

## ***Families in the Family of God***

### ***The Royal Love Song***

Lesson #7 for February 18, 2006

Scriptures: Song of Solomon

1. How do you feel about the Song of Solomon? Do you think such a love poem belongs in Scripture? Why do you think this “best of all songs” was included in Scripture? Most of the songs written in David’s and Solomon’s day were used for worship in the sanctuary. What do you think this psalm or song was used for? Are you quite certain that Solomon wrote this book?
2. In our day is it difficult for us to talk about or think of sex in sacred terms? **What would happen if you read this book to your family for worship and then asked your teenage son to comment or pray? What do you think he would say? What would God want him to say?**
3. Why do we find it so difficult to speak to our children about sexual matters?
4. 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?
5. “The Song of Solomon has been the happy hunting ground for allegorists for many centuries”. The Harper’s Bible Dictionary asserts, “The scope of interpretation about this little book surpasses by far that of any other book in the Bible.” There are 288 pages of introduction in the *Anchor Bible* Volume on Song of Solomon describing most of the different interpretations of this small book! The allegorization of this book can be traced back to the Alexandrian School and particularly to Origen (AD 184-254). When Origen was quite young and wanted to dedicate his entire life to the study of the scriptures, he found that his “maleness” was getting in the way, so he castrated himself. Wouldn’t you expect someone like that to allegorize this Song?
6. While the Song of Solomon has led to some of the wildest interpretations known to scholars, some have seen in this book a call to return to the purity of the Eden relationship.
7. **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! Presumably women were not to read it at all! Even today there are theologians who think this book is unfit to read! Some Jewish Rabbis believed it to be the most sacred and sublime book ever written!
8. 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?
9. The only completely safe commentators on Scriptures are inspired commentators. But since neither the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, nor the New Testament quote from the Song this leaves SDA’s with the comments of Ellen White, which are also very few.
10. One of the early heretics in the church, by the name of Marcian, wanted to throw out the books of Luke and Acts because he felt they were too respectful of women and of marriage. Why didn’t he throw out Song of Solomon?
11. Would you feel that you had experienced a serious loss if Song of Solomon was left out of the Bible? Have you ever heard any of the more “candid” sections of this book read as Scripture reading in church?

12. It is very clear from Scripture in many passages that the Bible does not agree with those who would divide the body up into separately functioning parts. From Genesis 2:7 almost at the very beginning the breath and the body form a living being. Sometimes body, soul and spirit are described but these are always regarded as one. But it is also clear from such passages as 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 that God considers our bodies as gifts which we are to use for His glory.
13. 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*)
14. 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?
15. **In the light of the Great Controversy we must ask, Was marriage created before or after sin? It is essential to remember that sin was in the universe before this world was created. Much of what has happened here came as a response to some of Satan's charges against God. Satan had accused God of not being willing to share His creative power. So God makes us male and female so we can by coming together in love pass along the life that He has been given us. Much of what is in Scripture happened the way it did because of the Great Controversy behind the scenes. And the whole universe is watching intensely to see how it will all work out.**
16. **If the issues in the Great Controversy are not settled and God proven to be the kind of Person we believe Him to be rather than the kind of Person Satan has claimed He is, would you even want to be saved? These universe-wide Great Controversy issues are more important than even our salvation! If God cannot be trusted, then nothing else really matters! Our world has become the “theater” (1 Corinthians 4:9) in which these issues are played out. What is the role of human love in this? Did the angels learn anything from this book?**
17. 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.
18. 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. Isn't a Christian marriage the best possible place for us to unlearn selfishness?
19. Two very important gifts were given us in the Garden of Eden which we still have today: the Sabbath and marriage. **Why do you think Satan is so determined to corrupt these two pillars**

**of God's plan for our lives? Is Satan jealous? Why has he tried to turn sexual matters into a taboo? Think of all the things the devil has done to corrupt our attitudes towards sex!**

