

What is Love?

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

INTRODUCTION

- A. A Brit observed to his American friend, “The increasing divorce rate is rapidly making America the land of the free.”
1. The American admitted, ‘Yes, but remember the marriage rate demonstrates that America is still the home of the brave.’
 2. We chuckle because we’re mostly married and our marriage is not perfect.
 - a. Each one of us has had struggles and trials in our marriage, and there have been times that it hasn’t been easy being married.
 - b. I dare say that if we surveyed this congregation, we would all admit that there have been times it would have been easier to throw up our hands and just quit.
- B. But, there was something that would not allow us to give up.
1. In the Song of Solomon, the Beloved writes of the love which would not let her give up, and this morning, we want to take a look at that love.
 2. Some might object to using the Song of Solomon to speak of the relationship between a husband and a wife because they would say the book is allegorical of the relationship between Christ and the church.
 - a. The headings in some copies of the Bible give the impression that this book is about Christ and his love for the church, and vice versa.
 - b. But, I respectfully disagree; the book is so sexual in places, and I don’t believe God would have used the allegory of sex to describe Christ and the church. Notice a couple passages:
 - 1) The bride says, “Draw me after you, let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers” (1:4).
 - 2) Notice what the king says to his bride: “Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower” (7:1-4). We don’t talk that way today but I think we see there’s a sexual attraction between Solomon and his bride.
- C. Our text this morning is not about sex, but it’s about the bond between a husband and wife, and we find the text in a book about both the physical and the emotional bond and love between a husband and wife. Our text tells us what love is.

LOVE IS POSSESSION, v. 6a

- A. “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm.”
1. The metaphor of the seal here refers to the signet ring or possibly a cylinder seal which was worn around the neck; this seal would have been near the heart, and Solomon here speaks of a seal upon the heart.
 2. The seal in the ancient world signified ownership, and Solomon is here saying to his beloved, “Let us belong to one another.”
 3. Using the seal in this sense, it’s quite analogous to our wedding band. The wedding band says, “I’m committed to someone. I’m faithful to someone.”
- B. Just as Solomon desired that his bride belong to him, husbands and wives belong to one another.
1. Husbands and wives don’t belong to each other in the sense that they can tell each other what to do and when to do it.
 2. But, husbands and wives belong to each other in the sense that they are faithful to each other,

where they look at each other and say, “I’m going to love you and you alone; I’m going to be faithful to you and to you alone.” Notice what Solomon’s bride says, “My beloved is mine and I am his” (2:16).

3. Scripture speaks of this faithfulness that husbands and wives are to have.
 - a. “A man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).
 - 1) When a man and a woman marry, they have a new relationship with parents - they no longer pledge allegiance to father and mother, but they leave father and mother.
 - 2) They are one flesh - there isn’t room for someone else in the picture, because they are one. They have committed themselves to each other, and they are faithful to each other.
 - b. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mt. 19:6).
 - 1) When God joins a husband and wife in marriage, there’s no one else to come between them.
 - 2) The husband and wife are to be committed to each other and let no one put them asunder.
4. How faithfully committed are we in our marriages?

LOVE IS PERMANENT, v. 6b

- A. “Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.”
 1. This passage speaks of the permanency of love - it is strong as death.
 2. Death is permanent; there is no altering death; there is no coming back from the grave (except when Jesus comes again).
 3. Love is that strong, just as death is permanent so is love.
- B. You know that Scripture speaks of the permanence of marriage.
 1. “Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life which he has given you under the sun” (Eccl. 9:9).
 - a. Solomon doesn’t say, “Go out and find another wife if the one you have doesn’t please you.”
 - b. Solomon says, “Enjoy your entire life with the wife you’ve chosen.”
 2. “Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery” (Mt. 19:9).
 - a. Many people are troubled by this statement. They’ll say, “Well, what about this situation or that situation?”
 - b. Sometimes people find themselves in situations that are difficult, but that does not change the words of Jesus. God always intended that when couples married they would remain married.
 3. A bishop must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2) - Elders are to take the lead in this regard and stay with their wives.
- C. Jill Briscoe wrote this: “My sister and I knew that Mom and Dad enjoyed being married, would stay married, and hoped we’d do the same. Differences they had were kept between them and worked out in the context of the promises they made to each other and to God on their wedding day. There was no option out! As someone has said, when the doors on a marriage are shut and bolted and a fire breaks out, all your time and energy go to putting out the flames.”

