



Sermon Series: The Best Song

Song of Songs 2:8-3:5 "The Best Wedding (night)"

Pastor Dillon Barber: July 12th, 2015

Big Idea: God designed the best intimacy for a husband and wife to enjoy.

This is a last chance warning to all of the parents who may have brought their parents into a service this morning. This will be a parental guidance required passage of scripture that we will be discussing so if you have not spent some time with your young adult or student preparing them for this topic I would encourage you to send them to Sunday school or to student ministries. I promise not to discuss anything that is not in the Bible, however, I want to give everyone fare warning that we will be talking about adult subject matters.

One other quick note before we begin. Don't miss next week. My friend Drew Berryessa will be coming to talk to us about marriage and the issues of homosexuality. Drew has been counseling people who are struggling with same sex attraction for the last 10 years at the Portland Fellowship. Now he is traveling across the nation teaching at churches and equipping on the subject of homosexuality in a biblical and grace filled way. Sunday night at 6:00pm we will be back in the worship center for a workshop and Q&A session as well. Lastly, Drew has made him self available for some time on Monday and Tuesday to meet with anyone who would like some counseling in this area, either for you or your child or family member. Call the office and talk to Jennifer to schedule an appointment.

Ok, we are ready. I can't think of a better time in the history of our nation to be talking about the beauty of sexual intimacy between a husband and wife. Perhaps if the church as a whole had done a better job talking about it for the last few hundred years our culture wouldn't be in the mess that it is now, but there is no time like the present. Right?

As we continue to our summer series on the Song of Solomon, today we get to look at the wedding day, and more importantly the wedding night where we will see that God designed the best intimacy for a husband and wife to enjoy together.

Turn in your Bibles to Song of Solomon chapter 3, verse 6 and let's watch the wedding procession: [Read 6-11]. A Healthy marriage begins with healthy people.

What is going on? First of all, Solomon the groom is speaking here as the narrator of the event. As if he is watching the wedding procession approach. It was the tradition at that time for the groom and his family to walk to the home of the bride and escort her and her family back to his home or their new home for the wedding feast. The feast would then last a week or more. So that is what they are doing now, marching up out of the desert into Lebanon to the home of the bride.

Solomon describes his group as they approach. Perfumed with myrrh and incense, they smell good right, no stinky travelers. Surrounded by 60 of the mighty men of Israel, all of them armed with swords, ready to defend the wedding party at any moment of day or night. These men are powerful and strong. Solomon's carriage or litter displays the wealth of the king, gold, silver, purple, all expensive stuff. Solomon himself is wearing the crown his mother made for his wedding. Probably made of flowers.

Notice one last thing, Solomon describes this as the day his heart rejoiced. The pinnacle of this song, the high point thus far is the wedding day. The day his heart rejoiced to marry his bride. It's not the day they moved in together, its not the first kiss or the first time they sleep together. The day his heart rejoiced was the day of his wedding day.

So what can we learn from this wedding procession since we don't really do this any more? I think the principle we can draw from this is the importance of being well prepared for marriage. A healthy marriage begins with healthy people. Brian talked about this last week on the relational level. Solomon was demonstrating that he was prepared to care for his bride. He had his affairs in order, he had his finances secure, he had safety and protection for his family and he was bringing the best of what he had for his bride.

For all of you young adults, who are thinking about marriage, make sure you have your house in order before you propose or before you say yes. Guy's you need to man up, show your girlfriend and her family that you can hold a job and pay rent and make tough decisions. Show them that you are going to be the kind of man worth marrying. Ladies, don't expect

a guy to suddenly grow up just because you said I do. If he is a lazy slob now he is going to be a lazy slob after the honeymoon. Don't expect him to change just because you married him.

I have met a few young couples who haven't finished college, who don't have decent jobs, don't really have a plan, but they are getting married and just expect it to all work out. Well, it can work out, but please have realistic expectations. Marriage is wonderful and amazing and good, it is also hard. So be prepared.

