

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

The Battle of the Sexes

Song 5:2–6:9

Let's take our Bibles together and turn to the book of Song of Solomon. Our passage today is Song of Solomon 5:2–6:9.

A little more than thirty years ago there was a famous book that was written and released called, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. It was not that controversial when it first came out. In fact, it was considered brilliant. The author, John Gray, unveiled the dramatic differences between men and women. He used tropes and truisms and stereotypes to differentiate the sexes, sometimes unflatteringly so. And yet, people typically nodded their heads and said, “Yeah, I can see that.”

Well, that was thirty plus years ago. Times have changed. And even shortly after the book came out, I heard critiques of men saying, “Yeah, I’m not like most men.” And women saying, “Yeah, I’m not like most women. I’m more like the way he describes men in that book than women.”

And then, confusion mounted in our culture. And then, third-wave feminism hit. And then, we had the #metoo movement. And then, we had men pretending to be women, and women pretending to be men. And people applauded that delusion as brave and even desirable.

And here we are in 2026, as a church, reading a book that’s 3,000 years old, not 30 years old. And you know what the conclusion of all this is for the average, normie Christian in America. Here it is, let me state it as clearly and as brilliantly as I can—men and women are different. Any debate about that?

And yes, men will slide up and down the spectrum of emotional vs. logical and so will women. But they don’t cross categories. Men have a way! And women have a different way! And that’s good.

And that leads us to Song of Solomon 5:2, where wouldn’t you know it—men and women are presented differently. The woman has an entirely feminine experience when she’s struggling in a matter with her husband. Likewise the husband has an entirely masculine experience in dealing with his wife.

And there’s a little thing that the text alludes to that we’ll just call “conflict.”¹ Does that ever happen in marriage? Do husbands and wives ever misunderstand each other? Hurt each other? Miscommunicate to one another? Miss one another’s signals?

The title of our message today is “The Battle of the Sexes.” And the goal of today is not to intensify that battle or to arm you for your next altercation. The goal is acknowledgement, understanding, resolution, and (dare I say it) consummation.² Or re-consummation, if you will.

Go ahead and write this down as #1 in your notes. There are four story beats in this passage. We’re going to see 1) The rise of anxiety, 2) The Shulamite’s admiration of her husband, 3) The assurance of commitment, and 4) The husband’s admiration of the Shulamite.

¹ O’Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 86: “We have seen their Edenic love. But now in 5:2ff. we walk east of Eden. We take a brief reprieve from relational paradise. Momentarily we leave the ‘uninterrupted revelries’ of idealism (1:2–5:1) and step into the inevitable ‘realisms of married life.’”

² Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 6: “All couples fight. Good couples fight clean. Bad couples fight dirty... Good conflict leads to a resolution in which both parties feel peace, and a new platform for communication and cooperation is established between them. Bad conflict leads to a victory for one and a loss for the other, which results in some degree of hidden resentment and bitterness that are stored away for a future fight.”

But let's start here. The first story beat has to do with the Shulamite's fever dream, where there is...

1) The rise of **anxiety** (5:2–8)

When we last saw this couple, they were enjoying the goodness of love, sex, and marriage as God created it. They let nature do the talking... and the young women of Jerusalem celebrated it. Their monogamy and commitment to one another formed a strong contrast with King Solomon and his harem.

That's the good side of monogamy. But monogamy can create some problems. Look at **verse 2**. This is the Shulamite speaking.

² *I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking.*

The indication in **verse 2** is that this is a dream. In fact, the dream is very similar to what she dreamed previously in **3:1–5**.³ But there's a twist here. In that previous dream, she had no husband/lover in the bed with her. And she had to go look for one. Here, she has one. And he's knocking at the door.

And he says,

"Open⁴ to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

Alright, so this is a dream. The way we know that is because of **verse 2**, "I slept, but my heart was awake." Also, she's locked her husband out of her room. In what world does that make sense?⁵ **Even in a dysfunctional marriage, you rarely have a situation like that.** In a few moments, we'll see this dream get even more fantastical.

So what we have here is the playing out of this woman's anxieties with her husband in a dream-like scenario.⁶ He wants to visit with her. He is sweet to her. All that she wanted and hoped for in a previous dream is here for the taking. He loves her. He wants to be with her. He's talking sweetly to her.

Look at **verse 3**.

³ *I had put off my garment; how⁷ could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?*

He wants to be with her. But she's not feeling it. He wants to be intimate. She says essentially, **"I'm tired tonight."** **Verse 3** is the Hebrew equivalent of **"I have a headache. Not tonight!"**⁸

Look at **verse 4**.

⁴ *My beloved put his hand⁹ to the latch,¹⁰ and my heart was thrilled within me.¹¹*

³ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 122: "Being sleepless and yet dreaming aptly captures the idea of the 'waking dream' (see comment on 3:1, although the wording there is different). In both passages the woman is sleepless and is dreaming about her lover."

⁴ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 87: "She has locked the door. Is it a literal door or her 'private' door? Scholars disagree. A door and a hand going through the small opening in the door, and then the arousal that follows is an easy target for double entendres."

⁵ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 412: "No meaningful literal interpretation of this verse has been offered. The event is harsh and inexplicable at this level."

⁶ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 88: "Maybe this is a dream, as many suggest. The illogical character and scene shifts remind me of my own dreams."

⁷ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 124: "The rhetorical איככה, 'how,' here and in Esth 8:6 (its only other occurrence), has a melodramatic tone of exaggeration, 'How could I possibly.'"

⁸ Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 6.

⁹ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 411: "Inasmuch as the word 'hand' is used in Hebrew as well as in other Semitic languages for the male member, the meaning of the line as a sexual metaphor is clear."

