

***ASCK_sermon_3pmSvs_Sunday10thFeb2019_JuliusTwongyeirwe
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I also came with Bereans last Sunday and today so they are visitors. Let me take this opportunity to ask them to stand up, the Bereans, people from our church so that you can know you are among, yes. A number of them are here; therefore, I didn't come alone. They have many friends especially during the time we had Perspectives here, the class, we got to know a number of people and you've heard about that. You've heard about the Perspectives course and the World Christian Movement, that's what took us to Mbarara. We launched on Thursday and so people in Mbarara are looking forward, we have doctors, lawyers, professors, we have teachers, we have housewives, we have all kinds of people who are looking forward to be mobilized as missionaries and having that God-size role. Here, it will be in June so look forward. How many of you have done Perspectives? I can see at least two, three, a number of you. I hope that you're being informed because all these issues we are talking about including the he/she business, these chemical-physiological sensations the kind we feel but sometimes can't explain, sometimes we feel ashamed, we feel them, but all those things are aligned well. Try to imagine this concerning the mission of the church. What strong church is not built on a strong family and what strong family misses the things we are talking about and it's strong? There isn't. The church is built on the family unit, marriage is the context for all parenting. We go wrong at home, we have nothing at church, nothing in the nation. The things we're talking about are so important, I'm glad that we can talk about them here. When people here catch it, mainly Uganda catches it. I have traveled and I go and ask young people in All Saints in other towns, where did you get this? From All Saints, Kampala. Where did you learn this? But All Saints does it, Kampala. Be careful how you do things. You are impacting the nation in good and bad ways; did you hear that?

There were some wrong things they were doing, they had also learned them from here and St. Francis and many good things they were doing they had also learned then from here. You are missionaries so if anybody in Fort Portal, Kabale, Mbarara, if you go and ask especially young people, "Where did you--?" "Even All Saints Kampala does it." "Did you care to find out?" "No, they do it so we have to do it too." You are missionaries even when you are here. Let's pray now.

Father, we thank you for Your Word and we thank You for availing it in ways that are understandable. We know it's spiritual warfare even to open scripture and understand anything, but Your Holy Spirit is with us to shine light working from Your Word and to create understanding and to bring enlightenment to warm our hearts, to arouse our affection for You so that

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we may love you intimately as we should. Lord, we pray that You may teach us from Song of Solomon and Lord as learn, we ask the relevant questions. There are things we grew up thinking are so shameful even to talk about and that they are so sinful to think about and we have developed attitudes from our culture, the devil has energized our lustfulness and taken the good gifts You gave us of romance, of those relationships that bring joy and build life, taken them to the ghetto. Lord, we pray you may salvage Your people and show them you create them in Your image that they may glorify you by the way they are, the way they feel and the way they relate to you. Thank You for our maleness and our femaleness and that's your image, Lord. Give us understanding not only to appreciate but to embrace the very design You gave us so that we may honor You with our bodies, with our minds, with our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

I tried to do a short PowerPoint because I saw last Sunday, many of you were trying to take notes so I tried to do a PowerPoint. If it will be available, that will be good, but let's remind ourselves of why we should study Song of Songs by Solomon. That's the title. It's a Song of Songs, meaning that it's the mother of songs, the mighty song. The great song among many songs and by Solomon because confusion about love, about sexuality and marriage about in our culture. Many people run their homes built on Nigerian movies, others wait for Ben Gisha .o tell us that we would go in these things, Hollywood and other places to find how to build relationships. We need the whole counsel of God to teach us about ourselves, about God, about righteousness.

Last Sunday, we said we all are sexual beings and we gave the relationship between sexuality and spirituality. We said that because we are sexual beings, we have sexual thoughts each one of us and we insisted that what we do with those sexual thoughts can leave us pure or impure so this is totally unavoidable. You can't console yourself in any way. You can't. They tried. We talked about sexual asceticism, the whole idea that a sexless life is holy and saintly and more godly all through. Our church fathers gave little attention. We learn so much about people like Augustine because he struggled with his sexual life. He struggled with sensualism and his struggles become our benefit because they created fear and anxiety in him and therefore, they took him to God. He was beating his chest, have mercy on me because again, all the women are beautiful, what shall I do? He ran to God.

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We need the whole counsel of God to teach us about ourselves. Who are we, how are we created, what does the image of God in us mean and about righteousness because where do sexual thoughts come from, what do we usually do with them because that will leave us holy or unholy and God cares about that to the point that the law that is written on our hearts is different from the law in the old covenant where they waited for you to commit adultery, then you have sinned. Jesus, takes it to the heart saying you have heard that, right? We no longer wait for action. You just need to look at a woman lustfully and it's already done. Even if she doesn't know, you've already sinned.

