

Romance and Sex: first thoughts

Song of Songs 1:1-11

Intro:

It's great to have you here today as we embark on this journey for the next 5 weeks on Romance and Sex from the Bible. I'm looking forward to it, not just because sex and sexuality are an essential part of who we are as humans, but because God has actually said some amazing wonderfully good things about it. I mean, the Bible actually says he created it in the first place, and it was a good thing.

In fact, this book we're going through is called the Song of Songs, and what that means from the perspective of the original authors is that it is the best of all songs, the song above all songs. Like the holy of holies in the Temple of the Old Testament (if you're familiar with it)- it's the same grammatical construction. And so since the Bible says God created this wonderful thing, and we are all sexual people, it makes sense that we go to His book to figure out how we just exactly engage in this part of our lives.

Now, before we get started, a couple of intro things should probably be mentioned:

1. First, I realize that we come from various backgrounds with this issue of sex and sexuality, based on our cultures, our families, our experiences. And so we probably have a wide variety of feelings and experiences here about it.

- Some of us may feel like it's totally gross, some of us may be total cassanovas, perhaps even sexual addicts. Most of us, I think, are probably in between somewhere.

- Some of us been in relationships, have had sex- good and perhaps even bad, others have not. Some of us are married, others are not.

Regardless of where we come from, I believe we have a lot to learn from each other, and more importantly from this book. I pray that you will come with an open heart and mind.

2. A couple of intro things with our book here.

- *Sex in the Bible is in the context of marriage.*

(See Genesis 2:23-25, Deut. 2:28-29, Proverbs 5-7, I Corinthians 5-7, Hebrews 13:4)

This is even seen in the placement of the book; in the Hebrew version of the OT, Song of Songs comes after Ruth, which is a story about a noble relationship consummated in marriage.

Now you may not hold to this belief; we're glad you're here anyhow. We'll be talking about this point some more, but for now I think it important to simply note this.

- *Sex is a jumping ground for us to talk about our relationship with God as well.*

See Ezekiel 16, 23; Jeremiah 2:1; Isaiah 54; Ephesians 5:21-33; Rev. 19:6-8

This is not just my idea- The Bible points to this, and so we will also use this to think about our relationship with God.

- Details: this is a book of poetry talking about the love between a woman and a man. Some would say it is about the King Solomon. Others don't. The intro leaves that open. In fact, some people would read this book as a love poem between a woman who is trapped in Solomon's harem, and her true love outside whom she has married or will married, leaving there to be 3 characters. Others, see it just as two characters involved. For more, see Song of Songs 1:4, 1:12, 3:6-11, 8:11-12.

In any case, that's the intro. We ready? Let's jump in our text and get this series going. We'll be reading from chapter one, and begin with 3 basic thoughts about romance and sex to get this series going.

Read text:

What are some first thoughts we can talk about with this issue of Romance and Sex?

Romantic, sexual desire is a good thing.

The song starts with a bang, doesn't it? Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. Your anointing oils- your cologne, your smell- key in a time where people didn't take showers everyday... Oh, and this is just the beginning.

Huge for us as a church to note this.

Important because we can go on extremes:

- Some of us can go to one extreme: no desire!

This has been the case throughout religious history, and it is even recorded in the Bible.

(I Timothy 4:3)

But more of us think like this, I believe:

- Some of us can go to the other: sex is my ultimate desire!

You know who you are: you think heaven will be an unlimited sex.

One thing I would say: interesting, in the Bible. Here it says your love is better than wine... And that's great. But there's one thing that's better than life: God.

Ps. 63:3- your love is better than life...

Too many of us live on this tier of thinking sex is the best thing- it's better than wine. But the Bible says there's something better than life- God. I believe this is the first step in a gratifying life, sex life included: knowing that God is better than everything.

To illustrate:

I know this is pretty crazy statement. We could cite a number of different observations people have made, including studies that suggest the most satisfied people sexually are religious women. But one illustration I'd like to share; it's a bit blatant, and has many other implications, but I hope you'll get this.

In the June 2001 of Philadelphia, Sandy Bentley, one of Hugh Hefner's girlfriends, said this about Hugh Hefner's sex life: Hugh.. "had trouble finding satisfaction through intercourse; instead; he liked the girls to pleasure each other while he masturbated and watched gay porn."

Here is a man who led the way for the sexual revolution and was and is the ultimate icon of free, uninhibited sex. And yet he was unable to find sex gratifying. The main issue at hand: He had not discovered the God who was better than life.

One pastor puts it like this: our lives are like solar systems- planets rotating around a sun. Too often we have sex as the "sun" of our life. It may seem alright, but it has no power to keep the solar system together. God needs to be the "sun," sex needs to be put in its right place...

Application:

For singles: do you delight in God first and foremost?

The need to delight in this first is key, especially if you are looking for that lifelong mate.

For marrieds: do you delight in your spouse?

The need to develop and maintain this discipline is key. We'll talk about this...

For all: Do we have this sort of desire for God?

Do we realize God has this desire for us? Zephaniah 3:17

A good name, a good character, is key.

1:3- Good name like oil poured out. For a culture where showers weren't regular, the scent and colognes were important. And the name of the person spoke of the person's character.

This is speaking of a good character.

Yes, looks are important, but it's not just about that.

How many of you have dated someone who lacked character?

Now, the text will go on and note one important indicator of good character: what other people think. Note the connection in v.3, v.4, and even v.9.

It's not a popularity thing, or just looks thing, though that is a central issue in v.9. It's about your character.

For singles:

Key. Are you becoming a person of this character? If you need help with this, just pick up the Bible and look through parts of the NT and ask yourself- am I becoming this person? For example, 2 Peter 1:5-8.

Note: I'm hoping for more couples to date here- it's a good thing to date in a church; Yen and I often talk about how we hope a lot of you singles will meet your life mates here. But here's the deal: and I'll just get on the guys case- you gotta have some character. There are some quality women here that need it!

For marrieds:

Do delight in your mate's character? I ask this because I know it's easy not to in marriage, isn't it? You see all the bad things about your mate. Again, this is something we need to cultivate and we'll discuss it more, but let me ask it again:

For all:

Do we realize that our Jesus has great character? And he has given us a good name when we come to him?

Confidence in our appearance and our history is essential.

1:5-7 Dark and beautiful-

We think this real sexy, some of us here.

But for then, it wasn't that great a thing- it showed this woman's lowly class.

Yet she was confident- she still pursues the man with confidence. v.7.

All of us struggle with having this confidence, don't we?

Testimony- Kelly Schauermaann (visit www.ethnos.us for the recording).

Challenge:

- Some of you have been on the wrong path with sex and romance, with the wrong people.
Come back to God

- Some of you have terrible self-image in who you are- your body, your appearance, your story. Find the truth of who you are in him- wonderfully made, created with a purpose.

- Some of you need to begin to delight in God, putting him at the center of your universe.