

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's

Who is the author?

Solomon wrote Song of Solomon, according to the first verse. This song is one of 1,005 that Solomon wrote (1 Kings 4:32). The title “Song of Songs” is a superlative, meaning this is the best one.

When was the song written?

Solomon most likely wrote this song during the early part of his reign. This would place the date of composition around 965 B.C.

What could have been the purpose of writing this song, which became the Song of all Songs?

The Song of Solomon is a lyric poem written to extol the virtues of love between a husband and his wife. The poem clearly presents marriage as God’s design. A man and woman are to live together within the context of marriage, loving each other spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

This book combats two extremes: asceticism (the denial of all pleasure) and hedonism (the pursuit of only pleasure). The marriage profiled in Song of Solomon is a model of care, commitment, and delight.

The Song purposes to extol sexual love between a man and a woman united in marriage. It is written to affirm God’s design for sexuality between a man and a woman and to unfold the maturing of a relationship between a man and a woman before, and during marriage. The Song can be divided into six Canticles, the subjects of which may be summarized as follows:-

- Canticle 1. (Cant. 1: 2-2: 7): The assurance of love.
- Canticle 2. (Cant. 2: 8-3: 5): The awakening of love.
- Canticle 3. (Cant. 3: 6-5: 1): The communion of love.
- Canticle 4. (Cant. 5: 2-6: 12): The restoration of love.
- Canticle 5. (Cant. 6: 13-8: 4): The witness of love.
- Canticle 6. (Cant. 8: 5-14): The triumph of love.

The poetry takes the form of a dialogue between a husband (the king) and his wife (the Shulamite). We can also divide the book into three sections: **the courtship** (1:1 - 3:5); **the wedding** (3:6 - 5:1); and the **maturing marriage** (5:2 - 8:14).

The song begins before the wedding, as the bride-to-be longs to be with her betrothed, and she looks forward to his intimate caresses.

However, she advises letting love develop naturally, in its own time. The king praises the Shulamite's beauty, overcoming her feelings of insecurity about her appearance.

The Shulamite has a dream in which she loses Solomon and searches throughout the city for him.

With the help of the city guards, she finds her beloved and clings to him, taking him to a safe place. Upon waking, she repeats her injunction but not to force love.

On the wedding night, the husband again praises the beauty of his wife, and in highly symbolic language, the wife invites her spouse to partake of all she has to offer. They make love, and God blesses their union.

As the marriage matures, the husband and wife go through a difficult time, symbolized in another dream. In this second dream, the Shulamite rebuffs her husband, and he leaves.

Overcome with guilt, she searches the city for him; but this time, instead of helping her, the guards beat her—symbolic of her pained conscience. Things end happily as the lovers reunite and are reconciled.

As the song ends, both the husband and wife are confident and secure in their love, they sing of the lasting nature of true love, and they yearn to be in each other's presence.

It is important for us to see in Song of Solomon an exact symbolic representation of Christ and His church. Christ is seen as the king, while the church is represented by the Shulamite. While we believe the book should be understood literally as a depiction of marriage, there are some elements that foreshadow the Church and her relationship with her king, the Lord Jesus.

Song of Solomon 2:4 describes the experience of every believer who is sought and bought by the Lord Jesus. We are in a place of great spiritual wealth and are covered by His love. Verse 16 of chapter 2 says, **"My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies"** (NKJV).

Here is a picture of not only the security of the believer in Christ (John 10:28-29), but of the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep—believers—and lays down His life for us (John 10:11). Because of Him, we are

no longer stained by sin, having had our “spots” removed by His blood (Song of Solomon 4:7; Ephesians 5:27).

In the sense of practical application, our world is confused about marriage. The prevalence of divorce and modern attempts to redefine marriage stand in glaring contrast to Solomon’s Song. Marriage, says the biblical poet, is to be celebrated, enjoyed, and revered.

Christ is the great theme of all Scripture, and, in its several parts, the Holy Spirit delights to set forth special aspects of Christ and His glories. Here, in the Song of Songs, His great object is to present the love of Christ for His people. Both character and chemistry matter in the matters of love. It is this moral application to the individual believer that is mainly in view in the expositions that will follow.

Sexuality, Spirituality

1. WHAT IS SEXUALITY?

Human sexuality is our maleness and femaleness or manhood and masculinity. It includes all the physical, emotional, and spiritual intricacies, as God designed us. God is the one who gave sexuality to His human creation. Like the rest of God’s creation, the sexual differences between man and woman are pronounced “**very good**” (Genesis 1:31).

