

# The Song of Songs

## Part 2 – Love's Story

### I. The Plot

1. The story of the Song of Songs is the story of love: how it awakens and how it matures, how it is received and how it is returned.
2. Love is a journey, not a destination. God desires that we would love Him as He loves us, but He has no desire to force it on us. If we let Him, He will patiently awaken it in us.
3. The charge is repeatedly given (**2:7, 3:5, 8:4**) – do not awaken love until it so desires. Literally – until *she* so desires. Love wants to be chosen.  
**2:7** Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.
4. The journey takes place over a whole series of events in the maiden's life: times of encounter and times of separation, times of hunger and times of fulfillment, times of pleasure and times of pain, times of resting and times of labor.
5. It begins with a newly awakened hunger and longing; it ends in wholehearted, abandoned love. This is the plotline that God has written for our lives – it is the purpose of the gospel.

### II. The Characters

1. The Beloved [aka Lover, Bridegroom, Solomon, the King]
  1. He is a shepherd, a keeper of vineyards, and a king.
  2. He is clearly the initiator of the romance. At some point before the story begins, He invites her into His chambers (**1:4**) which is what stirs the entire story. Throughout the story, He acts and she reacts [He also at times reacts to her reactions]. He seems at all times in control, while she is left deciding how to respond.
  3. He is a picture of Jesus – our Bridegroom God.
  4. God reveals Himself as the Bridegroom not because He prefers the male gender but because of what it means. The groom historically (and particularly in Jewish culture), and even now traditionally though not always, is the initiator. He is the one who courts, the one who proposes.
  5. God was making clear that the story of our relationship is not about us winning His affection, it's about Him winning ours. We already have His love, and now He wants us to return it.
2. The Maiden [aka Beloved, Bride, Shulamite]
  1. Oddly, we know almost nothing about her in terms of her life prior to meeting her Beloved. It's as if the most important thing about her is the fact that the King desires her and her story prior to meeting her Beloved is not even worth the telling.  
**Psalm 45:10** Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. 11 The King desires your beauty; honor Him, for He is your Lord.
  2. The maturing of her love that is the central theme of the story. Strangely enough the emphasis is not on the King falling in love with the maiden laboring in the vineyards – it is the maiden that has to fall in love with the King.
  3. Though the story was written by Solomon (**1:1**), it's actually the maiden's story. It's told from her point of view and centers around the events and circumstances of her life and the happenings of her heart. Both of them speak at times, but she is the narrator.
  4. She is a picture of the Bride of Christ – God's chosen people on whom He has set His love: Israel, the church or the individual believer [God deals corporately in the same way that He deals individually]. We'll be focusing on the individual.

3. The Daughters of Jerusalem [aka friends, maidens, the virgins]
  1. They are in the story primarily to provide a contrast to the maiden.
  2. They are not by any means enemies of the Beloved or of the maiden [interestingly, this story doesn't really have a villain]. They appreciate Him, and they are supportive of her love for Him, they just don't really understand it.
  3. They are a picture of those whose love is immature. They love the Beloved (**1:4**), but in a different way than the maiden. They are content with loving from a distance and don't yet understand the cry in her heart to seek after Him [not to worry – they will before the end (**6:1**)].
 

**1:4** ...We rejoice and delight in You; we will praise Your love more than wine.

**5:8** O daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you—if you find my Beloved, what will you tell Him? Tell Him I am lovesick. **9** How is your Beloved better than others, most beautiful of women? How is your Beloved better than others, that you charge us so?

### III. The Setting

1. The setting of Song of Songs can be divided into two basic categories: the garden and everywhere else.
2. The garden (vineyard) is one of the most commonly used symbols in the Song of Songs, and its clear meaning is the heart. It is the central arena of the drama of love.
 

**1:5** Dark am I, yet lovely... **6** Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected.

**2:15** Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

**4:12** You are a garden locked up, My sister, My bride

**4:16** Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my Beloved come into His garden and taste its choice fruits

**8:12** But my own vineyard is mine to give; the thousand shekels are for you, O Solomon, and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.
3. The second location where love's story takes place is 'out there'. From the city to the countryside, from the mountains to the desert, they speak of external circumstances, seasons and events that the invitation is extended to develop or to display love through.
 

**2:8** Listen! My Beloved! Look! Here He comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills... **10** My Beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with Me.

**3:2** I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares; I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him.

**4:6** Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.

**7:11** Come, my Beloved, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages. **12** Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened, and if the pomegranates are in bloom—there I will give You my love.

