Song of the Shulammite

A Study of the Shulammite Maiden
from the
Song of Solomon

“This is my beloved, this is my friend”
Song 5:16 (ESV)
Welcome

Congratulations and Welcome! You have taken on the challenge of studying a book of the Bible that many shy away from, The Song of Solomon.

In my own research and preparation for this study, I found myself experiencing a spectrum of many emotions...from confusion to clarity, back to frustrations and self-doubt. I was often driven to my knees in earnest prayer about its content and meanings. The message of this small book found between Ecclesiastes and Isaiah has drawn more contrasting interpretations than any other book in the Bible. It was only after I gave up trying to fully understand each verse that I saw in its mystery God’s “big-picture” message...

"This is my beloved, this is my friend"
Song 5:16 (ESV)

We will look at numerous verses and their meanings, always keeping in mind God’s big-picture message.

To help you prepare your heart for this study, I want to encourage you to commit to doing a few things:
- Read the Song through carefully each week allowing the scenes and dialogue to come to life in your mind’s eye.
- Pray that God will line up both your mind and heart with His Truth and guide you to accepting His affirmation of your worth and beauty.
- Remember that God wants to use every part of His Word to form your view of Him, of yourself, and of others.

My prayer is that at the end of this study, you may embrace God’s view of your sexuality as being His good design just for you. Further, I pray that whatever the Enemy has done to either undermine or overemphasize your experience in this area of sexuality, that God will affirm the goodness of sexual intimacy in your heart because it is in God’s heart to do so!

Remember, that if you are single, married, or enjoying the fruits of your labor in late life, you are His child and He wants the very best for you! We were all created as sexual beings by His design and He longs to teach us how to embrace this gift. Let’s get started!
We will be using the *English Standard Version ESV* for this study. It is helpful to know this because so many versions interchange several key words. There is a copy of both the ESV and the *Message* in the back of this Workbook for your reference. Both the ESV and the *Message* are placed side-by-side intentionally to give you the freedom of comparing how the *Song* is told from two very different versions. Please note the following words from the *ESV* that describe the voices in the *Song of Solomon*:

**Shulammite:** The Star of the *Song*

**Others:** Daughters of Jerusalem, Daughters of Zion, Friends, Chorus, Virgins, Bridesmaids. Refers to the passages when there is an interruption in certain scenes and where there is an exchange of words between this group and the Shulammite. Some believe this group to be imaginary, others believe this group is literal.

**Beloved:** How the Shulammite refers to Solomon

**My Love/My Bride/My Sister:** How Solomon refers to the Shulammite

**Lecture Notes**
There are no fill in the blanks! I have found that many ladies became more concerned with getting the correct words in the blanks than listening to the teaching. I don’t want that to be a distraction for you. You are provided bullet points of main ideas that will be presented allowing you to take notes on those points you find are most interesting! 😊

**Reality Check**
There will ALWAYS be a “Reality Check”. Why? The *Song of Solomon* teaches God’s ideal for the perfect expression of our sexuality, however, we live in a broken world. One of the most glorious yet potentially devastating aspects of a woman is her sexuality. The self-image and the ability for a woman to sexually give and receive unconditionally is a prime target for the Enemy. No assumptions are made that discount the struggles many women face in the area of their sexuality.

**Application**
I appreciate a study when there is some kind of personal application to my life, how about you? While many passages in the Bible are written to a specific audience, God wants to use His entire Word to teach how He views us, how He views others, and how we need to view Him. We will look at the *Song* with this personal application in mind.

**Table Discussion**
We were created for connection! Sitting at a round-table with other women was by design for this study. No rows of chairs allowed 😊. The discussions will be of a general nature so don’t worry about being uncomfortable...we won’t put you on the spot with a personal question!
Please participate and share as much as you want to, or just sit back and take in the wisdom of your group. I would ask that you return to the same table over the 5 week study which provides for cohesiveness within the group.

**Group Prayer**

There is a great need for prayer on the topic of sex and sexuality. The Enemy has either falsely exalted sex as the ultimate expression of our love for another or he has degraded it to the level of animal instinct and perversion. Each week your table will be asked to spend time in prayer for a specific group of people, beginning with yourself and one another!

**Looking Ahead**

**Reading**

The “big picture” of this book will come more into focus as you read through it each week. Allow the scenes and dialogues to come to life in your mind’s eye as you work towards overcoming any false view of sexual intimacy that the Enemy has created. Ask the Holy Spirit to line up both your mind and your heart with His Truth as you read through the verses and chapters. Regardless of how close or how far your beliefs and/or experiences of intimate sex compare with the ideal relationship shared in the *Song*, know that the Lord wants to use every part of His Word to lead you towards experiencing Him more!