Ok, now, because Song of Solomon was written by a man, we completely skip the wedding ceremony and head straight to the wedding night. Before I read this next passage I am going to be completely honest, talking about this next passage makes me a little bit uncomfortable. We are going to get a sneak peek into the bedroom of this newly wed couple and it's a bit awkward. But I feel like the Church has put all of the emphasis on the wedding ceremony, the vows and the rings and candles and the cake and we tend to ignore or gloss over the consummation of the marriage on the wedding night. Its like we all know it is going to happen but apart from a few bad jokes, no one wants to talk about it, let alone celebrate it. But that's not how the Bible handles it at all. Right in the very beginning of human relationships God said: "for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) God is not talking about two people living in the same house and sharing their finances. He is talking about the sexual union of a man and his wife and the bond that it forms between them. A bond that is not intended to be broken. So even though it feels awkward, we are going to talk about what takes place in the bedroom on this particular wedding night.

Lets read this next section together, Chapter 4:1-7. Healthy Intimacy begins with mutual appreciation.

I was doing some research and came across this Spirit inspired drawing of Solomon's bride to show you guys. Notice the goats, and the mouth full of sheep and the tower neck and all that? I guess we just have a different standard of beauty these day.

Seriously though, before any of you men in the room try to quoting the Song of Solomon to your wives, perhaps you should let me explain what is

going on in this passage. Here we are in the honeymoon sweet and instead of the newlyweds ripping each others clothes off like they do on TV, we notice that Solomon hasn't even touched his bride. Instead he is telling her how beautiful she is. "How beautiful you are my darling, O how beautiful." But he doesn't stop there, he takes the time to describe her beauty and compares it to the beauty of nature. This is poetry. Her eyes are soft and gentle like doves. Her hair is like a flock of goats coming down from the mountain. To see a large flock of goats, maybe two or three thousand goats, coming down the steep terrain of a mountain path would have looked like a river of brown hair flowing off a mountain, glistening in the sun. She has beautiful long brown hair. She has a full mouth of clean white teeth. None of them are missing. This is important stuff right?

She has a lovely mouth with bright red lips, and she has color in her face. The word for temples here can also mean cheeks. She has a nice complexion.

He says her neck is like the tower of David. This probably means it is straight and elegant and that she is wearing layers of beautiful necklaces, strung with gold and silver medallions. He is not telling her she has the neck of a bull or anything like that. Her jewelry highlights her beauty; it doesn't dominate her beauty. Lastly he describes her breasts as twin fawns of the gazelle browsing among the lilies. Ok, Solomon is not telling her she has a nice hairy chest. He is saying her breasts are gentle and soft and he wants to touch them.

At this point he loses his composure, I can't really blame him. And he simply blurts out, "until the day brakes and the shadows flee I will go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of incense. All beautiful you are my darling; there is no flaw in you." He is overcome by her beauty and he wants to enjoy her breasts all night long. I can't believe I just said that in church. But there it is right in the text, I'm not making it up.

What does this teach us about intimacy? Healthy intimacy begins with appreciating and admiring your spouse. Gentlemen if you want a healthy love life you need to tell your wife what you love about her and what you admire in her and you should probably start before 10pm. Ladies if you want your husband to say nice things about you make sure there are plenty of things for him to compliment. And I'm not just talking about your

appearance. It is hard for a man to find nice things to say about his wife if she is constantly nagging him or belittling him. Gentlemen the same goes for you. Your wife wants a hard working, respectful, well dressed man who is going to be a champion for his family. If you want your wife to be excited about you, show her there is something to be excited about. She didn't marry you for your looks anyway, so focus on character and you will be fine.

While I was in college I had a mentor who would take me out to breakfast once a week and we would talk about life and marriage and theology. He was a plumber and he asked some of the best theological questions of anyone I have ever met. Several times over breakfast he would tell me "Dillon, you will know if a man is loving his wife well because she will get prettier and prettier every year." Years later when I was in seminary I went back to visit Chico and found out that his wife had decided to have some minor cosmetic surgery done and it broke his heart. It nearly ruined his marriage. He felt like he had failed his wife and failed his marriage.

Healthy intimacy begins with mutual appreciation and we all have some work to do in this area.

Ok, lets watch what happens next. Lets read verses 8-15. Healthy intimacy is intentional.

A couple of things are going on here. One commentator calls this first part of 8-11 the Kings request. The groom is very poetically asking his bride to come away from Lebanon, her home, and leave behind all of the struggles and cares of the world to be with him. He is asking her to set aside the worries of the day, the struggles of life and enjoy intimacy with him. Notice the respect that he is showing her even on their wedding night. He doesn't own her, he doesn't demand his rights, he doesn't force himself on her or take advantage of her. He asks her gently and lovingly to put aside the worries of the day and be with him because he respects her as a person and recognized that she is the master of her own body.