Sexuality is an essential attribute of human nature. We therefore affirm human sexuality to be a gift of God. By God’s grace, human sexuality both enriches and fulfills our personhood.

As a result of humankind’s fall from innocence (Genesis 3), the complementary nature of human sexuality, like all other human relationships has been distorted. When we seek to live within the healthy boundaries God instituted for our well-being, sexuality is once again a good gift.

Within covenant marriage, and owing to the sexuality, a sexual union is a binding force that draws the couple together as “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6). Our gender and natural sexual desires are part of our God-given physical and spiritual existence.

2. WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

All spirituality has to do with where we have placed our belief or trust or confidence and how this works out in living. Spirituality has a set of beliefs, values and attitudes in a comprehensive worldview, and how that influences ways of living or lifestyle. This includes setting

ambitions that amount to the cause of life's existence. In this regard, every person has a spirituality

What is biblical spirituality?

Biblical spirituality is the process of spiritual formation of a disciple of Jesus Christ for an authentic and fulfilled Christian life in the present world; bringing together the fundamental tenets of the Christian truths and the experience of living in God's presence, grace and love in our daily life. It is theology in action.

Spirituality is a useful term to describe how, individually and collectively, we personally appropriate our biblical faith in regard to God, humanity, sin and the world, and express this faith in terms of our basic attitudes, life-style and activity. Therefore, spirituality involves the whole person – body, mind, soul, place, relationships – in connection with the whole of creation throughout the era of time.

Spirituality has to do with our experiencing of God and with the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as outcomes of that experience.

Hence our spirituality begins with God who created us, and under his divine call, he gives us rebirth and conversion (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:38-39) and continues with sanctification or spiritual formation.

It involves our inner and outward lives. The ultimate goal of our spirituality is to become more like Christ, by daily being conformed to his image (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:13-16).

So spirituality has to do with applying our biblical faith to practical Christian living, through our being and doing, encompassing all our yearnings, aspirations and journey in Christ.

Sexuality and Spirituality are jointly characterized by Passion

Our worship is energized by passion; sexuality and sexual activity are driven by passion and our spirituality is inseparable from being passionate.

So, the common aspect among these three which link them by implication is "**passion**". The word passion refers to a strong and barely controllable emotion. Seen within our sexuality, male and female are passionate in intimate and intense relationship, and Song of Songs expresses that.

Seen within our spirituality, God and his people are passionate with each other. The death of Christ itself in which God pursued his people

to save them through the suffering and death of Jesus is known as "the Passion of Christ" – with synonyms crucifixion, suffering, agony, martyrdom.

Our worship to God as the only service we can render to the one who loves us calls for boundless passion in living for him. In all these, we see a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something that should cause God or us to act in some ways. Between humans passion can represent a strong sexual desire or romantic feeling for someone.

Passion is more than just enthusiasm or excitement. It is ambition that is materialized into action to put as much heart, mind, strength, energy, body and soul into something as is possible.

Passionate love involves intense feelings and sexual attraction. To be passionate, one is a state of intense longing for union with another. Passionate love clearly involves more than sexual attraction, intimacy and intense commitment. Intimacy is the feeling of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness. Commitment refers to the decision to maintain the relationship.

On this basis, the relationship between sexuality and worship is characterized by worship of some form, and amounts to the quality of our spirituality. As sexual beings – male and female, God designed us with normal sexual feelings, thoughts and energy.

What we do with those sexual thoughts or how direct sexual energy points to the quality of our spirituality, since these can leave us pure or impure. Our spirituality is what lays the basis of drawing near to God in worship.

God designed sex to be shared between two bodies, two minds, two hearts, and two spirits which unite together to become a one-flesh union.

Sexuality through a spiritual lens and spirituality through a sexual a lens

Looking at sexuality through a spiritual lens, and vice versa, is not a new concept. In the Song of Solomon, a man and a woman's desire for healthy sexual intimacy are celebrated.

In the book of Hosea, God uses the analogy of a husband's relentless pursuit of a sexually unfaithful bride to illustrate the depth of His own passion and commitment to His people. God obviously knew that "sexual metaphors" would teach us about ourselves and about Him.

Primarily the love of the bridegroom is described and then the growing love of the bride whose relationship to the bridegroom becomes firm and firmer until finally she comes into full enjoyment of his love. This development of love and confidence as well as the ripening experience finds its expression in the following words of the bride:

1. **My beloved is mine, and I am his; He feeds among the lilies** (2:16)
2. **I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feeds among the lilies** (6:3)
3. **I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me** (7:10).