¹⁰ "In ancient Israel, the doors of ... domestic dwellings were locked with a wooden bolt and a tumbler lock mounted on the inside of the door.... A wooden box containing loose pins was attached to the inside of the door above the wooden bolt, or lock case, into which the pins drop when the bar is moved to lock position. To unlock the door the key is inserted into a slot in the bolt until the matching teeth of the key push up the moveable pins so that the sliding bolt can be drawn. When the key is withdrawn, the bolt can be secured by sliding it horizontally into a position in which the pins drop from the box into the slots of the bolt. To make the tumbler locks more difficult to pick, they were mounted on the inside of the door and *reached by passing one's hand and key through a hole in the door* (my italics)." King and Stager, 31–33, quoted in Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 124–5.

¹¹ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 125: "The effect of the man putting his hand through the hole is to raise the erotic level; indeed, the woman became sexually aroused by this action. This verse is frequently seen as hinting at sexual intercourse. That is not to say

So the husband continues to woo and pursue, like a good husband should. And eventually she comes around.¹² Gary Smalley said once, **“Men are like microwaves and women are like crockpots.”**¹³ *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Pick your metaphor.

I think Smalley’s statement is an astute observation. It’s not an absolute principle, but generally speaking it’s true. Men are generally speaking ready for intimacy just about any time and just about anywhere. Women on the other hand typically need time to warm up slowly.

I heard a counselor say once that women will complain all the time that on their honeymoon, their husbands were slow and conscientious and thoughtful. But then they lost sight of that discipline after a few years of marriage, and they got a little sloppy with the art of romance and intimacy.¹⁴ **That happens in marriage.**

And here’s the thing. God has rigged sexuality.¹⁵ **God has made it where men and women approach it differently with different speeds. And if, as a married person, you selfishly pursue what you want without any thought for your spouse, you both are going to end up frustrated. God’s ideal for sexuality is found when both parties are sacrificially giving of themselves to delight their partner.**

And in many cases that means that a man needs to slow down and take time to woo his wife and love his wife and speak tenderly to his wife. And often a wife needs to kick it up a notch to enjoy and delight in her husband.

And this woman, after a momentary period of reluctance comes around. And her heart was starting to turn. But her pace was too slow and too deliberate for her husband.

Look at **verse 5**.

⁵ *I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh,*¹⁶ *on the handles of the bolt.*

Myrrh is used throughout this book as a kind of olfactory aphrodisiac.¹⁷ That’s the case here. She is responsive now. She’s prepared. But she’s too late.

⁶ *I opened*¹⁸ *to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.*

Her readiness was lost on him. He perceived her deliberateness as disinterest. He’s hurt by it. He’s gone. She’s hurt by it. She’s distraught.

that intercourse actually took place here (it did not), but that the wording plants in the mind of the reader thoughts of the sex act.”

¹² Duguid, *Song of Songs*, 101: “The couple’s desires end up moving in the same direction, but they are not synchronized, as is often the case in marriage.”

¹³ Quoted in Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 5.

¹⁴ Tommy Nelson, *The Book of Romance: What Solomon Says About Love, Sex, and Intimacy* (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson, 2023), chapter 8: “God has a much different desire for marriage. In His plan, the romance continues throughout the marriage. In fact, it builds and grows into a loving and passionate marriage that is even more wonderful in its latter stages than in its beginning. A marriage that cools and grows stale is not biblical! It is worldly wisdom that makes it acceptable. Rebel against such error!”

¹⁵ Nelson and Delk, *Better Love Now!*, 187: “If you haven’t noticed, sex is rigged. The deck is stacked by God. Men and women are different, so that both of them get stretched in the area of sexuality. Imagine if women had men’s sex drives. Wouldn’t that be great? The problem is that we’d be like little rabbits all the time. And sex would just feed your lust. God wasn’t going to let it happen that way. Imagine if men had women’s sex drive. Marriage would be this incredible, long conversation. You could talk for days; you’d forget to eat. Instead, God rigged sex so that sometimes a woman has to consciously decide, ‘I’m going to give myself to this man.’ And a man has to say, ‘You know, I’m going to slow down a little bit and talk to her and hold her.’”

¹⁶ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 125: “Liquid myrrh is myrrh-scented oil, as in ‘oil of myrrh’ (Esth 2:12), in contrast to צרור המור in 1:13, a bag of powdered myrrh. The choice of myrrh adds an erotic touch, for myrrh occurs several times as a symbol of lovemaking (4:14; 5:1).”

¹⁷ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 411: “Myrrh was used as an aphrodisiac (Prov 7:17). Even so, the statement that her hand is drenched with myrrh (an expensive, exotic ointment) is another detail that makes the song unintelligible if taken literally.”

¹⁸ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 411: “It is better to take this as a continuation of the metaphor of her sexual excitement as she ‘opens the door’ for him.”

Once again, this is a dream. If only this kind of stuff only happened in dreams! This is the stuff of marriage. This is what miscommunication and missing each other's signals looks like. And as you well know, lots of times our daytime anxieties are manifested in our nighttime dreams... or nightmares.

And here's where the dream gets especially fantastical. Look at **verse 7**.

⁷ *The watchmen found me as they went about in the city;*

We saw that earlier in **chapter 3**, when she was looking for a spouse previously.

*they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls.*¹⁹

Wow! Okay! That didn't happen previously. What's that about?

Like I said previously, a Hebrew woman would not wander the streets of the city in the middle of the night. She wouldn't do that as a single woman. She wouldn't do that as a married woman. And also, the watchmen of a Hebrew city would never treat a woman like this. This is unthinkable in a God-fearing society. If anything, they would escort her home... not beat her... bruise her... and unveil her.

So what is this? **Well, it's like some of your dreams. They start out with some semblance of reality. But then they quickly descend into the bizarre and ridiculous.** And this is her feeling the weight of her disinterest in her husband. This is her manifesting her feelings of self-incrimination and self-flagellation in a dream.²⁰

Previously she wanted a husband... she longed for her husband... she searched for her husband... now she has him, and she's alienated herself from him. There's a loneliness to that which makes her feel like she's single again. And she's beating herself up over it.²¹

Do married people ever feel that way? Do married women even manifest that anxiety? Do married men ever feel rejected in the marriage relationship? This is the stuff of marriage. These feelings actually happen. This is the risk associated with committing yourself to one person for the rest of your life.