**NOTE:** Yellow and Pink highlighters and a red ink-pen are provided for suggested use.

**Journaling**

There are those women who have been journaling since childhood and then there are those women who have never tried. Allow me to encourage you to pick up a pen and write over the next 5 weeks. Journal questions will be provided, but only as thought-provokers. The specific questions do not need to be answered, but I would like you to write, write, and write. The intent of journaling though this study is to provide an outlet for you. Share what’s swirling around in your mind or what might be hurting your heart. If you find there is no need for either, then journal about your hopes and dreams for yourself or for those you hold dear.

**Fun Facts**

This study will have us laughing and crying. With all the extreme emotions, I thought it would be fun to just read some interesting points about the *Song of Solomon*. Besides, in preparation for this study, I kept finding these facts and couldn’t fit them all in to the lecture material! Enjoy the read!

**Index**

Wonder what that word or phrase REALLY means? Here is your chance to find out! I bumped into a pretty exhaustive list of phrases I thought would be helpful. I also added a list of my own word studies. Keep in mind that there are still numerous disagreements regarding these definitions. As Freud once said, “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar” 😊

**Disclaimer:** Please note that at any time this printed material could change. This study is a first-run which means it is a “work-in-progress”. I put no limits on God’s direction which allows for last minute changes and potential handouts 😊
Song of the Shulammite
Summer Study 2017

Schedule:

9:30-10:00 Connect and Refresh/children dropped off (doors open at 9:45)
10:00-10:15 Corporate Worship/Opening Prayer
10:15-11:00 Lesson
11:00-11:10 Q/A
11:10-11:30 Table Discussion Questions
Table Prayer
Week One: Self
Week Two: Singleness
Week Three: Marriages
Week Four: Family/Friends
Week Five: Church

Closing Prayer

Week One Meet the Shulammite Maiden
Table Q: How/when did you learn where babies come from?

Week Two Hear Her Voice of Desire
Table Q: In what ways might it be helpful for all Christians, married or single, young or older, to seek a biblical perspective on sexual desire?

Week Three Hear Her Voice of Choice
Table Q: How do the Shulammite’s choices differ from what is promoted in our current culture in regards to singleness? Marriage? How do you see her choices as ones that celebrated God’s ideal for the expression of her sexuality, especially as she aged?

Week Four Hear Her Voice of Wisdom
Table Q: How does the wisdom of the Shulammite differ from the wisdom of the world? What is the best evidence you have seen in the Shulammite that has demonstrated godly wisdom?

Week Five Live Her Legacy, Leave a Legacy
Table Q: How can we keep this conversation going with friends? Spouse? Children? Grandchildren?
How can we live her legacy? How can we leave a legacy?
Introduction:

Meet the Shulammite Maiden:
Background on the *Song of Solomon*: Song of songs!

Book of Wisdom:

Structure:

Author:

Audience:

Setting:

Voices:

Symbolism:

Interpretations:

*Message:*

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**Discussions Qs:**
1. How would you summarize what you already know about the *Song*?
2. What has been your previous impressions of the book?
3. How/when did you learn where babies come from?

**Table Prayer:** Small Group and Self
Looking Ahead

Read the Song this Week:
In one sitting, read through all of the Song. Don’t worry about anything you don’t understand – just keep reading to get an overview of this short book as a whole. From this read, what are your strongest impressions of the book? Why?

Journal Reflections:
1. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul says that all scripture is given to (1) teach us, (2) rebuke us, (3) correct us, and (4) train us in righteousness. As you consider these verses, journal about which area(s) you want to ask God to speak to you as you study the Song and the Shulammite Maiden?
2. Whether you are single or married, divorced or widowed, allow yourself to reach back and review your first introductions to sex. Journal about what you remember and how your views and/or your experiences have evolved. Are there areas that are tender?

Pray:
Please don’t let this study be an exercise in gaining knowledge alone; rather, ask God what He wants you to notice as you read though the Song. Ask Him to show you why He allowed this book to be part of His Holy Word. Finally, seek God’s face as you consider whether or not your view of sex is in line with His desire for you. Continue throughout this week to pray for your group members and yourself.

Questions?
Please feel free to submit any question(s) you may have in the box provided at the entrance and we will respond the following week

-We waste time looking for the perfect lover,
   Instead of creating the perfect love-
   Tom Robbins
Journal Reflections
Week One

Meet the Shulammite Maiden

- In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul says that all scripture is given to (1) teach us, (2) rebuke us, (3) correct us, and (4) train us in righteousness. As you consider these verses, journal about which area(s) you want to ask God to speak to you as you study the Song and the Shulammite Maiden?

I am the Rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys
Song 2:1 ESV
Journal Reflections
Week One

Meet the Shulammite Maiden

- Whether you are single or married, divorced or widowed, allow yourself to reach back and review your first introductions to sex. Journal about what you remember and how your views and/or your experiences have evolved. Are there areas that are tender?