Song of Songs takes the form of a dialogue between an unmarried man and woman, it celebrates love and sexual attraction and even sexual intercourse, often in explicit language. Toward the end of the book, the woman speaks to her beloved: **"Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as Death, passion as harsh as Sheol; its sparks are sparks of fire, flames of the divine."** (Song 8:6-7)

We see passion here, perplexingly and powerfully comparing love with death and fire, serving as a culmination of the book's exploration of human love or, and as a clue to the presence of the divine, giving reason as to why he created us male and female in what amounts to our sexuality.

Inviting her lover to place her on his breast and forearm like a seal, the narrator of Song 8:6 offers not only intimacy, but also her unrivaled passionate and protective force in all his thoughts and deeds.

The woman urges, even orders her lover to keep her close, like a stamp used for sealing documents, worn around the neck or on the arm, and perhaps more literally as the deep impression left by such a seal, a brand or tattoo as it were, permanently marking her beloved's body and heart.

She also gives voice to an implicit equality, in which, neither she nor her lover can resist their mutual attraction, which is both sexual and intensely emotional.

This is the sensuous love with erotic overtones which is both God's intent for the marriage relationship, but drawing from God and his people. The reality is God as the husband of Israel or Christ as the

husband of his bride, the church. This is what takes our maleness and femaleness into understanding spirituality in regard to our living, being and moving in God. Worship expresses this placement and connection.

Spirituality and sexuality present to us an enduring quest for a biblical reaffirmation of God's design for sexuality, without whose understanding and appreciation we would not be able to worship God.

Sexuality and spirituality are basically the same thing, or at least two sides of the same coin. We are both spiritual and sexual beings. And behind every sexual longing, there's an even deeper spiritual longing that call us to worship – whether in worthy manner or unworthy – but we worship.

So there is always much to learn about God through our understanding of human sexuality, and there is much to learn about our sexuality through a deeper exploration of God.

In our relationship with God therefore, there is always need to expose the deeper meaning behind sexual thoughts.

- Where do our sexual thoughts come from?
- What do we do with them?
- Where are the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual boundary lines?
- How far can we go in satisfying these overwhelming longings that we sometimes feel?
- And the most important question to consider is: Could there be an even deeper spiritual longing beneath our sexual longings?

Our failures to find satisfaction in God form a basis on which we end up settling for sex as an exclusive alternative for directing our innermost energy and in a form of worship. Or sometimes, as we search for God because of our deepest need for relationships, we end up trying to settle for sex, especially if we search wrongly or in wrong places.

People with sexual struggles often find it difficult to connect on an intimate spiritual level with God and others, but this is precisely the best prescription for understanding and overcoming any issue. Our sexual wounds originate in relationships, so we're more likely to find healing in relationship.

Wounded people say to themselves, “I must be the only person in my church who struggles with inappropriate sexual thoughts and fantasies”.

We all have our struggles because we are both spiritual and sexual beings. So we all have our secrets because as created by God and in his image, we are far more alike than we are different. We just need to understand the next steps to healing so that we may love and worship God with an exertion of all our hearts, souls, minds and strength.

We are unmasking the great unmentionable: The God-centered sex education

When we were growing up, most of us never bothered consulting our parents as they would have died of embarrassment and locked us in our room until we were 40. And we certainly didn't ask our spiritual leader, because we figured they probably didn't even have sex.

Besides, they likely would have banned us from the church building altogether if they had found out what kind of sexual thoughts actually go through our heads -- even on Sundays...after we have taken Holy Communion our sexual thoughts are with us! Sometimes we are looking at each other while we are taking communion instead of beholding the cross of Jesus!

In trying to unmask the great unmentionable, if we fear that our request will be met with horror ... disgust... fear...anxiety...suspicion... judgment, perhaps even with bulging eyes and popping neck veins, then how will we navigate our way through this foreign territory?

You may or may not be comfortable with these topics, but we need to discuss them. Ignoring the elephant in all of our living rooms certainly won't make it disappear, but causes it to mysteriously grow larger and larger in our sexified society, in ways immoral ways that provoke God to anger. This may hinder our relationship with God and thus our worship of Him.

So in regard to the integration of spirituality and sexuality we have to ask where our sexual thoughts come from and whether what we do with them bear spiritual implications. We have to ask how far we can go in satisfying these overwhelming longings that we sometimes feel without offending God who created us with such feelings.

The challenge we face is how and where to direct what emotion, affection or passion and in what measure, as well as when! When our hearts are drawn by our deepest affections – whether for our love-

mate who is human or God himself who is divine, we end up in worship.