So the Song of Solomon is God's gift to the church for such a time as this and yet the Song of Solomon is still rarely taught, preached or studied. I mean I don't know if many of you have done quiet time in Song of Solomon, but sometimes when you're about to open, you want to remain holy the whole day and you don't know what you'll do with whatever was read for us. You know, thank you for reading, but what do we do with it? That your arm will be my pillow, the green grass will be our bed. What are we to do with those things? We knew what to do with things before we got saved because as I told you, whenever we wrote to girls befriending them, we quoted Song of Songs. For us it served a purpose at that time. Soon as you get saved, you don't know what to do with the book now that you're saved. You've found its use and come, come my love. Come and let's run together. Those ones we could do, but when you are saved and you're saying those things, you'll ask God, am I still saved? You say God have mercy on me. Am I still saved?

Sometimes the book is feared, it's often shunned as sexually explicit and mainly tolerated by Christians simply because it is found in the Bible. You didn't put it there, but you kind of endure it there right there. There are others who tried to remove it, when you read history. Easy for us to affirm than it is inspired by the Holy Spirit so it is inspired, but rare that we would feel as holy in interacting with it. Now, the hesitancy to study the song is understandable. The song is a collection of poetic exclamations and exchanges between two lovers. The intimate nature of the material causes some to shy away, we shouldn't be surprised.

I told you how I was losing my innocence as I grew. With a long shirt that didn't need any trouser or pair of shorts and as I grew, it got short and then I started realizing from others, not myself, from others that I was naked. Others are the ones who told me. Me I was normal, for them they thought I was naked especially when visitors came. They asked me to go find

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something to put on. Before visitors come, it was all all right. I could swing around and do anything and everything was all right, but when the visitors come, see my mother trembling, go find something, put it on for as long as they are here. You'll remove it when they have gone to save it from tearing apart.

Anyway, but you lose innocence as you grow, but here it is that now, you know, that the government thinks since the church is not doing anything, these things of morality and what, give up on the church. These preachers don't know what to do. We'll do sex education, we'll write the curriculum, we from UNEB. Really? The church should be guiding these issues. Don't think they confidently can, they wonder what's wrong, what's right. What's evil, what is good. They also tremble a bit, they can depend on society, but when society goes and goes and goes down and the church is saying nothing, Miss Curvy comes up. Even then, we don't know what to do by the time those things are brought by the very Ugandans, leaders, and whether they are good or bad, but you see us scratching our heads. Now what? "No, it's evil." The other one says, "But what is evil about it?" "Actually I don't know, but I think it's evil." Our discussion kind of keeps at that. Some are not sure how to read the song. If these are reservations and questions that we have about studying the Song of Solomon, consider that studying the book is the best way to address them. For us the people of God, getting to people created in the image of God. To understand ourselves in order to please God, we are doing a good job. This is where it should be, this is whether it should begin because scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. So this book, change attitude. Change completely. I don't know how you thought about it, but studying the Song of Solomon as part of the whole counsel of God is good for our souls as with any other portion of God's Word and we neglect it to our peril.

Now of the many insights to be gained from studying this book, there are four that seem especially important for our cultural moment. I want to share them. The first is a deeper appreciation of the Gospel. The Song of Solomon is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible. It gives us a godly perspective on the love between a man and a woman as we encounter God's ideal, our shortcomings, our sins and failures, they become evident. We are always okay, standard, saintly until God's nature and character come in. That's when we beat our chest and say, "Woe to me a sinner. Woe to me a sinner." Appreciation for the Gospel grows even deeper as we see new ways we need the Grace of God in Christ. A primary purpose of marriage is to reveal

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the mystery of Christ's love for His bride. Actually, by the end of the month, that's where we'll be tending so that we can catch the vision, God's vision for marriage.

You can't teach anybody marriage. Everybody knows they can handle. Actually, many people are confident. Culture has taught us, we have watched, we have-- and there's that excitement and it's like a cave. Others are running in, others are running out, but nobody, no great discussion at the entrance really. You know, "Is it, is it?" No, come see for yourself. It's hard to explain, it's what and you hear difficulties and others tell you, "No, how wonderful it is to get married." But for us who have been in ministry long, we know the counseling closet where also we find people simply thinking why did I enter this thing. They meet at the cave of marriage. Others are rushing in, they are asking those rushing out, "Tell us." "No, no, come." Sometimes those who are in tell us how great it is and then with our own experience and eyes, we can see those who tell in tears how difficult it is then we fail to take whatever it is. By the end of the month, we'll look at marriage and we'll pick very wonderful portions that describe so we can get that theology of marriage. We'll see marriage at creation when God created and wedded the first couple. Then we'll see marriage before the fall, the dynamic of it, how it operated. We will see marriage at the fall and ask what went wrong, then we'll see marriage after the fall, then we'll know what we are to expect and struggle with. How does Christ make marriage new.