My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand!
Song 5:10 ESV
Song of the Shulammite
Week Two
Lecture Notes

Hear Her Voice of Desire

Story:

“Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamom—he lent out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. 8:11 (ESV)

Singleness:
Embrace Desire without Guilt or Shame (Song 1:2-4, 2:4-7)

Marriage:
Awaken Desire without Inhibitions (Song 4:16-5:1)
Later Life:
Remember Desire when faced with Challenges (Song 8:5b)

Reality Check:

Application:

Discussions Q:
1. What is the difference between sexuality and sexual desire?
2. How does the secular world view sexuality and sexual desire? The church?
3. In what ways might it be helpful for all Christians, married or single, young or older, to seek a biblical perspective on sexual desire?

Table Prayer: Singleness
Looking Ahead

Read the Song this Week:
In one sitting, read through all of the Song. Getting accustomed to the Song’s intense use of metaphors becomes easier as you learn to accept it as a poem put to music. Ask yourself if you are understanding it better. Reflect on the verses or passages that seem to resonate with you. Which verses do you believe God may be using to teach, rebuke, or correct you?

Journal Reflections:
1. What were some of the messages you received about sexuality and sexual desire as a child growing up from your parents? Friends? Your church?

2. The Shulammite Maiden speaks without embarrassment of the passion she feels towards her Beloved. What values and beliefs do you seem to align with on how the Shulammite longed passionately for her Beloved? What values and beliefs seem to differ?

3. What has been your experience with sexual desire in your current season of life?

Pray:
Ask God to line up His truth with both your heart and mind as you read through the Song each week. Also ask the Lord to guide you in accepting His affirmation of your womanhood, your beauty and your worth. Continue your group prayer by remembering to pray for our single sisters.

Questions?
Please feel free to submit any question(s) you may have in the box provided at the entrance and we will respond the following week

-Sex is Emotion in Motion-
Mae West
Journal Reflections
Week Two

Hear Her Voice of Desire

- What were some of the messages you received about sexuality and sexual desire as a child growing up from your parents? Friends? Your church?

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it
Song 8:7 ESV
Journal Reflections
Week Two

Hear Her Voice of Desire

- The Shulammite Maiden speaks without embarrassment of the passion she feels towards her Beloved. What values and beliefs do you seem to align with on how the Shulammite longed passionately for her Beloved? What values and beliefs seem to differ?

- What has been your experience with sexual desire in your current season of life that God has you in now?

Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples,
For I am sick with love
Song 2:5 ESV
Song of the Shulammite
Week Three
Lecture Notes

Hear Her Voice of Choice

Single:
Choose to Restrain (Song 4:12,3:5)

Married:
Choose to Stay Awake (Song 5)
Later Life:
Choose to Renew (*Song 7:1-10*)

Reality Check:

Application:

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**Table Q:**
1. What does our culture teach on choices regarding managing our sexual activities?
2. How do the Shulammite’s choices differ from what is promoted in our current culture in regards to singleness? Marriage?
3. How do you see her choices as ones that celebrated God’s ideal for the expression of her sexuality, especially as she aged?

**Table Prayer:** Marriages
Looking Ahead

**Read the Song this Week**
In one sitting, read through all of the *Song*. What verses or passages have you identified with that are teaching you something you believe God wants you to learn? Mark those verses with a **yellow highlighter**. What verses or passages seem to cause you some discomfort? Underline those with a **red ink-pen**.

**Journal Reflections:**
In our lesson we talked about two types of experiences in life.
1. Ones that we choose.
2. Ones that choose us.
Journal about significant sexual choices, whether you made them or ones you had no control over, that have impacted your life. Have you seen God work in these experiences? How has God used these choices/experiences to reveal Himself to you? Are you still struggling to see God in some of these experiences?

**Pray:**
Thank God for any new insight He has given you as you read and study the *Song of Solomon*. Ask God to give you clarity on the verses you have underlined in red. Seek an understanding from the Holy Spirit as to why the verse or the passage cause you discomfort. Ask God to reveal how He has worked in your life regarding sexual choices: good or bad, and how He is currently working in your life during this study and your private journaling time.
Continue your group prayer this week by remembering to pray for marriages.

**Questions?**
*Please feel free to submit any question(s) you may have in the box provided at the entrance and we will respond the following week*

-Everyone says that forgiveness is a lovely idea, Until they have something to forgive-
C.S. Lewis
Journal Reflections

Week Three

Hear Her Voice of Choice

- In our lesson we talked about two types of experiences in life.
  Ones that we choose.
  Ones that choose us.

Journal about significant sexual choices, whether ones you made or ones you had no control over, that have impacted your life. Have you seen God work in these experiences? How has God used these choices/experiences to reveal Himself to you? Are you still struggling to see God in some of these experiences?