And here's how this first section closes. It closes oddly. She says... look at **verse 8**.

⁸ *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,*

You might think she's going to give her regular refrain, **"Do not awaken love until it pleases."** But she doesn't do that. It's not the right place to do that because she's not exactly enjoying the pleasures and goodness of the marital relationship right now. She's not coaching up the daughters of Jerusalem here.

No! Instead she says almost hysterically...

if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

It's an odd place for these women to find themselves. Previously they'd been called to an oath to not awaken love too early. Now they are being called to an oath to help this woman "find" her husband and communicate her love for him.²²

And I wonder at this point if the "daughters of Jerusalem" are thinking to themselves, **"Is marriage really worth it? This lady's a mess! She's lovesick for this man. And they're going through this weird conflict. And now she's recruiting us to help her resolve it."**

¹⁹ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 126: "Unlike the successful search in 3:1–5, this one is unsuccessful. For a second time in this episode, she fails to come together with her lover."

²⁰ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 411–2: "It is not that she is physically alone, but that emotionally and psychologically she suddenly feels herself abandoned... the manner in which the man seems to appear and disappear with amazing abruptness here and in 3:1–5 should warn us against a literal interpretation." Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 127: "I do think that the scene is symbolic. The watchmen's actions make the woman's fantasy even more surreal and her quest for her lover more hopeless. It is through her eyes that we see these actions. What do they mean to her? Perhaps the physical and sexual attack upon the woman represents the emotional pain she feels at not finding her lover, the agony of unconsummated love."

²¹ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 90: "What's going on here? Has she found him? Has he found her? Did they ever leave each other's presence? Was this all a bad dream? We don't know, and it doesn't matter, for the poetic point is clear. The chasm of separateness has been filled emotionally and *physically*."

²² Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 128: "Because the woman's search for her lover was thus far unsuccessful, and she is not on the brink of making love, the charge to the Jerusalem women differs from before (2:7; 3:5; 8:4)."

There's a telling moment in the NT where Paul alludes to what we see play out here in this Shulamite's dream. And it's a moment where he tries to convince the Corinthians that it's better for them to stay single like he is.

Here's what Paul says, "I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband" (1 Cor 7:32–34). **Every married man and woman in the room reads that and says, "Uh-huh! Uh-huh! Uh-huh! That's true."** There's a cost associated with marriage. There are anxieties... and conflicts... and challenges in marriage, because... newsflash... men and women are created differently.

I had a professor at Moody years ago. And I was telling people that my wife and I have a cross-cultural marriage. She's from Croatia. I'm from Texas. And he said this, "Every marriage is cross-cultural." Because men and women are created differently.

Last week I gave you this stark contrast between sex in the context of monogamous marriage and sex outside the context of monogamous marriage. And I hope that I was convincing that the first option is the best of the two options. But there is another way according to Paul—the way of singleness. Paul says "those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that" (1 Cor 7:28).²³

Now watch how this married woman enters an imaginary conversation with the single women of Jerusalem, because this is insightful. I do think this conversation is imaginary, but this is the kind of conversation that a married woman might have with her single friends.

Look at **verse 9**. These are the virgin daughters of Jerusalem speaking.²⁴

⁹ *What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?*

In other words, **"Why's he so special? What's he to us? Why should we help you? Why are you dragging us into this? With an oath no less!"**

At this point, the wife could have said, **"You know what, that's a good question! Who cares about my lousy, no-good husband! I'll just drop him for someone else. Maybe Solomon wants another concubine in his harem! Maybe I can find a better man out there on the open market!"**

She could've said that. But she doesn't say that. And behind her fears and anxieties, she doesn't want that. Look how she answers. Look at **verse 10**.

¹⁰ *My beloved is radiant and ruddy,²⁵ distinguished among ten thousand.*

Oh, wow! This is good. This is like the parallel of what her husband did for her in the previous passage. He was admiring her from her head down to her hips. Now she's admiring him.

And wouldn't you know it, she admires different things about him than what he admires about her. Let me say it this way, a little more crudely, she admires different body parts of his than he does of her. It's almost as if the Bible knows that men and women are different.

Look at **verse 11**.

²³ For more on singleness, see Tony Caffey, "The Biblical Theology of Singleness" Messiah Bible Church, 03-05-25: <http://messiahbible.org/marriage-and-our-maker-the-biblical-theology-of-singleness>

²⁴ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 128: "For the first and only time, the Jerusalem women become active participants in the scene, with brief speaking parts in 5:9 and 6:1. They are a link between the woman and her absent lover, so that when she recites the Body Description in vv. 10–16, she is reciting it to the women of Jerusalem, not directly to her lover (as the man did to his beloved in 4:1–7). By means of the literary vehicle of the Jerusalem women, the woman expresses and bolsters, to herself and to the audience, how attractive her lover is and how much she is attracted to him."

²⁵ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 132: "The pair צה and אדם (literally, 'bright and ruddy') also occurs in Lam 4:7 to signal vigor. Similarly, in the Mesopotamian physiognomic omens, 'red' means 'healthy, flushed,' 'bright' means 'radiant,' and 'black' means 'unhealthy.'"

¹¹ His head is the finest gold;²⁶ his locks are wavy, black as a raven.

¹² His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.

The wife was described in the previous passage as having black hair and white teeth. That was an attractive combination and contrast. The husband in this passage has black hair that contrasts with the white of his eyes.

The metaphor of doves bathing in milk is a little difficult. Perhaps the doves are the iris and the pupil, and the milk is the sclera (i.e., the white of the eyes). Doves sitting beside a full pool is more impressionistic than representative of how his eyes actually look. This is a description of peace and gentleness. She finds his eyes peaceful and delightful.