This book lays a good foundation to keep thinking. I don't think that through these sermons, we can get everything, but when the song presents an ideal picture of love in marriage, we have a unique glimpse into the relationship between Christ and the church as we said before, between God and Israel. Israel were seen as God's wife and so reality you will see is not human marriage. The reality is Christ and the church and human marriage is the metaphor, it's the photocopy of it: Ephesians 5. That's what Paul says. He says-- this is a profound statement having talked about wives and husbands and I'm not talking about these things. I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about Christ and the church, that's the profound statement so marriage images the reality. Once we get the reality, we will have a deeper appreciation of the Gospel.

The second insight to be gained to be gained from studying this book that seems especially important for our cultural moment is a woman's voice. The Song of Solomon is unique because the voice of the shepherdess, the Shulamite is most prominent in this book. The body of the poem begins at

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verse 2 of chapter 1 with a bold declaration of her desire for her beloved, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." What? And this is the woman. You know, if you are a good Muganda woman, you are punished by your parents for saying such things. Likewise the poem ends with her calling out to her beloved in chapter 8:14, "Make haste, my loved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices," wonderful poetry painting images of love, of intimacy, real action here, right?

From the beginning to the end, the reader encounters the woman's perspective more than any other. In the book, the most vocal is the woman. Christianity is in certain quarters styled as marginalizing women especially when it comes to sexuality. The fact that the majority of the song is from the woman's point of view is significant, I don't take that lightly. Divine wisdom makes it plain that a healthy romantic relationship will be one in which the woman's voice is cultivated, is heard, is heeded, as well as fully considered. That's how we understand it. Communion marriage tells us that. Of course our culture of male chauvinism and dominance, we have to be seeing women as just usables, look at her. That is healthy and godly. Our culture objectifies women recently as economic commodities or even as earlier gratifiers of sensuality, of their male counterparts, providers of pleasure at the whims of men and always clients-- did you hear that word? Clients. Sometimes sexual clients even in a marriage context, sexual clients. "Iwe, orahi? Come here!" Those things, in the otherwise God-ordained partnership to give and to take, we go to marriage to give. Blessedness in marriage is heightened in giving. You try marriage, go there to get because the other one has also gone there to get, you get nothing and you get frustrated. But if you go there to give, you try to outcompete each other in giving, then marriage is enjoyable, but these things of, "But I did this yesterday, why don't you try it today? I've been making the bed all through." Like, "Am I your dishwasher? Am I your washing machine?" But when you go there to serve and we will see that at the end hopefully because I would like to bring it clearly.

You see in the opening words of the maiden. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for your love is better than wine because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is ointment poured forth; therefore, the virgins love you?" Is he a polygamous man? No. "Draw me away."

Let me go briefly on this because the woman's voice, we should dwell on it. That will be our exposition for today. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his

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mouth, the dialogue between the maiden and the young man begins with this passionate desire of the maiden. She wants to receive and experience the love of her beloved. At the very beginning, we catch some of the power of this Song of Solomon, it causes us to feel as if we are with Solomon and the Shulamite, this woman, not merely watching them as we read, but we share their feelings. They invite us into the very experience so that we are part of it not just watching it.

Right away, we are stuck with two complementary truths regarding this loving couple. First, the maiden is not weak and passive in this. Second, the young man, nevertheless, is a leader and respected as such. That's the mystery. The woman is not taking over though she is active. Actually, when you read it well, the man is still the leader. This is undeniably strong woman who happens to do most of the talking through the song or the singing, let's say. Nearly twice as many verses are from her lips than from his. There is nothing here of the aggressive male and the reluctant or victimized female. They are one in their desire because their desires are God-given and aspire to be enjoyed in the sphere of the divine. When we lift our eyes to God, we enjoy each other. When we don't lift our eyes, but become spouse centered, we wonder why things fall apart very quickly. I think I saw my wife around. Mukyala, are you around? Stand, people have to see you. That's my wife Grace so me and her, when there is a bit of friction, immediately the spiritualmeter, you can call it, tells us we're not far away from each other, but we have become spouse-centered rather than God-centered. The closer I am to God, the closer I am to my wife and when I find that I'm trying closeness and it's not working, there's friction, then I check my prayer life and those intentional deliberate ways of making sure we grow spiritually.