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem...
That you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases
Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4 ESV
Journal Reflections (cont’)
Week Three

Hear Her Voice of Choice

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow!
Song 4:16 ESV
Song of the Shulammite
Week Four
Lecture Notes

Hear Her Voice of Wisdom

Single:
Loving Wisely: Beginnings of Love  (Song 2:8-3:4, 8:4)

Married:
Tending Wisely: Building of Love  (Song 5:10-16, 6:1-3)
Later Life: Living Wisely: Deepening of Love  (Song 7:11-8:14)

Reality Check:

Application: (Ps. 14:1)

Discussion Q:
1. How does the wisdom of the Shulammite differ from the wisdom of the world? What is the best evidence you have seen in the Shulammite that has demonstrated godly wisdom?
2. How has this study, so far, affected your perspective on the wisdom of marital intimacy?
3. Since all of Scripture testifies ultimately of Christ, in what way, if any, does Jesus come more into focus for you in this book?

Table Prayer:  Family/Friends
Looking Ahead

Read the Song this Week
In one sitting, read through all of the Song. Ask yourself what verses or passages you would feel comfortable sharing with your friend, your husband, your child, or your grandchild. Mark those with a pink highlighter. Review the verses and passages that you have previously identified as those you are learning from and those that cause you some uneasiness. Have you been able to move forward with those passages you struggle with?

Journal Reflections:
1. Considering again the verses in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, where Paul says that all scripture is given to (1) teach us, (2) rebuke us, (3) correct us, and (4) train us in righteousness, what areas has God spoken to you about in your singleness? In your marriage? In late life?
2. What are some areas in the relationships that you currently have with friends, a special guy, or your spouse, that you feel God is directing you to change? To improve on?

Pray:
Ask God to impress names of family and friends that might benefit from a sharing of the Song. Seek His guidance as you first confirm that He is leading you to share, and then ask God to create a time and place where you can share. If God is not leading you in this direction, spend some time in prayer asking Him to reveal why He orchestrated your presence in this study. Continue your group prayer time remembering to pray for your family and friends this week.

Questions?
Please feel free to submit any question(s) you may have in the box provided at the entrance and we will respond the following week.

-The grass is greener where you water it-
Neil Barringham
Journal Reflections
Week Four

Hear Her Voice of Wisdom

- Considering again the verses in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, where Paul says that all scripture is given to (1) teach us, (2) rebuke us, (3) correct us, and (4) train us in righteousness, what areas has God spoke to you about in your singleness? In your marriage? In late life?

Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards
Song 2:15 ESV
Journal Reflections

Week Four

Hear Her Voice of Wisdom

- What are some areas in the relationships that you currently have with friends, a special guy, or your spouse, that you feel God is directing you to change? To improve on?

I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me
Song 7:10 ESV
**Song of the Shulammite**

Week Five
Lecture Notes

*Live Her Legacy, Leave a Legacy*

God Purposed Marital Intimacy to be “...Very Good...”
*Genesis 1:31*

**God Purposed Sex for P_______________**
*Song 2:5*

**God Purposed Sex for P_______________**
*Song of songs!

**God Purposed Sex for P_______________**
*Song 5:1, 16, 6:3*

**God Purposed Sex for P_______________**
*Song 6:4-12 1 Cor. 7:1-5*

**God Purposed Sex for P_______________**
*Gen. 1:31, Song 5:16, Eph. 5:31-32*
Live Her Legacy
“...sing to Him a new song...” Ps. 33:3

Leave a Legacy
Singles: Friends, Family
Marrieds: Children
Late Life: Grandchildren
Beyond...

Ben Patterson (2005), says it best when he writes in *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*:

> What are the theological foundations for this celebration of sex, and what does it have to do with the glory of God?
> The gigantic secret of the joy of sex is this:
> Sex is good because the God who created sex is good.
> And God is glorified greatly when we receive His gift with thanksgiving and enjoy it the way He meant it to be enjoyed.
> The reason we like sex so much is that it is a little bit like the God who created it.
> Therefore, the more sex is enjoyed in ways of redolent of its Creator, the better sex is for all involved
> (pg. 55).

*And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was... Very Good!*
*Genesis 1:31 (ESV)*

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**Discussion Q:**
1. How can we keep the conversation going with friends? Spouse? Children? Grandchildren?
2. How can we live out the Shulammite’s legacy? What might be some ideas on how we can leave our own legacy?

**Table Prayer:** Our church, churches across America and around the world.
Looking Ahead

Read the Song this Week
In one sitting, read through all of the Song one last time (for now). Then re-read all the verses and passages you highlighted and underlined. Commit to memorize at least two of those passages, or more, depending on how God directs you. Mark your calendar one month out with a reminder to return to the Song of Solomon and read through it once again.