20. Do we really believe that God invented sex? Does it sound like an oxymoron? Did God really create every part of our bodies? Why do you think there are such powerful sexual taboos in almost every culture?
21. All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human BEINGS were a new and DISTINCT ORDER. They were made 'in the image of God,' and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth. They were to live in close communion with heaven, receiving power from the Source of all power. Upheld by God, they were to live sinless lives. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 11, 1902; *Sons and Daughters of God 7*; *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* Vol. 1, p. 1081
22. In our day is it actually possible to live and behave as if sexuality is a sacred gift from God? What are the most important aspects of intimacy? Is it possible for the body including the sexual nature to be set apart for holy use? What would that mean?
23. **What is it about the sexual union that makes us feel "one"? In what sense are we "one" with our marriage partners?**
24. Why is it so important for young couples to wait until the appropriate time to engage in sexual intimacy? What problems are caused by premarital sex or sexual infidelity after marriage? What does it actually do to a marital relationship? Is there some sense in which sexual immorality actually could destroy God's image within us? Doesn't it destroy trust between us?
25. Is it possible in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to have a frank and reasonable discussion of sexuality in a Sabbath school class? Why do some Adventists suggest that it is wrong to have sexual intercourse on the Sabbath?
26. **What are God's intended results of sexual intimacy inside the marriage relationship?**
27. Our study for this week suggests that husbands and wives are to be friends and lovers. What does this imply? "The natural intimacies of romantic love are a gift of the Creator, to help partners bond closely to each other in marriage. As partners are open to the work of divine love in their hearts, their human love is "refined and purified, elevated and ennobled." Ellen G. White, *ST*, September 6, 1899 par. 8; *The Adventist Home*, page 99.
28. It seems to be God's plan that sexual intimacy frees us to be completely open and frank free to speak and fully honest with each other. What percentage of couples today have this kind of relationship? In a typical modern marriage does sexual intimacy helped to create these traits?
29. It can hardly be denied that our modern society is preoccupied with sex. How can we possibly keep our lives and minds pure while we guide our children into a correct understanding of the sexual relationship?
30. How do you understand Genesis 2:25: "the man and the woman were both naked, but they were not embarrassed?" Is such a relationship even possible in our day?
31. **How long do you think it was before Adam and Eve were married? Did God give them a period of time to get acquainted? Did they enjoy some quiet time to gently explore each other's feelings personalities and bodies? Did God give them marriage counseling?**
32. It is very clear that nakedness and shame became associated only after the entrance of sin into our world. What does this tell us about the way a marriage relationship should be today? "Sexual intimacy as it represents the marriage commitment involves a corresponding obligation and responsibility. Scripture teaches that this union is a sign of the commitment between a man and a woman. This commitment is called marriage. The whole of each person is involved in the sexual act. It is a communication that is physical, emotional, and spiritual."
33. What can we do to return sexuality in our marriages back to this ideal? Clearly this intimate sexual relationship is intended for procreation and relational bonding. It is also a means of renewing our wedding vows. Are these the clear messages we get from popular culture?

34. The culmination of their love seems to be described in Song of Solomon 4:7-5:1. Notice the mutual invitations expressed in these verses. Clearly for the sexual relationship to be sacred it must be entered into with mutual consent.
35. It is interesting to note that both the names Solomon and Shulamith are derivatives of the Hebrew word shalom which means peace or wholeness. Compare the language of Song of Solomon 2:16 "my beloved is mine, and I am his" with the language of Eden "this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh " (Genesis 2:23). The obvious ideal in the biblical sense is for husband and wife to feel totally at one.
36. **As we know the Bible describes the sexual relationship as a kind of "knowing" Adam knew Eve his wife and they had a baby. The Bible also describes our relationship with God when it is ideal as "knowing God". What is implied by this mutual terminology?**
37. In many cultures sex is regarded as a necessary evil. What's wrong with this attitude? Could you demonstrate from Scripture that this is an erroneous view?
38. Can you think of any modern media pictures of the marriage relationship which depict it in a correct biblical context? Does modern media always misrepresent the biblical ideal for marriage?
39. As couples grow older is it natural for them to include other forms of intimacy? Is it possible and within God's plan for our lives that these other forms of intimacy could substantially replace sexual intimacy?
40. Joseph is often cited in Genesis 39:7-9 as an ideal example of someone who refused to get involved in the wrong kind of sexual relationship. But what about Genesis 38 and Judah?
41. What does the New Testament teach us about sexual indiscretions? How do we explain the attitude of Jesus in John 8:1-11? Do we know who this woman was? What was going on in this story? Why do you think the Bible so openly discusses the sexual indiscretions of some of its leading characters such as Judah, David, Gideon?
42. Careful research has repeatedly demonstrated that the most rewarding sexual relationships are in committed marriages. Why do you think this is?
43. How should we as a Church relate to those who have unusual attitudes toward sex? Should homosexuals be treated just like other church members? Why? Or why not?
44. **Our lessons study guide points out that the most important sexual organ is the brain. Or the mind. What is implied by this?**
45. In Noah's day they were described as marrying and giving in marriage. This was clearly carried to an excess. In what way was this wrong? What is implied by this expression?
46. Is it even possible in our day to avoid reading, seeing, hearing or encountering impurity?
47. Would you agree that the most important safeguard against sexual liaisons is having a meaningful relationship within your own marriage? What can we do to improve the intimacy and joy of our own marriage relationships? What could God do to help us in this matter?
48. 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?
49. What does God want to say to us about Himself through this small book nearly in the center of the Bible?

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[khart@llu.edu](mailto:khart@llu.edu)

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