It's interesting that both the man and the woman fixate on the eyes. Because the eyes are the window of the soul. And there's something engaging about locking eyes with your spouse. There's a look and there's a connection that only takes place in the marriage covenant. You know her looks and she knows your looks in ways that nobody else does.

You don't look a prostitute in the eye. You don't look into the soul of someone you're having a one-night stand with. When sex is commoditized and depersonalized, it becomes soulless. That's not what these two experience. They merge not just their bodies, but also their souls, through the windows of their eyes.

Look at **verse 13**.

¹³ His cheeks are like beds of spices,²⁷ mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh.

Not the most masculine features here. We'll get to that in a moment. But this is a description of his tenderness and his approachability. He's not uncouth. He's not a slob or an oaf. He's genteel. He's a gentleman. He's conscientious in the way he interacts with her. **Take a note, men in the room. You can still be tender and romantic after you get married.**

Tommy Nelson would always say that men treat dating like they're out on a hunt. They go out there and they try to take down a prized elk. And once they do that... once they do the hard work of hunting and procuring, they take that elk to the taxidermist, and they have it mounted over their mantle for all to see. And that's how some men treat their "trophy wives."

But that's not how it's supposed to be. You don't stop being gentle and romantic when you get married. The wedding is the beginning of that, not the end.²⁸ **You marry to woo; you don't just woo to marry.**²⁹

Look at **verse 14**.

¹⁴ His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires.³⁰

¹⁵ His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold.³¹ His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars.³²

²⁶ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 133: "His hair is not blond or two-toned, and his head is not gold-plated like a statue. The gold metals are invoked for their shininess or luminosity, and they also carry the sense of high value."

²⁷ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 414: "In describing his cheeks and lips in terms of fragrant spices, she is not referring to their appearance but their effect on her. In particular she seems to have his kisses in mind (the connection between spices and lovemaking is made also in 4:14 and 5:5; cf. 1:2)."

²⁸ Duguid, *Song of Songs*, 98: "Entering marriage is not the end of your search for a spouse. It is the beginning of a lifelong pursuit, as you continually sin against each other, and then ask for forgiveness, pushing through the obstacles that threaten to divide you in search of true intimacy."

²⁹ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 94: "Don't lose sight of how special your spouse is. Open your eyes to your beloved. What do you admire about him or her? What is outstanding? What are you grateful to God for—the way she looks, the way he talks, the way she cares for you, the way he sacrifices for you, his or her friendship?"

³⁰ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 136: "Hebrew: סַפִּירִים, often rendered 'sapphires,' is better understood as lapis lazuli (*HALOT*, s.v. 2:765, סַפִּיר, and NIV). A lapis lazuli body is a bright, healthy, and beautiful body, as in Lam 4:7, סַפִּיר גִּזְרָתָם, "their form/physique was lapis lazuli.""

³¹ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 89: "His head and feet are golden. That's her way of saying, 'From top to bottom he is magnificent, pure, costly, divine—like gold. He is superior to all others.'"

Alabaster is a stone, but unlike many other stones, it is relatively soft and easy to carve. This is her way of saying that his legs are strong and shapely. When she says that his appearance is like “Lebanon, choice as the cedars,” she’s saying he’s tall and stately. He’s powerfully built like the most valuable trees in the forest.

One of my great pet-peeves is going to the gym and seeing grown men preen in front of the mirror, like they’re Arnold Schwarzenegger. I can’t stand it. It’s so obnoxious. I don’t know, maybe it’s jealousy on my part.

But no man looks this good, even on his best day—arms of gold! Legs of alabaster! Polished ivory bedecked with sapphires! What is that!!!!³³

And that lets you know that this is not a realistic depiction of the man. No man looks like this! She’s not describing him as he is, but how he makes her feel. This is impressionistic, not realistic.³⁴

And that’s clear in **verse 16**.

¹⁶ His mouth³⁵ is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend,

He has called her “my friend” (רַעֲיָתִי [ra ‘yāti]) multiple times throughout this book (1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4). She has typically referred to him as “my beloved” or דֹּדִי (dōdī) through this book (1:13, 14; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 16; 6:2, 3; 7:10, 11, 13; 8:14). But this is the only place in the book where she calls him “my friend.” He calls her רַעֲיָתִי. She calls him רַעִי (rē ‘ī, “my friend”) here, the masculine form of “friend.” He is her lover. He is her beloved. But he is also her friend.

¹⁶ His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved [דֹּדִי] and this is my friend [רַעִי], O daughters of Jerusalem.

Remember now, she’s trying to convince the women of Jerusalem to help her find her husband. She’s basically saying, **“This is why I want you to help me find him. That’s why this is important to me. He’s my beloved (דֹּדִי). He’s my friend... my best friend.”**

And there might be some women today who say of their husband, “Yeah, my husband used to have black hair like a raven. Now it’s more salt than pepper. If you know what I mean!”

“He used to have a body like polished ivory, but the second law of thermodynamics has taken its toll on him. His legs of alabaster have gotten a little squishy!”

Look, that’s okay. It happens. Those imperfections belong to you. He’s your beloved. He’s your friend. And as the hot and heavy passion of lovemaking and baby-making starts to wane over the years, the goodness of friendship and relationship will rise.

And no matter how long you’ve been married... no matter how many years have passed, as you grow old together, you can always say this... you should say this to your husband, wives...

¹⁶ His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend,³⁶

Write this down as a second point in your notes. After the rise of anxiety in the first section, now we’ve got...

³² Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 414–5: “The cedars of Lebanon are proverbial types of majesty and beauty. As in the other admiration songs, she is describing how she feels about him rather than how he looks.”

³³ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 129: “We should not picture the lover as actually having gold arms, an ivory belly, marble thighs, and golden legs. It is a *metaphoric* description; he has arms that *resemble* gold rods, thighs that *are compared to* marble pillars, and so on. Beautiful and precious objects are often used as metaphors to describe people. They signify color, luster, and value—that is, beauty.”