Journal Reflections:
1. Ask yourself, “How can I be a Shulammite Maiden to my friends and my family?” What might be some hindrances? What steps can I take to overcome any barriers?
2. If someone asked you to sum up this book and explain its value in a nutshell, what would you say?

Pray:
Thank God for His Word that gives you direction in every area of your life! Ask God to provide you with a thirst to return to the Song of Solomon as often as you need to. Further, ask Him to allow the Truth of this biblical teaching to sink into your inner convictions so you will be increasingly able to act on this Truth as a natural way of living. Finally, ask God to give you the courage to share this Truth with others as the Holy Spirit leads. Continue your prayer time remembering to pray for our church and churches across America and around the world.

Be a Shulammite Maiden!

Return, return, O Shulammite,
Return, return, that we may look upon You!
“Song of Songs”
6:1 (ESV)
Journal Reflections
Week Five

Live Her Legacy, Leave a Legacy

- Answer the question, “How can I be a Shulammite Maiden to my friends and my family?” What might be some hindrances? What steps can I take to overcome any barriers?

My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies
Song 2:16 ESV
Journal Reflections (cont’)
Week Five

Live Her Legacy, Leave a Legacy

❖ If someone asked you to sum up this book and explain its value in a nutshell, what would you say?

O you, who dwell in the gardens,
with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it!
Song 8:13 ESV
The Song was considered such an important book in Hebrew culture that, on the eighth day of Passover, it was read each year.

There is only one mention of “the Lord” in the Song and only found in the English Standard Version ESV (8:6)

Other major religious words in the Hebrew vocabulary are not found in the Song that are found elsewhere in all the books of the Old Testament.

There are several books in the Bible that did not receive automatic acceptance into the Canon of Scripture by Church Councils. The Song was one of them due to its erotic element.

The Song of Solomon is part of the third section of the Hebrew Bible classified as “Wisdom”. The Song has 117 verses broken into 8 Chapters.

There is an unusually large number of uncommon words used in the Song. Of the 470 different Hebrew words the Song contains, which is a large number for such a small book, 47 words only occur in the Song (not found anywhere else in the Old Testament), and of the 47, many occur only one time in the Song.

The Song is not a single composition; instead, it is a collection of individual love poems gathered together into a book.

The Shulammite speaks 53% of the time in the Song. Solomon speaks 34% of the time. The Chorus speaks 13% of the time.

When the Daughters of Jerusalem speak (Chorus), they speak only to the Shulammite.

The first words in the Song are about first love: The word “love” is used 10 times in the first chapter.
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God could have used medical terms or slang when speaking of sex. But medical terms cause a sense of awkwardness, and we react negatively to slang. So God avoided both by expressing these delicate things in the language of poetry and symbols. Symbolism says more than medical or slang ever could, but without creating awkwardness or evoking negative reactions

(Joseph Dillow in *Solomon on Sex* pg. 9)

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**General Words Used Throughout the Song:**

**Apples, pears and pomegranates:** Symbols for sexual love. All considered rich in color, juicy, ripe, and seed-filled. Used as analogous to sexual organs and the fruitfulness of the human body.

**Apple Tree:** Considered the Tree of Love.

**Banquet Hall:** A common oriental expression for the bridal chamber.

**Beloved/Lover:** Believed to refer to either King Solomon or the Shulammite, depending on what translation. It means “peace” or “peaceful”.

**Daughters of Jerusalem, Daughters of Zion, Friends, Chorus, Virgins, Bridesmaids, Others:** Refers to the passages when there is an interruption in certain scenes where there is an exchange of words between this group and the Shulammite. Some believe this group to be imaginary, others believe this group is literal.

**Fruit:** In extra-biblical literature, fruit is sometimes equated with the male genitals or semen.

**Lily of the Valley:** A beautiful red flower found in Palestine.

**Love:** The Hebrew word for love is *dodem*, which often refers to sexual love. Eros would be the companion Greek word used in the NT.

**Purified Oil:** This was highly prized in the Hebrew culture.

**Raisin Cakes:** Highly regarded love enhancers in Solomon’s time. After the Ark of the Covenant was brought safely back to Jerusalem and the nation was at peace again, King David, after he had finished burnt and peace offerings to God in thanksgiving for the safe arrival of the Ark...distributed to all the people a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins and then he sent each person back to his own home (2 Sam. 6:19). A cake of raisin was considered an aphrodisiac. The raisins were considered to be “seeds”. In essence; David was sending his
soldiers home to have a nice dinner and then have good and productive sex with their wives. Raisin cakes were used also in fertility rites by pagans. (Hosea 3:1)

**Rose of Sharon:** Sharon is a region between Tabor and the Sea of Galilee in the neighborhood of Nazareth where Jesus grew up. The *Rose of Sharon* was a flesh-colored meadow flower with a leafless stem which appeared by the thousands in the warmer regions. It was very common.