If sexuality is God's invention, and it is, then we should be able to teach these things in the church for a roadmap as we search for answers to our questions about all-things-sexual. If we do not teach these things, they will still be alive in us, and society will teach them to us.

Sexuality (maleness and femaleness) is one of the most important aspects in helping us to understand who we are and how we relate to God and to one another. It is also on the basis of human sexuality that we understand sexual purity.

The most pure undertakings of life are associated with sex and sexuality and they can render us pure and righteous or impure, filthy and defiled in body, mind and spirit.

Several specific sexual relationships are forbidden in the Bible. Among these are homosexuality, bestiality (sex with animals), incest (sexual relations with close family members), fornication (sexual relations outside of marriage) and adultery (sexual relations with another person's spouse), and rape (forced sex).

To emphasize the seriousness of these kinds of offenses, **the penalty was death** (Lev. 20:10-21). If God is so serious about these issues to the point death, then they are as close to his heart as we ourselves are.

Sexual Communion

In a marriage context, oneness on the level of spirit and soul provides the basis for physical oneness in marriage. From a biblical standpoint, sex should not be regarded as "making love" but as expressing love. Sexual intimacy was designed to be an expression of spiritual and psychological (mental, emotional, and volitional) intimacy.

The two bodies that come together should house two persons who are already together. The sexual relationship was never intended to lead to a good marriage, but to be the result of a good marriage relationship.

Our culture has cheapened and debased the idea of sexuality by minimizing this dimension of personal meaning and ignoring the

boundaries originally set by God. Sex has become associated with coarse humor, promiscuity, obsession, perversion, exploitation, and abuse. It is an oppressive master of those who pursue physical pleasure as a solution for their personal problems.

We should never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the enemy's ground.

Sexuality Is Beautiful: In the Canticles, as in Gen 1, sexuality, along with the rest of God's creation, is "very good." As in Gen 2, lovers in the Song stand "naked and ... not ashamed" before each other.

Sexuality Is Pleasurable: As an insight into the nature of sexuality from the Song of Songs, we note one aspect that is not mentioned. Analysis of the wedding night (4:1-5:1) provides insights into the sexual intimacy between bride and groom and of the final section of the Song, summarizing how love is awakened, defined, developed, and enjoyed.

Conclusion: Developing sexual purity and maintaining worship
First, recognize that purity is possible

Second, know that sexual intensity does not translate into sexual intimacy and sexual intensity is simply not the same as intimacy. If it were, then prostitutes and porn stars would be the most emotionally and relationally fulfilled people on the planet. That doesn't seem to be the case.

Does the entangling of arms and legs and the exchange of bodily fluids scratch the human itch for intimate connection? Or is sex just the closest thing we can imagine to what we're really craving: a deeper spiritual and emotional connection, both with our Creator and with His creation?

If deep and spiritual intimacy is what humans seek, then relational or sexual intensity can never satisfy our deepest longings or heal our oldest wounds. Soul-deep intimacy is what we seek, and it's ultimately found in the God who created human sexuality.

In order to maintaining sexual purity and thus bring acceptable worship to God

- recognize and reflect upon the consequences of sexual sin
- practice personal accountability

- Watch the imaginations of the heart

We cannot close our eyes to the biblical understanding of the heart and the wicked imaginations of their own hearts. Evil desires and evil behaviors are the supreme threat. They are spawned from the deep motivations of a heart that resists repentance and the will of God.

These deep motivations create a false reality of one's own making that denies the reality of God. It is critical to understand that whatever a person thinks they know theologically and spiritually their mind is affected by the imaginations of his heart.

A person may justify the imaginations of his heart by his past and present pain. One then finds relief through false intimacy or they may actualize their imaginations through sexual encounters with needy women or men who are looking for a listening ear or a man seeking use a woman sexually.

In the end, people are deceived into believing their relational needs will be met and their search for significance secured through these activities. Only a biblical paradigm of the heart will effectively alert them to these mortal dangers to the soul.

Do you not know?

Christians are to avoid all forms of sexual sin, since the Christian's body is the indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that those who are sexually immoral are separated from God and will not share in God's inheritance upon death.

1 Cor. 6:9-20 ⁹**Do you not know** that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

¹³The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁵**Do you not know** that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶**Do you not know** that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is

said, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

¹⁹**Do you not know** that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Key Verses:

Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4 - **"Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."**

Song of Solomon 5:1 - **"Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers."**

Song of Solomon 8:6-7 - **"Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned."**