9)

**Song 7:10—8:5**

- Marriage covenant formula (7:10)  
Her invitation to an outing (7:11-13)  
(B<sup>1</sup>) A wish that he might visit her home (8:1, 2) (B<sup>1</sup>)  
Charge to Jerusalem girls (8:3, 4)  
The apple tree (8:5)

**Song 8:6-14**

- Cedar (8:8, 9)  
Evaluation of her (unfavorable) (8:8, 9)  
(A<sup>1</sup>) "My breasts" (8:10) (A<sup>1</sup>)  
Silver (8:11)  
"My own vineyard" (8:12)  
Solomon named (8:12)  
Wife's desire for her husband (8:14)

—Adapted from William H. Shea, "The Chiastic Structure of the Song of Songs," ZAW 92, 1980. Note: Variations within the chiasm exist. The overall order of segments in C<sup>1</sup>, for example, are not the reverse of C, as is the case with the other segments.