**Sister:** The Hebrew meaning of the word may indicate sibling, but also a person who has a very close and lasting relationship such as a bride.

**Spring:** Used to describe a man’s sexuality.

**Well:** Used to describe a women’s sexuality.

**Wine:** In the Hebrew culture, every joyful banquet of celebration is referred to as “wine”.

**Additional Word Phases within Verses:**

1:6 “my own vineyard” – her body.

1:9 “like my mare” – at that time in the Orient the horse was not a beast of burden, but the cherished companion of kings.

1:12 “at his table” – banqueting was done in a reclining position.

1:12 “my perfume spread its fragrance” – The perfume is nard, or spikenard, a very expensive perfume or ointment from a plant native to India. Origen, one of the great fathers of the early church, observed that the actual spikenard plant emits its scent only when its hairy stem is rubbed, thus hinting at some erotic connotations.

1:14 “henna” – a fragrant bush which grows and intertwines itself among the vines in a vineyard.

1:15 “dove” – symbol of innocence, gentleness and purity – indicating that the beloved was a virgin.

2:3 “shade,” “fruit,” “apple tree” – all ancient erotic symbols. Extra-biblical literature uses “fruit” and “apples” as a symbol of the male genitals, indicating here an oral genital caress.

2:5 “ raisin cakes” were used as a religious ritual in fertility rites. The cakes were molded in the form of a female goddess. Along with apples, raisin cakes came to be viewed as an aphrodisiac.

2:5 “lovesick” – overcome with sexual passion.
2:6 “embrace” – fondle.

2:7 “Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases” - The experience of lovemaking is too powerful to be aroused before the couple have committed themselves in marriage.

2:9 “gazelle or young stag” – suggests sexual virility as gazelles and stags in the spring.

2:16 “feeds among the lilies” – refers to kissing some tender part of each other’s bodies.

2:17 “until the day breaks” – she wants it to last until the morning.

2:17 “upon the mountains of Bether” – run your hands and mouth over the contours of my body.

3:6-11 The groom’s wedding procession. Solomon is a kind of code name for the lover as Shulamite (see 6:13, i.e., “Solomoness”) is for the beloved. The picture of the processional with its entourage and trappings is hyperbolic, deliberately exaggerated to heighten the significance of the event. Behind this poem may lie a royal wedding song from Solomon’s time which helped to shape its extravagant descriptions of royal largesse expended in the services of love.

3:11 “crown” – In ancient times garlands were worn in weddings and the bride and groom were called queen and king.

4:3 “temples” – Describes more generally the side of the face. Hence “cheeks” is meant. Her cheeks are compared with the rosy, roundness of “pomegranate” halves.

4:4 “neck like tower of David” – erect and queenly carriage.

4:4 “shields” – tiered or layered coins or ornaments of precious metal that adorned her neck as she walked in public. The coins or ornaments were her dowry.

4:5 “two fawns,” “twins of a gazelle” – The reference is to the dorcus gazelle, an animal about two feet high at the shoulders, and a marvel of lightness, beauty, and grace. The gentle beauty of its eyes was proverbial. The attractiveness of the gazelle invited petting and affectionate touching. One of the most common associations with the gazelle was that it was a delicacy served at Solomon’s table (1 Kings 4:23). They are delicious to eat. As gazelles were warm and affectionate, so was the beloved as a sexual partner.

4:10 “wine” – symbol of supreme pleasure, or of a celebration.

4:10 “the scent of your perfumes” – those she naturally produces.

4:11 “your lips drip with honey” – speaks of the sweetness of her kisses.
4:11 “honey and milk are under your tongue” – points to the depth and fullness of the kissing.

4:12 “garden” – The garden refers to her vulva and vagina. When the lover says it is locked, he is saying it has never been entered; she is a virgin. Thus to describe his wife’s vulva as a garden is to say it is beautiful to behold, like flowered gardens of the East.

4:12 “a spring shut up” – its precious liquid is reserved for private use. Because water was scarce in the East, owners of fountains sealed the fountain with clay which quickly hardened in the sun. Thus, a walled fountain was shut against all impurity, no one could get water out of it except its rightful owner.

4:13 “orchard of pomegranates” – depicts the beauty and colortone of her vulva which abounds in delights to his senses.

4:13 “pleasant fruits” – Her vagina is a source of sexual refreshment for him to experience. As a carefully cultivated Eastern garden yields delicious “fruit”, so his bride’s garden is a source of delicious fruit (sexual pleasure) when “cultivated.” Furthermore, it is a source of fertility. To make love with her is like entering Paradise. Her pleasures are secret and hidden from all but her husband – the rightful owner of the garden.

4:15 “rivers of water” – One inference of this picture of abundant moisture is that her body is prepared by its own secretions for the long-awaited consummation.