LOVE IS PASSIONATE, v. 6c

- A. “Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame.”
- B. There is a flame, a passion, which should exist between a husband and wife.
 1. The Song of Solomon speaks of this passion over and over.
 - a. “You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace” (4:9).
 - b. “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields, and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyard, and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom.

There I will give you my love” (7:10-12).

2. God created us as passionate, sexual individuals, and he expects husbands and wives to be passionate toward one another.
 - a. “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27) - God created us as male and female, as sexual beings.
 - b. God expects husbands and wives to be sexual, to be passionate, toward one another.
 - 1) Notice what Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 7:2-5.
 - 2) Because of the temptation in this world, husbands and wives are not to deprive each other sexually. God does not want spouses depriving the other of sex because of the problems that creates.
- C. There is nothing dirty about the sexual relationship between a husband and wife.
 1. God created that relationship, and God intends for husbands and wives to participate in that relationship.
 2. In fact, God tells us that husbands and wives are not to deprive one another of sexual intimacy, for love is passionate.

LOVE IS PERSEVERING, v. 7a

- A. “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”
- B. We’ve already spoken of the permanent nature of love and of marriage - “love is strong as death.”
 1. But, the nuance here is a little different.
 - a. The point there was that we shouldn’t entertain divorce as a viable option; it shouldn’t be that when we argue, we say, “Well, I’m going back to Momma’s, because I’m not putting up with this anymore.”
 - b. The point here is that when we face difficulties in life that our love continues to grow.
 - 1) A flood isn’t going to be able to come and put out the flame that we feel for one another.
 - 2) In fact I would argue that the more “floods” a couple experiences, the closer together they will be.
 2. Think of a couple biblical examples:
 - a. “Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” (Gen. 24:67). Isaac had been through a flood, the death of his mother, and he found comfort with Rebekah.
 - b. Jacob had to work for Laban 14 years to get Rachel, and we read, “Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years” (Gen. 29:30). Because of all that Jacob had to go through to get Rachel, he loved her and loved her deeply.
- C. True love perseveres.
 1. You know couples who have faced some upheaval in their marriages, and in all likelihood that upheaval brought them closer together, because love perseveres.
 2. Persevering love is that love that says I Will be there “for richer for poorer, for better for worse, in sickness and in health.”
 3. Is that the love you and your spouse share?

LOVE IS PRICELESS, v. 7b

- A. “If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house; it would be utterly scorned “
 1. Solomon says that if a man came and offered you all the money he had for your love, that man would be utterly scorned.
 2. Love is so precious all the money in the world cannot replace it.
- B. Family is by far the most precious thing we have in this life.
 1. “You husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered”

(1 Pet. 3:7).

- a. The word “honor” in Greek literally means “price” or “value.”
 - b. Peter says to us husbands, “Treat your wife as valuable. Treat her as your most prized possession; she’s valuable and priceless.”
 - c. Are we husbands treating our wives as valuable and priceless? Or, do we seldom give them what they need? Do our wives know how valuable they are to us, or do we need to do a better job of showing it?
2. What if someone really came and offered you money for the love you and your spouse have for one another?
- a. If your love so strong that all the money in the world could not pry you and your spouse apart?
 - b. Or, do you have work to do on your marriage?
 - 1) We’re having a marriage enrichment seminar this week-end to help make our love strong and precious. Do you need to attend this week-end to strengthen your marriage?
 - 2) Do you need to come and ask for the prayers of this congregation? Do you need to come to Jesus and be baptized this morning in order that you might begin living a new life at home?