Friends you don't need me to tell you that life is difficult and busy even on a good day. Work is hard, family is hard, kids are difficult, time is short. Yet there are seasons in your marriage where you will need to take your spouse to your bedroom and lock the door and turn down the light and intentionally love each other for the sake of your marriage. Leave all that

other stuff behind and focus on each other because it is good for you. Healthy intimacy is intentional, and that starts long before you say “I Do.”

Now look what happens in verse 12. The groom says “You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride you are a spring enclosed a sealed fountain.” Solomon is talking about her purity and her virtue. Remember the warnings, do not let love awaken until it so desires, keep the little foxes out of the vineyard. Solomon is praising his wife for keeping the foxes out of her garden, for saving herself for her husband. Again, our culture has completely lost sight of this beauty. Once upon a time sex outside of marriage was frowned upon. Now the question that is asked is how many dates should you go on before you sleep with the guy. If a young high school student tells his or her friends that they are a virgin they are often shamed or mocked. And when a star athlete like Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson tells the world that he isn’t sleeping with his girlfriend, public mockery will soon follow. Our culture doesn’t know what to do with people who keep the foxes out of their gardens so they just make fun of them or quietly applaud the proponents of abstinence as “one way.”

The scriptures are clear that God desires for us as men and women to be sexually pure before marriage and faithful to our spouse until death do we part. That is the best way to live according to god’s plan. Unfortunately we haven’t always followed God’s best plan for our lives. Many of us have failed to keep the foxes out of our gardens. Some of us have failed to protect our girl friend or our fiancé. Some of us have chosen to say yes instead of no. Some are victims of terrible abuse and crime. And in each of these cases we carry with us guilt and shame and memories that can easily burden our lives and our marriages and prevent us from the ability to live in the freedom of Christ’s forgiveness. These burdens can also prevent us from enjoying intimacy with our spouse in the safety and freedom God intended. No one wants to bring memories of some other woman or some other man into the bedroom with them. No one wants to bring guilt or shame or hurts or scars with them into marriage.

I want to encourage you this morning, if you are carrying this stuff with you in your marriage, please take some time this morning to pray and to ask for the forgiveness and healing of your savior. He knows all of your mistakes and all of your hang ups. I love what Pastor Tommy Nelson says about this: “God can restore what the locusts have eaten.” God can restore what has been lost or taken from you, he can heal your heartache

and wipe away every stain and every tear. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Seek the Lord for that forgiveness and restoration. Be honest about it. If you need to talk it through with your spouse please do so. It won't be easy but it will be good.

If you are struggling to find freedom in this issue I encourage you to seek professional counseling to help you process through your hurts and hang-ups. God has hard wired our sexuality to our emotions in a unique way and it can be very difficult to get things untangled. Call one of our staff this week and we can refer you to a Christian Counselor who can help you work through this. Remember it takes healthy people to have a healthy marriage.

Ok, the moment has finally arrived. Solomon has declared his bride's beauty, he has asked her to come away and be with him, he has praised her virtue and look how she responds...Get away from me you sweet talking snake, ... just kidding. Look at verse 16. Awake, north wind, and come south wind? Blow on my garden that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits. Notice first it was her garden, and then she calls it his garden. She is giving herself to him fully with no hesitation because she trusts him, because she feels safe and cared for and valued and admired. She is excited to be with him and she wants her husband. Healthy intimacy means giving yourself away.

Thankfully for us, the curtains close and when it opens again Solomon declares [read 5:1] He has fully enjoyed his wife and consummated their marriage and he is satisfied. Notice the last part of verse 1. The margin note in your bible probably says "friends." That part was added later. We don't know who is speaking but we do know that it is a clear blessing in the form of a command for these two newlyweds to eat and drink their fill of each other. To enjoy each other to the fullest extent of their marriage. God created man and woman to enjoy each other intimately in the safety and security of a committed marriage. It is a good thing and something to be celebrated, not ignored or hidden away.

This week's Challenge: For all of you who are dating, engaged or married. Find at least one creative, thoughtful way to show your love and appreciation for your spouse or significant other. Don't wait until your

anniversary or valentines day, and men make sure you use words, not just actions.

For those of you who are widows and widowers: Take the time this week to write down the story of how you and your spouse met and fell in love. How they stole your heart and what you appreciate about them. Give it to your kids or your grandkids or put it somewhere safe so they can have it later. Lets pray.