4:16 “Awake, O north wind and come, O south!” – The north wind brings clear weather and removes clouds, and the south brings warmth and moisture. When they blew across a garden in Palestine, coolness and sultriness, cold and heat, would promote the growth of the garden. She is asking her spouse to stimulate her garden with caresses to promote the growth of her sexual passion.

4:16 “Let my beloved come to his garden” – The Hebrew word (literally, “enter” or “come into”) is used frequently of sexual penetration (Genesis 16:2).

5:1 “I have come into...have gathered....have eaten...have drunk” – The past tenses are a clear clue to what has happened. The invitation has been responded to in every detail and more. The fullness of covenant-love (“my sister, my spouse”) has been experienced. The true marriage feast has been completed.

5:1 “wine and milk” – readily understood in that culture as fertility symbols.

5:2-6 These verses can be read on one level as the lover coming and knocking on the door of his beloved’s house. But many commentators see an underlying meaning. The word “open” is twice used without door in Hebrew as object. “Head covered with dew,” “hand by the latch,” “feet” and “hand” (which can be euphemisms for genitals) — all of these point to double meanings.
5:3 There is a difference in intensity between the lover’s ardor (v. 2) and the beloved’s reluctance to inconvenience herself and respond to his overture (v. 3). She tries to put off his advances.

5:3 “feet” – often a euphemism for genitals.

5:4 “hand by the latch” – “Latch” is literally keyhole. It was the ancient custom to secure the door of a house by a cross bar or by a bolt, which at night was fastened with a little button or pin. In the upper part of the door, there was a round hole (a keyhole) through which any person from the outside might thrust his arm and remove the bar, unless the hole was sealed up. “Hand” is often a euphemism for genitals.

5:4 “my heart yearned for him” – her mood changes.

5:6 “my beloved had turned away and was gone” – too late.

6:11 “garden,” “vine,” “pomegranates” – all occur most frequently in sections where the man is speaking. He uses them to paint poetic pictures of the woman’s erogenous zones.

6:13 “Shulammit” – a feminine form of Solomon and, therefore, part of the royal motif which threads through the song.

7:2 “navel” – incorrect translation. While the Hebrew word could take that meaning, it is generally translated today as “vulva.”

7:2 “round goblet” – The Hebrew for “round goblet” should be rendered “a bowl in the shape of a half moon.” The allusion to the female genitals is obvious.

7:2 “heap of wheat” – In Syria, the perfect skin was considered to be that which could be compared in color to the yellowish-white of wheat after it had been threshed and winnowed.

7:8 “climb the palm trees” – To “climb the palm tree” had a special meaning. In the Ancient Near East the artificial fertilization of the female palm tree flowers by the male palm tree flowers has been practiced from the earliest times. The male and female flowers are born on separate trees in clusters among the leaves. In order to fertilize the female tree, one must climb the male tree and get some of its flowers. One then ascends the female tree and ties among its flowers, a bunch of the pollen-bearing male flowers. Thus, to climb the palm tree is to fertilize it.

7:8 “I will take hold of its branches” – The man says he will take hold of her branches, i.e. fruit stalks of the date palm – her breasts. Now he changes images from date palms to grape clusters for breasts, which seems more appropriate. Grapes swell and become increasingly round and elastic as they ripen, similar to the female breasts when sexually aroused.
7:12 “vine has budded,” “grape blossoms are open,” “pomegranates are in bloom” – all of these terms are capable of a literal, horticultural meaning, yet each is used in the Song as an image with erotic implications.

7:13 “mandrakes” – considered to be an aphrodisiac in the ancient world.

8:6 “seal over your heart..seal on your arm” – The seal of a king was commonly a sign of his ownership. It signified something of great value. She desires to be set as a seal on her husband’s heart — the place of his affection. To be set like a seal on his arm is to be in the place of his strength or protection.

8:10 “breasts were like towers” – The towers on the walls of the city were the first things an enemy saw. But because of the ability of the tower to provide a defense for the wall and city, the sight of those towers discouraged an attack. In a similar way, the beloved’s fully developed breasts, ready for love, were inaccessible. She was impressive to look at, like the towers of the city. But any enemy of her virtue was quickly repelled.

8:8 The brothers’ strategy depends on the sister’s character. If she is a wall – impervious to the advances of men – they will simply encourage and praise her for her virtuous stand. Just as a battlement of silver increases the beauty of the wall and attractiveness of the city, they will increase her good character by adding to her dowry (which was worn around the neck). There is, however, another possibility. It could be that their sister will turn out to be a door – easily entered, easily seduced. Should that prove to be the case, they will take a different approach. They will barricade her with planks of cedar. In other words, they will be very strict with her and protect her from men’s advances.

8:11,12 “my own vineyard is before me” – The man probably speaks this. In these verses he compares his vineyard, i.e. his wife, with Solomon’s vineyard at Baal Hamon. His bride was to him a vineyard beyond price.