³⁴ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 129: “The description is an idealized portrait of the lover as the epitome of masculine beauty and worth. He is the most good-looking and desirable man in the world, a handsome treasure. His physical features are compared to an array of the sweetest scents, radiant colors, and exquisite and valuable materials.”

³⁵ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 138: “חֵיק, ‘palate,’ is the locus of taste and of speech. This could mean that his speech is sweet, that he speaks sweet words, but more likely it refers to the taste of his mouth when the lovers kiss (cf. 2:3)... In 2:3, the man tasted good to the *woman’s mouth* (she is tasting all of him), whereas here it is the *man’s mouth* that tastes good to the woman, that is, she is tasting the inside of his mouth and it tastes like candy (also in 7:10).”

³⁶ O’Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 90: “She thinks he’s more masculine than Michelangelo’s *David*, but it’s not his biceps that she misses most. Rather, it’s his companionship or friendship—‘This is my friend’ (v. 16).”

2) The Shulamite's **admiration** of her **husband** (5:9–16)

Now watch how the women reply to her. This dialogue between them is instructive. Look at **6:1**.

¹ *Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?*

This is a continuation of what was communicated earlier. She made them oath to help her find her husband. They said, “**Why should we help you? What makes him so special?**” Then she talked about how precious he was to her. And now they say, “**Where’s he at? Let’s go find him.**”

And interestingly, she knows where he’s at.³⁷ Look at **verse 2**.

² *My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies.*

Now there’s probably a double entendre there.³⁸ There’s the statement about grazing in the gardens. That might be a reference to a shepherd taking care of his sheep. And he went down to his garden, meaning his place of work. **So this man, like many men, has buried himself in work. His pursuit of her has been unsuccessful. He doesn’t go find another woman; there is no other woman for him. The only mistress he knows is the work mistress.**

But even in that, there are allusions to something sexual in nature: garden, beds of spices, gathering lilies... those are terms that have been used already in this book for sexual delight and pleasure. So she’s saying to the women of Jerusalem, “**He’s desirous of me and our communion together.**”

And here’s the kicker. Here’s the key point and the key moment in all this. Look at **verse 3**.

³ *I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.*

Just so you know, “beloved” is singular. There’s only one beloved for her. And “I” is singular. And “am” is singular. And “is” is singular.³⁹ And “mine” is singular. And “he” is singular.⁴⁰ This is one *singular* woman declaring her undivided devotion to one *singular* man. **“Take that Solomon! This is the better way!”**

Write this down as #3 in your notes. Here’s the emphasis of the third story beat.

3) The assurance of **commitment** (6:1–3)

What does this woman do when anxiety gets the best of her? She goes to her friends. She talks it out. She remembers the goodness of her husband and the goodness of love, sex, and marriage. And she remembers her covenant.⁴¹

³ *I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine*⁴²

And by the way, she said this already in a previous passage. She said this in **2:16**. But she said it differently. Back then she said, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Now she reverses that and says, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” **What’s the significance of that?**⁴³

³⁷ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 412: “She is not yet able to grapple with the emotional turmoil of her relationship with the man and needs the support of other women. She perhaps feels that they can empathize with her experience in a way he cannot. In addition, it is important that she calls to the Jerusalem girls who are themselves still virgins. She has not yet reconciled herself to the fact that she is no longer one of them.”

³⁸ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 415: “As in 4:15–5:1, his going down to his garden refers to his coming to make love to her; and as in 2:1–2, the ‘lilies’ refer to the woman herself.”

³⁹ Technically, this verse is verbless in Hebrew. But the context makes clear that verbs are implied. And based upon the use of the nouns and pronouns, the verbs implicitly are singular.

⁴⁰ In this case, there is no pronoun. It’s assumed under the participial form of “grazes” or “shepherds” (רָעָה [rā-’ā(h)]), which is masculine singular.

⁴¹ Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 6: “She had absolutely no doubts about his commitment to her or her commitment to him. Regardless of the conflict they had—their spat, their argument, their difference of opinion, their momentary display of bad behavior—they were committed to having an ‘us’ relationship. They were one.”

⁴² Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 415–6: “In reaffirming that she and her lover belong to each other, she is both asserting the exclusiveness of the relationship and further distancing herself from her attachment to the Jerusalem girls and to her maidenhood.”

⁴³ O’Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 93: “Perhaps this is not significant, but perhaps there is a shift from selfishness to selflessness. Either way, 5:3 and 6:3 are worlds apart, and the chasm of their separation has been bridged by selflessness—‘I am not my own; I am my beloved’s.’”

Iain Duguid states as follows, “Instead of beginning with ‘My beloved is mine,’ this time she says, ‘I am my beloved’s.’ This is significant because it was precisely the failure to remember that ‘I am my beloved’s’ that triggered this whole episode. She was reluctant to get up and open the door because she was thinking only of herself and her own desires. She was thinking, ‘My body is mine, and it belongs in my comfortable bed right now,’ forgetting that her body actually belongs to her husband, just as his belongs to her.”⁴⁴

And that doesn’t mean that the husband can bypass the importance of wooing and pursuing. There’s a middle ground to be found here. Both parties (husband and wife) have to compromise and accommodate the other. Marriage is compromise. Marriage involves hurting each other, repenting, and forgiving.⁴⁵ And if you are single right now and want to get married, but you don’t want to repent, forgive, and compromise, do us all a favor and don’t get married!

And if you are married right now, and you don’t want to repent or forgive... If you don’t want to remember your vows and the promises that you’ve made... If you don’t want to say, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine”... Then I pray, “Holy Spirit bring conviction. Change that heart right now, Lord!”

To that you might say, “Pastor Tony, you don’t understand, my spouse hurt me. It’s hard to forgive.” Okay. Get in line. Find me a husband or a wife who never hurt his or her spouse, and I’ll find you a Yeti somewhere in the Alaskan wilderness! This is part of the marriage experience, because you married a sinner. And your spouse married a sinner too.