When you're spouse-centered, you gain nothing. When you are God-centered, you gain everything because marriage was meant for holiness. Marriage is focused on God more than it is focused on us. When we are counseling people who are going to get married, we guide them through weeks but we are interested to see their marriage mission statement. "Why are you getting married." It's not enough to say I'm of age. "My father wants children. My grandmother has been--" No, we go beyond that and usually as we work through the mission statement, we would like the couple to realize that they not the end, they are the means. At the end of their mission statement usually, so that we may glorify God, so that we may image God, we may image the invisible God in the world that when people see us, they may see Christ and His church by way of the husband's sacrificial love, by

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way of the wife's willing and delightful submission and many other things. So very key, we'll talk about those things as well.

It's a strong woman here, yet we see that the young man occupies a place of leadership. She does not initiate a kiss, but asks that he might kiss her. She asks that he draw her. "For your love is better than wine," she says, "to the maiden, the love of her beloved is more refreshing and intoxicating than wine. She is deeply, passionately infatuated with her man. She's totally lost in him and that is good once it's anchored on God; otherwise, to be lost without God, but be lost in Him is called intensity, it's not intimacy.

The theme of sexual enjoyment and consummation runs through the book, and the theme of commitment is central to that whole relationship. This is no passing encounter, this is total dedication and permanent obligation. Really those things apply to marriage. She says your name is ointment poured out forth. In other words, your identity and incense change. This expresses the respect and esteem the maiden had for the character and reputation of her beloved. The name represented much more than just the title by which her beloved was addressed. It represented his character and reputation. His name was like ointment poured out forth and flowed from the fragrance of his good ointments. While chemistry is volcanically churning in the chests of these lovers, character is also foundational. Character and chemistry both matter in the matters of love. Sometimes we go for chemistry. I feel, I feel-- my feelings have gone for-- I feel, I feel. Emotionally I mean I'm taken up, I can't sleep. The chemistry is working and sometimes it overshadows character and we call it falling in love. After this book, you should not use that phrase. In love, you remain standing. You remain thoughtful in love. Deliberate, reflective, contemplative thoughtful. That you have fallen, meaning yes. I can no longer see. I am finished now. No, this is from a mind, not just from a melted heart that has lost capacity to discern or to judge or to assess or evaluate, or even plan when. Didn't we read here? It was read for us. "Do not arouse love." Let the rhythm and pace. It means that you are in control. Is that falling? No, I think that's standing. That's when you say not now, but time will come so you're in control.

I remember years ago. For me, it was a unique situation as I met my wife now. I was deliberate, I had prayed and I was now ready to talk to her. We are from different tribes, I was worried she will not meet me and I was right because it was difficult to meet her, but I promised myself she gives me audience or two minutes, I will say it. For ten, I will explain it, for One hour,

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I will elaborate it. So she gave me audience. After difficulty, I can't explain how hard it was. Actually, she was convinced by a friend whom she trusted. "You go on. Meet that young man, actually, he's not bad." Character, eh, not just chemistry. She risked and she-- as soon as we met, I kept thinking what if something comes up and I won't have said it so I said it. Within our first, how many minutes of sitting, I proposed. She was shocked. Yes, did I elaborate? She was so shocked, she didn't say bye. But I was telling her as she went, "I'm not going to look for another one until I hear back from you." And I was serious. I went on my knees to pray. She's there, she can always come sometimes and share with you how it felt as the Mukiga man laid on the line, put it as it is. I didn't want this chemistry, flowers, of, "I love--" I love you? I don't even have permission to sit with her, when did I start loving her? No I didn't love her. No. love is mutual, right. So you start loving somebody who hasn't even allowed you? Can you? No, I didn't love her, but I told her and then I remember telling her that I feel in me potential to love if she gives me permission. If she allows me, she will see me because I can love. She will come and testify of that sometime.

So character, I didn't want chemistry to take over some gifts that are defined, some flowers, some outings, until you just have to guess and you hear the speeches. You people get married and say, "So, your wedding day, she's here. I got for myself now." Eh, what is this man talking about? The first thing is when she came to visit my cousin, they went to school together. Then one thing led to the other and the things are happening you, you're not happening them. You're so passive in things. Then one thing led to the other and here we are. Really? A marriage should begin like that. A marriage begins deliberately. You just put it there, get somebody to struggle with, and actually, I didn't get to hear from her, but you know how determined I was. I had told God I knew a wife would come from God. If she's mine, I wasn't dying to have her. Even at the end of every prayer that included praying for her was a prayer that goes like this, "And Lord, if it's not her, I thank You for whoever else it is." That freedom, remain sober, don't fall yet because somebody may not be there to hold you. You can hurt yourself.