**8:5** Who is this coming up from the desert leaning on her Beloved?

#### IV. The Story

1. Scene 1 (**1:2-2:7**) – A longing awakened and fulfilled
  1. The maiden proclaims her desire for her Beloved (**1:2-1:7**). The story begins with the maiden already having met her Beloved. She was brought into the King's chamber (**1:4**) where she tasted of His love, and now she longs for more.
  2. Her Beloved responds (**1:8-10**). He declares His love and invites her to draw near again.
  3. The maiden and the Beloved recall time together and share their love (**1:11-2:7**).
2. Scene 2 (**2:8-17**) – An invitation missed
  1. The Beloved comes to the maiden (**2:8-15**). This time it is Him calling for her to arise and follow (an answer to her cry in **1:4**).
  2. The maiden stays (**2:16-17**). She rejoices in His love, but declines His invitation.
3. Scene 3 (**3:1-5**) – A night spent seeking
  1. The maiden realizes her mistake (**3:1**) – her Beloved has gone and she misses Him.
  2. The maiden responds (**3:2-3**) – she gets up and starts seeking.
  3. Her Beloved is found (**3:4**)
4. Scene 4 (**3:6-11**) – A coming wedding day
  1. The maiden sees her Beloved coming up out of the desert, looking very different than what she's used to: 'Who is this?...' (**3:6**)
  2. She sees Him coming on their wedding day, though it's clear that the wedding doesn't happen at this point (in fact the wedding still has not come by the end of the story).
  3. At first she's caught off guard by this new look, but after she sees all the love that He has put into their wedding day (**3:9-10**) she responds by calling all the daughters to come and see Him in this light – wearing His wedding crown (**3:11**).
5. Scene 5 (**4:1-5:1**) – A heart of love expressed
  1. The Beloved expresses His boundless love for her as she is (**4:1-4:7**).
  2. Then His desire for her to come up higher – to open to Him still more (**4:8-4:15**).
  3. The maiden says yes to that desire (**4:16**). This marks the shifting point in the story. Up to this point it has been primarily about His love. Now that she has said yes, the focus moves to her love.
  4. The Beloved receives her yes (**5:1**).
6. Scene 6 (**5:2-6:10**) – A love revealed in testing
  1. Another encounter missed (**5:2-5:6**), this time not because she says no, but because He wants to be sought after.
  2. Again she responds (**5:7**), she rises up to seek for Him even though it costs her deeply.
  3. In the midst of this testing she runs into the daughters and gives a declaration of her love (**5:8-16**) that I think surprises her (**5:8**), and certainly surprises the daughters (**6:1**).
  4. Her Beloved reappears to affirm her and praise her for her love (**6:4-9**).
  5. Even the daughters are stunned by how her love has changed her (**6:10**).
7. Scene 7 (**6:11-8:4**) Carried away by love
  1. The maiden finds her love taking her to unexpected places (**6:11-12,7:11-12**).
  2. The Beloved again affirms her love (**7:1-5**) and expresses His desire for more (**7:6-9**).
  3. The maiden expresses her desire to give all her love to her Beloved (**7:9-13**).
  4. The final hurdle – to love openly with abandonment will bring scorn (**8:1-4**).
8. Scene 8 (**8:5-14**) – A triumphant love
  1. The maiden has made her choice – she comes up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved (**8:5**), and again the daughters are stunned.
  2. She expresses her newfound revelation of the consuming nature of love (**8:6-7**).
  3. Her brothers express concern over her abandoned, unguarded heart (**8:8-9**).
  4. The maiden joyously declares that her heart belongs to another (**8:10-12**).

## V. The Moral

1. Love wants to be chosen – to be desired, to be sought after.  
**Acts 17:24** God, who made the world and everything in it... gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us  
**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.  
**Proverbs 25:2** It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
2. Love is a journey – it takes time, and that's what makes it pleasant.  
**Psalms 84:5** Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage. 6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools. 7 They go from strength to strength; Each one appears before God in Zion.
3. Love grows through encounter – time with the Lover of our soul is the surest recipe for lovesickness. The central building blocks of love are hearing it and speaking it.  
**John 17:24** “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”
4. Love's story is interwoven with life's story – it takes place in all that we are and do. It covers the good, the bad and the mundane.  
**Psalms 139:5** You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.
5. Love is consuming – as it grows it not only rides on our life story, it takes over our life story.  
**2 Corinthians 5:14** For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.
6. God has written a similar story for every heart.  
**Psalms 139:14** I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.