And to that you might say, “But Pastor Tony, my husband (or my wife) cheated on me.” Okay. That’s a different issue. That’s a violation of the covenant. I’ve dealt with that issue before and the matter of divorce and remarriage. You can go watch those sermons online.⁴⁶ But maybe, just maybe, God wants to heal that marriage... if both parties are willing. I’ve seen it done. I’ve seen God restore the seemingly unrestorable. And rebuild the assurance of commitment.

If you need to have a conversation or prayer on a matter like that, please come forward at the end of the service.

Let’s get back to the text. Look at **verse 4**.

⁴ *You are beautiful as Tirzah,⁴⁷ my love, lovely as Jerusalem*

You might have guessed already, but the man starts to speak in **verse 4**. He hasn’t said much up to this point in the passage. And you might remember that I told you at the beginning of this book, the woman speaks twice as much as the man.

But when the man does speak, he acquits himself well. And that’s the case here.

⁴⁴ Duguid, *Song of Songs*, 104.

⁴⁵ Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 7: “Nothing brings about reconciliation quicker in a relationship than these two elements: (1) a repentant heart on the part of the person who has wronged another, and (2) a heart overflowing with unconditional love and forgiveness on the part of the person who has been wronged... In any conflict, each spouse is wise to have a repentant and a forgiving heart.”

⁴⁶ See Tony Caffey, “Marriage and Our Maker: Marriage and Divorce (Part 1),” Messiah Bible Church, 02-19-25: <https://www.messiahbible.org/marriage-and-our-maker-marriage-and-divorce-part-1> and “Marriage and Our Maker: Marriage and Divorce (Part 2),” Messiah Bible Church, 02-26-25, <https://www.messiahbible.org/marriage-and-our-maker-marriage-and-divorce-part-2>.

⁴⁷ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 417n145: “This serves to establish that the Song dates from this period. The argument that Tirzah was actually not the city but some unknown woman of the ancient world renowned for her beauty is not convincing in light of both the biblical references to the city (1 Kgs 14:17; 15:33; etc.; cf. Gordis, *Song*, 92) and the parallel to Jerusalem in this verse. The argument of Fox (*Song*, 151) that Tirzah was “probably half-legendary by the time the Song was composed” is special pleading. There is no evidence that Tirzah ever obtained legendary status (like Babylon), and there is no clear reason why a late postexilic poet would allude to a city that had long passed its prime as an example of splendor.”

⁴ You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love,⁴⁸ lovely as Jerusalem, awesome⁴⁹ as an army with banners.

Tirzah was an important city in Solomon's day. It later became a capital city in northern Israel. And Jerusalem was the prized city of the Hebrews throughout the entirety of the OT and even today. So likening his wife to these two prized, beautiful cities is not off-putting.⁵⁰

But there may be more to this than meets the eye. Tirzah in Hebrew means "delight." And Jerusalem means "foundation of peace." So he might be intimating here that his wife is a "delight" to him. She's the place where he finds his peace. I know what that's like.

And don't look past the last statement there in **verse 4**. She's awesome as an army. She's formidable. She's even a little terrifying to him. She's "awesome as an army with banners!"

Listen, wives in the room, let me tell you something right now—you have power! You have power over your husbands. You have power over your households. You are עֵזֶר (‘ēzer) in Genesis 2:18. You are the “helper” for the man. But that word itself indicates strength and power not weakness (see Exod 18:4; Deut 33:26, 29; Ps 33:20; 70:5; 115:9–11; 121:1–2; 124:8; 146:5).

The book of Proverbs talks about “the excellent wife” in chapter 31. But that word “excellent” is better translated “strong.” She is a אִשָּׁת־חַיִל (‘ēšet-ḥayil), “a woman of strength” or “a strong woman.”⁵¹

The book of Proverbs says, “The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down” (14:1). **You have the power to do that, wives in the room. You have the power to build your home and make it flourish. But you also have the power to destroy it and all the people inside of it.**

And men in the room, strength in a woman is something to be admired, not begrudged. This husband admires his wife's strength.

Write this down as #4 in your notes.

4) The husband's **admiration** of the **Shulamite** (6:4–9)

Let's continue with that admiration. Look at **verse 5**.

⁵ Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me—

My wife can make me say, “I'm sorry” with just one glance from a distance. Maybe that's what this husband is alluding to here. Or maybe he's alluding to the overwhelming beauty and power of her eyes. I'm aware of that too.

Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. ⁶ Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young.

You might say, **“Wait, he said that already in chapter 4. Why's he saying that again?”** Well, some things bear repeating.⁵² **And it's okay to repeat the admirable qualities of your wife, husbands.**

⁴⁸ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 94: “They are constantly complimenting and affirming each other. They are always using terms of endearment—‘my dove, my perfect one, my beloved, my friend.’ In fact, they often borrow from each other's language. Their normal pattern of speech is ‘honest, considerate, constructive and tender.’”

⁴⁹ Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 417: “The meaning is that she inspires awe and wonder in him; and, as in his comparison of her to David's tower, he is still aware that he cannot storm her by force (the walls of the city were its most prominent feature). The request that she turn away her eyes further expresses his sense of her power. She can unnerve him with a single glance.”

⁵⁰ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 139: “Cities are objects of beauty. Jerusalem's beauty is lauded in Jer 6:2; Ezek 16:14; Pss 48:3; 50:2; Lam 2:15.”

⁵¹ Also Proverbs 12:4 “An excellent wife (אִשָּׁת־חַיִל) is the crown of her husband.” As an example, Ruth is described as אִשָּׁת־חַיִל in Ruth 3:11.