When the Shulamite, this woman in the song said that his name was perfume poured forth, she meant that his character was as fragrant and refreshing as cologne poured out of a bottle. This is the reason the girls around the palace loved him, not just because he was handsome, but because his inner person was so attractive. This is character. We have to remain warned about being lustful when looks seem to be the guide to love.

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"Are you loving or lusting? How shall you know the difference?" Sometimes we lust and we think we are falling in love. You switch on any FM station and it's singing about love, love, love, but when you listen to the song, it's not like this song. The song is just lust. "Wendabba akabina--" So hat is in the kabina now, are there brains also or something like that? You can see while those things are important, it's just that you are looking at a woman and her looks kill you and you call that love? That's lust. Love is thoughtful, you engage minds. The kabina comes later. That's whole thing.

The couple is obviously physically attracted to each other, no doubt and beauty, I'm not undermining beauty. No, no, God created us. Didn't I tell you? How do you exclaim? God is an artist! You men, when you look at a beautiful woman and then you are watching that and you are saved and then you are thinking, "Now, why did I look again," and now you look again. And so you just don't struggle, you will sin in your heart. As she walks away, you look once, you look again, you look again, it clearly shows you can thank God that you are normal, okay? Then secondly you exclaim, "God is an artist! Look at the way He created her, my goodness!" So you exclaim and give glory to God who created rather than feeling like, "I must have lost my salvation now. I must have lost my salvation now." Because girls can't stop being beautiful so how far will you go now?

From the start, they focused on each other's character and kindness toward each other. They learned to value and care for each other as persons and this shows us that the wise woman chooses a man whom others see to be a man of character, whom who see others too. Credibility. It's not just, "Me, I know he's good." Can you read integrity. Credibility is what we see and hear him say and do in the eyes of all those who assess, that's credibility. It matters and if credibility is within like a Christian community, you are safer. If credibility is being sought in a bad situation among drunkards and prostitutes, it'll also give its own standard which is detrimental. The seriousness of her estimation of him, going far deeper than just a physical sexual attraction shows us the character of their passionate love and reading this collection of love poems, one might easily think that this is primary a book about falling in love. Instead, it is much more accurately seen as a book about building love. Love is built, it's cultivated and deliberately. You don't oops it. "Oops, I'm in love." No, it doesn't. It's not one of those things that come with, "Oops, eh!" and then I'm in love. That "I fell." Because falling is so instant, you think that that's how you just-- no, it's cultivated because you're also deliberately thinking of whom you will love. Can you love the whole love the same? No, there's one you want to share.

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"Draw me away," it says. This was the logical desire of a woman so taken with loving desire towards her beloved. She wanted to be with him and to be one with him. Before that, she said, "Therefore, the virgins love you." The maiden understood that others could see the good character qualities in her beloved without necessarily being romantically attracted to him and this made her love him all the more. See that, credibility, where they are not fighting for him, but they are watching and so you find an interjection from the daughters saying in the last part of verse 4, "We will run after you." Now it's for-- business is for how many? Two. Why are the other ones going to run after them? The idea is that the daughters of Jerusalem, those onlookers who do so in a chorus, they have a refrain, who observe and celebrate the love between the maiden and the young man, these ones are involved. They want to see what will happen as this wonderful love builds and takes its course. It is a good thing and from their respectful distance, they still want to be part of it. They are watching at a distance, "Let's see how this thing grows. It's okay."

You know in our church when you start those he/she things, we don't find wives for husbands or husbands for wives, they find each other, but as soon as they find each other, we would like them to kind of show some seriousness in giving up on each other or in keeping together and making it a church business so it's no longer a private matter. They come and tell us as the church, because these are serious things. We want to see purity, we want to support them, we want to hold them accountable, we want to make sure that the family begins on a strong foundation. We were just in that business yesterday, he's seated over there. We were in Shema (ph) and we were finding one there. We want to make sure the church involved. Are we all going to marry? No, it's just about two who are falling in love, but we watch them. When they are singing this song, we are part of it, we can hum it together with them. We can fill it and that's very, very key.