8:14a “make haste, be like a gazelle or a young stag” – Hurry up! Even though we are old, return to your youth and be like you used to be!

8:14b “mountains of spices” – She sees her body as a veritable mountain range alive with fragrances. Thus she invites her husband to make love.

Adapted from New Life Community Church Stafford, VA
Keep the Conversation Going
Recommendations for Bible Studies and Personal Growth

While this is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, it is a good place to start! Touching on both small group studies and personal reading, these resources will provide a base for continued conversations and personal growth in the areas of sexuality and marital intimacy. Single or married, looking for that special someone or retiring with that lifelong friend, there’s something for everyone on this list. Commit to keeping the conversation going by joining in with your voice!

Small Group Bible Studies

Singles
Dance of the Sexes: Celebrating the Soul in Single Sexuality
Sexual Wholeness CASE Video Studies
http://www.sexualwholeness.com/case-courses.html

Married Women
Passion Pursuit
Linda Dillow and Juli Slattery
Moody Publishers

Couples
Intimacy Ignited: Conversations Couple to Couple
Dr. Joseph and Linda Dillow/Dr. Peter and Lorraine Pintus
NavPress

Books

Singles; All Ages
Soul Virgins: Redefining Single Sexuality
Doug Rosenau and Michael Todd Wilson
Sexual Wholeness Resources

Engaged and Newlywed Couples
Getting Your Sex Life off to a Great Start
Clifford and Joyce Penner
Thomas Nelson Publishers
Couples
Total Intimacy
Drs. Rosenau and Neel
Sexual Wholeness Resources

Sex Facts for the Family
Clifford and Joyce Penner
Word Publishing

The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment
Clifford and Joyce Penner
Thomas Nelson

A Celebration of Sex After 50
James and Carolyn Childerston, Douglas Rosenau
Nelson Books

-A happy relationship is a long conversation that always seems too short-
Andre Maurois
(1885-1967)
References Used for this Study


Holy Bible translations referenced for this study:


**NOTE:** All these resources are recommended for further individual study
The Rose

Some say love, it is a river, that drowns the tender reed
Some say love, it is a razor, that leaves your soul to bleed
Some say love, it is a hunger, an endless aching need
I say love, it is a flower, and you, its only seed

It’s the heart afraid of breaking, that never learns to dance
It’s the dream afraid of waking, that never takes the chance
It’s the one who won’t be taking, who cannot seem to give
And the soul afraid of dying, that never learns to live

When the night has been too lonely and the road has been too long
And you think that love is only for the lucky and the strong
Just remember in the winter, far beneath the bitter snows
Lies the seed, that with the Son's love in the spring becomes the rose

“...sing to Him a new song...”

Ps. 33:3 (ESV)
Song of the Shulammite

Small Group Contact List

...And let us consider how to stir up one another
to love and good works,
not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another...

Hebrews 10:25

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Bear one another’s burdens,  
And so fulfill the law of Christ  
*Galatians 6:2*
Thank-you for your participation in the study, *Song of the Shulammite*. We would appreciate your comments, suggestions and candid responses to this evaluation. We are interested in hearing about your experience as we look at making adjustments for future studies.

Please circle the numerical answer that best reflects your experience in response to the following questions. Also, please write any comments or suggestions that you feel would be helpful.

1. **Did you feel that there was enough time given to our Corporate Worship?**
   - Not Enough
   - Adequate
   - Good

   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

   Comments/Suggestions: ____________________________________________________________

2. **Did you feel that there was enough time given to the teaching of this study?**
   - Not Enough
   - Adequate
   - Good

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   Comments/Suggestions: ____________________________________________________________

3. **Were the workbooks and handouts that were provided helpful and easy to follow?**
   - Lacking
   - Adequate
   - Beneficial

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   Comments/Suggestions: ____________________________________________________________

4. **Was the teaching style of lecturing helpful in your learning experience?**
   - Lacking
   - Adequate
   - Beneficial

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   Comments/Suggestions: ____________________________________________________________

5. **How would you rate the teaching/leadership/group facilitators of this study?**
   (Knowledge of the subject, sensitivity, able to connect with the group)
   - Lacking
   - Adequate
   - Good

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   Comments/Suggestions: ____________________________________________________________
6. Was the subject matter presented in a way that you could identify with?

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7. Did you find the small group discussion time beneficial?

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8. Were the suggested follow-throughs of reading the Song weekly and journaling helpful?

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9. Did the study meet your expectations?

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10. Would you recommend this study to your friends?

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Other Comments and Suggestions:
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Thank-you for joining us in studying one of the most beautiful books in all of inspired Scripture! Our prayer is that you gained a positive portrayal of God’s good design for sexual intimacy and His intentions for this gift. Whether you are single, married, or living out your retirement, His gift remains constant and affirms your womanhood, your worth, and your beauty in His eyes!