⁵² Duguid, *Song of Songs*, 115–6: “Why all this repetition? A poet as creative as the writer of the Song of Songs is not merely running out of new things to say and therefore cutting and pasting in some tired old lines from a previous poem. No, what is significant here is *precisely* what the man says and what he omits. Omitted from the previous poem are the references to her lips and to her body below her face—her neck and breasts. Given the fact that their fight was over sex, the last thing the man wants to do is to give the impression that he just wants to make up so that he can get back into bed with her. So he passes over the more erotic elements of his description. At the same time, the repetition of the other elements of his former description stresses the fact that he hasn't changed in his fundamental view of her attractiveness.”

I'll just tell you, I've never come to my wife and said, "Sanja, it's October 18, 2026! I want to tell you this so that I never have to tell you again. Log this away. 'You're beautiful and I love you.' End of story."

No man has ever done that with his wife... no intelligent man anyway. "I already told you, 'I love you.' I said it years ago!"

No, some things bear repeating. And by the way, the man speaks half as much as the woman does in **Song of Solomon**. But he admires her beauty more than three times as much as she admires him. That part before with the woman admiring the man only happens once or twice in the book.⁵³ He does that with her three times in this book in a total of 23 verses... that's like 20% of the book, the man admiring the woman.⁵⁴

Look at **verse 7**.

⁷ *Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.*

He told her that before too. Again, some things bear repeating.

Look at **verse 8**. This is new.

⁸ *There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number.*

As I said before, this is probably an allusion to Solomon and his harem.⁵⁵ Solomon has fewer queens and concubines here than what is recorded in **1 Kings 11:3**. But he's well on his way to building a massive harem already.

The husband on the other hand doesn't have dozens of women. He doesn't run hither and yon to service one woman after another. Solomon probably never had to resolve conflict with his wives. If one woman displeased him, he just dropped her and went to the next woman. **He was like a modern-day man who is hooked on pornography. There's no love and tenderness. There's not relational conflict and resolution.** There's no deepening of the relationship or the friendship. There is only instantaneous and unsatisfying gratification.

The husband committed to one wife on the other hand can say in **verse 9**.

⁹ *My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,*

"She's the only one for me. Yeah, we have conflict. Who doesn't? But we also make up. And we get through it."

the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women⁵⁶ saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

In other words, Solomon's harem is envious of the Shulamite. They praise her. Because she's got something better than them.

And the young women of Jerusalem, the virgin daughters of Zion, praise her too. They desire what she has, not what the women in Solomon's harem have.

So yes, men and women are different. They describe each other differently in this book.⁵⁷ They desire different kinds of things in the marriage relationship. But there is one thing that they hold in

⁵³ The woman's extended physical description of the man occurs primarily in 5:10–16 (seven verses). The man's extended descriptions of the woman appear in 4:1–7; 6:4–9; 7:1–9 (approximately 23 verses).

⁵⁴ Song of Solomon contains 117 verses. $23 \div 117 \times 100 = 19.7\%$. So approximately 20% of the entire Song of Solomon consists of the husband's three extended descriptions of his wife's beauty (4:1–7; 6:4–9; 7:1–9).

⁵⁵ I'm indebted to Miles van Pelt for this observation. See his "The Message of the Song of Songs," lesson 1. See also "Interpreting the Song of Songs: Wisdom, Orthodoxy, and Feminism," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Boston, November 18, 2025. Audio recording: <https://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=53576>.

⁵⁶ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 141: "'Women,' בנות, here refers to the young women, עלמות, in v.8. They, along with the queens and concubines, the most desirable women in the kingdom—experts in pleasing the most demanding man—recognize that our woman is exceptionally attractive."

⁵⁷ Berlin, *Song of Songs*, Hermeneia, 130n33: "Descriptions of men and women are gendered, in modern literature as well as in ancient literature. For example, arms and legs get more attention in descriptions of men, while breasts and hips get more attention in descriptions of women."

common. There is one thing that's the same. There is one thing that they both desire. They desire "exclusivity." They desire, "commitment." They desire oneness and fidelity.⁵⁸

They desire it, and they rightly expect it of each other. She says to him, "I am my beloved's and he is mine." He says to her, "She's the only one for me."

And in healthy, godly marriages, conflicts don't make them weaker, they make them stronger.⁵⁹ They bind couples together.⁶⁰

If you see a good marriage of twenty, thirty, or forty years... if you see a good marriage where two people love each other and are solid as a rock. I can promise you that there have been some conflicts in their rearview mirror. And they've worked through it. And they've built a strong marriage through that conflict.⁶¹ Just ask them!

Years ago, the great Bible teacher and author of *Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan exhorted a group of husbands to be "such a believing husband to your believing wife that she may say, 'God has not only given me a husband, but such a husband as preaches to me every day the way of Christ to His church.'"⁶² No pressure, men in the room.

Whenever I do a wedding, I always tell the husband, "Be like Christ to your wife. Love her like Christ does the church. You will fail in that. You will never be perfectly like Christ to your wife. But you must struggle to approximate him for the rest of your life."

And how does Christ love his church? Why is that exhortation in a wedding ceremony apt? Let's close with that church. Was there conflict between Christ and us? Yes, but not because of Christ. Was there sin? Yes, but not on his part. Was there a fracture in the relationship? Yes. But it wasn't his fault. We did the sinning. We did the fracturing. We did the betraying.

And yet... and yet... and yet... While we were sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).⁶³

The great thing about being a Christian is that you have this amazing example of love and faithfulness and commitment in Christ. And no matter what happens in this life... if you have a good marriage or a bad marriage, a broken marriage or a marriage that was tragically cut short, or even if you've never been married at all like Paul recommended in 1 Corinthians 7... No matter what you experienced on this side of eternity, you have a perfect relationship and a perfect marriage to come forever in the life to come.

⁵⁸ Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 7: "When two people marry, their individual identities do not disappear. Rather, their two identities blend together to create a greater, richer, and more wonderful whole. This blending of differences into a unique and appealing new entity requires that some parts of each individual be sanded away or refined so that the two people might complement each other in all ways and so that their home might function with efficiency and be overflowing in Christian ministry."