Now, I have taken that time on the woman so that you may understand, that's our main exposition there, but I want to give a few other things. The third insight to be gained from studying this book that seem especially important for our cultural moment is a re-visioning of sexual intimacy. Sexual imagery is powerful. Actually, I don't know which movie would sell without sexual imagery. Some nudity and some words and so on, looks and some insinuations. I don't know, because there we'll connect without thinking. We are wired just like that. So our culture abounds with images and paradigms that corrupt more than they instruct and wound more than they heal. So much of the cultures presentation of sexuality is what they call

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crass, lacking the beauty and mystery that should characterize the physical consummation and enduring love of marriage.

We told the people who are married here that when you switch off the light at night, God keeps His eyes open. For Him He continues to see what you're doing and He wants to be part of that and He is. When He is, it means serious business because He can be glorified through your enjoyment. He created us like that. Any doctors here? All those physiological sensations, which other part in a man that has more nerves than the tongue. Find that out, then you come and tell me how God created us.

A study of the Song of Solomon which cannot completed a short time that we share during this month or even now can revise our understanding and help us reclaim in holiness the sexual expression that God has created and declared as good. This inspired poem encourages us that husbands and wives are to share their adoration for each other with joy. The Song of Solomon contains sexual imagery in part and is full of declarations of love and adoration, but the language is tasteful, poetic and beautiful. It is ancient. You have to know how to do Biblical poetry. May in some of your groups, you can just-- when you are studying the Bible, especially interpretation, some are narratives, there's poetry, there's law, there's narrative, parables, metaphors, all these-- the Bible is a whole library of language. Similes, euphemisms, rhetoric, all those things are found there. This is poems and so you have to see how the images are painted.

The fourth insight to be gained from studying this book that seem especially important for our cultural moment is a realistic perspective on love. The Song of Solomon is not the one sensual sin after the other. It is a series of love poems that capture the joys, even insecurities. The Shulamite was not fit, didn't perceive her from the beginning as fit for the king. Insecurities. Sorrows are also there and frustrations that accompany their journey of love. At one time they separated. Through patient Bible study, the reader can follow her bride and her beloved on a journey from courtship to consummation and beyond so the voices of friends are there. You find them. The fears and insecurities are there. The temptations of the world are there. Most of all, God is there. He's superintending it all. The relationship captured in this poem is His Word for His children and children's understanding of love, of marriage, of sexuality.

The love that they share is as the Bible says in chapter 8:6, the very flame of the Lord. It literally says in chapter 8:6 that, "Put me like a seal over your

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heart, like a seal on your arm." It means that if I were blood, I would flow in your veins, right? "For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol." In other words, I possess you, there is a possessiveness. "It's flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord." While the Song of Solomon provides much needed wisdom from God on love, on marriage, this wisdom is not attainable apart from Christ. The capacity to take this view to catch the view of ourselves and of God on marriage and relationships requires us to be found in Christ. Nobody has ever managed. Socrates I think he didn't marry. He told a young man, "Either get a wife and be happy or if you can't find one become a philosopher," or something to that effect. They were there. We are spurred on these times and fascinated that the Song of Songs knows our deepest longings, but also humbled to know that this is how God designed us to glorify Him and we hear the call once again to live a life of faith in the son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Song of Solomon is a unique book of poetry that is often misrepresented, misunderstood, or simply overlooked. Presenting a godly view of marriage from the beginning, it covers the issues of attraction, of deepening, of love, of courtship, of sex and sexuality, of conflict. This book will raise our sights and show the redemptive potential of healthy godly relationships.

I want to conclude with a few applications because each time I'm thinking I'm going to come, how much can we do in exposing verse by verse? Eight chapters, we already have just two Sundays remaining, but just some key words for us: Attraction. If the slide comes, you'll see chapter 1:1-6. Most of us tend to be attracted to others based on their physical appearance, but as already said, what if that is not by priority according to God. Biblical attraction is based on character, whether us to God or us to each other. It should be more than looks. Looks don't last, they can be deceiving even and looks are always cancelled out by character. Good-looking, but if there is no mind or heart, what's a beautiful woman who is a thief? What beauty is there when she is a gossip and just a slanderer? So beauty is cancelled out immediately as character starts to show. And people will say, "Wow, she's good just to look at, but can you do anything more with her? No, pretty no?"

When it comes to attraction, character and chemistry must be aligned according to divine priorities. Do you think Eve, Mrs. Adam, became ugly by looks after she led her husband into sin? I don't think she changed in physical things, she might have stayed that beautiful that Adam that had sung, "Bone of my bone--" I don't know the tune of the song that Adam sung,

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but he sung bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. I'm sure she kept looking like that, but the ugliness now, where was it to be found? In character. The word ugly right applies to their marriage. It became an ugly relationship after and we suffer the same today. Whether we remain single or build on that foundation for a strong marriage and future, character is what matters.

Secondly, dating. And the Scriptures are there. Many Christians who date are off the chart as far as emotional and spiritual intimacy are concerned yet they don't realize that the emotional, spiritual and physical intimacy are like links in a chain that follow each other closely so they end up crossing moral boundaries even when they never intended to. To guard against, how do you guard against? You don't just write laws. We'll never be where nobody is as we date, okay? Just imagine-- for men who are able to imagine the features, the physical features, is there any gomes or dress that can stop them? Even when you put on gomes, for them they have this microscopic, telescopic way of seeing where the shape goes and feeling good about it. Really it's more than laws if you say what we want is to glorify God with the way He created us, and He really created us with these chemical and physiological sensations.

When we dating with my wife and so we knew we were normal, right. But then we wanted to remain pure. Thankfully we did and I thought, "If I really love her, I would not defile her." Did you hear that statement? If I really love her-- If I ever defile her, the message comes to me saying, "Then you really didn't love her." Such a statement is above me and then thinking about this is God's child, would you do with her whatever you want for some kind of physical pleasure? No, no. See how thoughtful it is to remain pure? Do not just put some constitution and so we say when we are walking hand-in-hand and for us men, electricity goes through pretty fast, faster than women. And so when I-- you let go becomes it means that electricity will have and then we want to keep things contained and she said, "Yes, we'll do that," and we used to talk about it. How do we keep safe? Let's be deliberate. We don't want to defile each other, and we related, '89 until '93. So that was a long time, but I kept looking forward. I think I was singing this song, but singing it differently.

That's dating, then courtship. There is wisdom in rediscovering the issue of courtship, a period where a couple develops a romantic relationship that is moving toward marriage. This is what I was meaning to my wife when I said to her, "I feel a potential in me to love and I really get lost and even sing alone even in the bathroom. I know that I can." So courtship, intimacy is a

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natural overflow of communication with each other. We look at communion at spiritual level, we look at it at psychological soul level, we look at it at physical level by the end of the month, but intimacy is a natural overflow of communication with each other over time and the closer you move toward intimacy, the more important clarity becomes. You want to create understanding. You don't oops your way into a good marriage as well and if courtship is done well, a marriage can be built on a foundation of Christ and of clarity, which is a beautiful thing. A theological vision for life must guide the essence and practice during courtship.

And then there is this other one, sex and sexuality. Of course that one is what we covered mainly last Sunday that God created us as sexual creatures and He wired us with a longing to express our sexuality. Even the way we dress sometimes you see, He also designed that expression for the context of marriage and we don't need to go find this. My time is pretty gone.

Then there is conflict, chapter 5-6. Conflict is part of marriage and as early, I thank God, as early as our dating, for me I kept thinking that once I realize I wasn't a perfect man, and then I thought that a relationship would expose me enough to grow. I used opportunities of clashes and disagreements to check myself, my check my selfishness, my ego, my securities. They come out. You women have related to men and you can tell yourself, "My goodness! He's so insecure. I can't be objective. He'll think I'm being disrespectful." Haven't you found those relationships? Yes, so those clashes are moments of discovering yourself or discovering your friend and helping them to grow because actually you are a saint until you marry because in marriage, you're intimate enough to be known. So my wife is seated there and she knows me in and out. She really does. But when you are dating, you tell your girlfriend especially you men, "What do you want? Eat anything." You are like a superhero, you want to be her messiah. You want her to believe that once she is with you, she shall not want. "What now? Whatever you want, let them give it to you." You are just there and you are brave. "Who talks about you?" You are like a lion. When you get married, things become real. They don't change, they just become real. When you are married and somebody knocks, "Mukyala, did you hear that? Did you hear?" You're so afraid. The brave man before, you are sending your wife to the door when somebody is knocking and you're so afraid and she now knows you in and out, she knows you had even borrowed some money when you were taking her out, now the reality is you don't have. She knows you, you even fear other men, but you were there trying to--