⁵⁹ Duguid, *Song of Songs*, 119: "A healthy relationship is not one in which no conflict ever occurs, but one in which that conflict gets resolved. The only way to have a relationship in which there is no conflict is to marry someone who just doesn't care. In that case, though, there will be no deep merging of your souls. If you truly care about someone, he or she will have the power to hurt you deeply, both because you want what is best for that person and because what he or she thinks of you really matters."

⁶⁰ O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon*, 91: "East of Eden, where we all live now, the 'realistic rhythm of married life is that of frustration and delight,' but marriage allows us to work through difficulties in order to become more Christlike."

⁶¹ Nelson, *The Book of Romance*, chapter 7: "Conflict will arise. Resolution can be achieved. And if done with free-flowing forgiveness and unconditional love as the central features of reconciliation, the resolution of a conflict can result in a marriage that is stronger and more vibrant than before the conflict arose. In many ways, a strong marriage is the result of repeated, healthy conflict resolutions over time."

⁶² John Bunyan, *Christian Behaviour*, paraphrased by Douglas Wilson in *Reforming Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1995), 10.

⁶³ Duguid, *Song of Songs*, 109: "We need someone who is always utterly faithful and reliable, completely and perfectly beautiful, so that when we think about his character, we have absolutely no question about his commitment to us, someone of whom we can truly say, 'My beloved is mine and I am his forever.' We need someone who will stand at the door and continue to knock even when we are unreasonably cold and fickle. We need Jesus."

No more sin. No more conflict. And a perfect love that will satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. That's what awaits those of us who know Christ. Amen?
Do you know him? Christ? The perfect Savior! The perfect husband!

⁶⁴ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 169–70: “In Palestine, such dampness can soak a fleece such as Gideon’s (Judg. 6:38). Hence the complaint could well be valid for someone out in the night, especially if they were attempting to sleep in the open. It is possible that the male also had trouble sleeping and his heart’s desire drove him to this nocturnal visit.”

⁶⁵ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 172: “The whole point of the passage is the failure of the couple to reach and touch one another. It is not sex but lack of sex that is the focus.”

⁶⁶ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 173: “The female used it to describe her love as a sachet of myrrh between her breasts (1:13). Hence it is a description of the exquisite sensual delight that the female enjoys in respect to the male and vice versa. As myrrh might cover their bodies with an intoxicating fragrance, so it describes the pleasure that each finds in the other’s body.”

⁶⁷ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 174: “The term for ‘bolt’ (*man ‘ûl*) occurs only here and in Nehemiah. However, its root (*n l*) has appeared as a verb in Song 4:12. There it twice describes the female as a ‘locked’ garden.”

⁶⁸ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 178: “The final line of 5:8 repeats 2:5 but under different circumstances. In the earlier section the female was with her lover, in his house and in his arms (2:4, 6). Here she has lost her lover. His presence is no longer there to thrill her.”

⁶⁹ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 180: “Although *wasf* forms in which males describe females are relatively common in ancient Near Eastern literature, those where females describe males are rare. Nevertheless, all of them tend to begin with a general all-encompassing observation and then move from the head downward.”

⁷⁰ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 180: “With the exception of a few participles used as adjectives in the descriptive phrases, there are no verbs in this section. It is composed entirely of nominal clauses, so that the translation must add the necessary ‘is/are’ in order to render it into readable English.”

⁷¹ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 182–3: “The picture of the eyes as doves in the twelfth verse continues the emphasis on color. The doves imagined here may be white, an image reinforced by their association with a milk bath. However, they may also be another color and thus describe the pupils. The pupils of her lover’s eyes are then set in a field of white within the eye. Although the analogy may not provide a one-to-one correspondence, it does suggest the whiteness of the eyes.”

⁷² Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 190: “He has no interest in any of the other women, only in her. The verse concludes with the metaphor of gathering lotuses, suggesting the beautiful, delicate, and intoxicating effects of physical love.”

⁷³ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 191: “He has no interest in any of the other women, only in her. The verse concludes with the metaphor of gathering lotuses, suggesting the beautiful, delicate, and intoxicating effects of physical love.”

⁷⁴ Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, 192: “Love between couples, and between God and his people, never surrenders hope (1 Cor. 13:7).”

⁷⁵ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 204: “It is instead a symbolic representation of the woman’s loss of virginity.”

⁷⁶ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 204: This text is a jolt to the harmony of the Song of Songs. After the rhapsodic praise of the glories of the woman and the delicate portrayal of their union in 4:1–5:1, we abruptly have a barely coherent canto of the man pounding at her door and running away followed by the woman taking a beating at the hands of the city guards.”

⁷⁷ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 211: “It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the *וּצְבָעֵי*, “fingers,” represent the woman’s genitals, that the oils suggest vaginal fluids, and that the *מַנְעוּל*, “bolt,” suggests the man’s penis.”

⁷⁸ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 216: “This is not a girl sending a message to her lover via some friends. It is a poetic device that uses an address to the chorus to convey information about the woman’s condition to the audience.”

⁷⁹ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 219: “The meaning of MT *תְּלָלִים*, a *hapax legomenon*, is uncertain. It is sometimes rendered “wavy” on the analogy of *תֵּל*, a “mound,” but this seems to be little more than a conjecture. LXX renders it *ἐλάτα*, which is usually rendered “palm-fronds,” and some prefer this translation here.”

⁸⁰ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 221: “The description of the man’s cheeks as like balsam or trellises of spices possibly relates to his beard, although the word *לֶחִי*, “cheeks,” tells us that her focus is more on his skin than on his beard. He may well have scented his beard with some kind of perfume.”

⁸¹ Garrett, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, WBC, 225: “There can be no question of the love described here being anything other than monogamous. The woman’s claim upon the man here is the counterpart to the man’s claim in Gen 2:23 that she is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (RSV).”