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Anyway, here we are, but some of those things really expose us to say, "Mmm, so that's who I am," and then the weaknesses and shortcomings start to show you where to work from. I can't even love enough. That's why we can say, you want to know whether you can love, marry. Many people have really loved before they have married. You will hear they can even sing songs of love, but when they marry. You think you're courageous, try marriage. You think you are brave, try marriage. Two sinners; just your sins are too heavy for you in a single life, now double. Two sinners living together, they are not only sharing a bedroom, but even a bed. Oh how close two sinners are! Their sin is so exposed. I know a marriage that came down because of toothpaste. They are so close, anything will finish you. The man always wanted toothpaste to be rolled from the back. This woman came and squeezed wherever the stomach was and as long as some came out for her use that morning or evening that was all right. The man always came and said, "I told you now look, the thing is totally without shape. You have to do this." And he would take time in the bathroom rolling them, go to the children's bathroom rolling them and then the children come and just squeeze even what he had rolled, rolls back. And we knew her and it was big trouble until the man now started thinking, "You know what, it's not about toothpaste. You woman, you do not respect me." You see how the thing has grown and then soon they were not together. "Because I keep telling you how to do toothpaste. Since you don't, it's no longer toothpaste, it's about me. You demean, you think I'm just a dog, right? You have taken things very far now."

Those conflicts and clashes they expose sin and our weak point so that we may be deliberate to grow. They also become the basis for assessing the virtues needed for marriage. Can I love my wife? When I'm praying to God and she's hearing. "Lord, teach me to love my wife." Of course she says, "Amen, Lord," but the truth is that that prayer is a sincere prayer because I don't have capacity to love and I can tell myself, "Now you are failing to love your wife. Now you are. Be sincere to yourself." I can't tell everybody, but I can tell myself, "I'm now failing to be patient with her, Lord, and I'm her spiritual leader. Help me." If you have matured, if you can tell yourself those things, but as a Mukiga man, if you're not saved, you just push those things aside. See, my father was never wrong. I grew up in a home where my father was never sorry. Even if he was wrong and it was very clear, it was my mother's fault. Now, you come from there and you can love a wife?

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Then this one lastly, deepening. There is an excitement with new relationships, but that is nothing compared to the fulfillment and satisfaction that comes with being with your spouse or your friend over time. Intimacy should be distinguished from intensity. There are many who seek intense engagements and involvements and they call it deep whether in marriage or outside marriage, but then realize how empty each session leaves them if they are not intimate: Intimacy, Into-Me-See. Really see through me, but now we go intensity and think a deep kiss that gets the tongues out and the what swinging and what and whole electrification, we think that that's the whole deal. At the end of it, you feel emptier.

Next Sunday, we will be looking at the theology of marriage and that's probably the last slide. You can read Mark and Ephesians as they are there. Mark 10 and Ephesians 5, just those two verses as we prepare because I would like Song of Songs to really clearly show, because it's a display. It's an explanation. It may not be teaching us about marriage deliberately as a core syllabus, but what it is doing, it's showing us, it's a movie that we watching. I think that as Solomon sang it, he was not singing it for us, he was singing it for himself, but he happens to be as human as we are. The Song of Solomon confronts with a challenge of allegory of life itself. It calls us to look into and through the physical pleasures of sex, both in Solomon's song and in our bedroom. In other words, it's not just this song really physical and also points something spiritual in relation to God and the church. We are here learning a number of things, and I hope that as you pray, in the short time that we usually share, create questions. When you create questions, you direct them to Capt. Gideon and he can forward some of the emails, we can answer them. What the desire is this depending on how you grew up: sexual abuse, fears of what, some bad impression from the beginning, broken hearts, you will hear this that God can restore us because God created us so there is nobody that is beyond God's reach to repair and we have already made sexual mistakes out of ignorance, but when we know that God created us sexual and instead our energy overruled like a broken dam and we messed, we come back to God. When we come back to God, He can restore us. For us who are seeking understanding and living in confusion, we can point our feet in the right direction. Let's pray.

Lord, we come to You and this is a large subject because we remain sexual from birth to death and therefore at every moment, every movie we watch, every novel we read, every paper we open like a magazine, something about men and women and their relationship, some very close and intimate, others broken and hurting and crying, we have seen it all. We pray

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Heavenly Father that You may direct our hearts to this kind of teaching. We are aware that as we grow, we sin in our thoughts just thinking about these issues, we feel so filthy, we feel guilty and the devil takes that and tells us that we can never make it because we fail at each moment. We go there saying, "It's only once. Never again," and the devil comes and says, "but that's what you said before," and then we give up. Lord help us to stand firm and to be pure. Teach us like you have done from Your Word, give us the principles, but give us that assurance to say in our hearts that even though I do not understand everything, I have enough to point my heart to God and trust Him for cleansing, for restoration, for good relationship, for honoring relationship and for a relationship that glorifies God. Help us, Lord, that we may be a strong church building strong marriages, a context for godly parenting, a heritage that you are building of faithfulness passed on through godly lives among us as fathers and mothers whether now or in the coming future that Lord from generation to generation, we may fear you, we may honor you. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.