



[Leader tip: A fun, love themed ice breaker to play is Over Under: True Love. You can find it here: <https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/p/over-under%3A-true-love-edition/valentine%27s-day/valentine%27s-day-games-9240.html>]

[Slide] The Song of Solomon! If you're not familiar with it, it's an eight-chapter book of explicit love poetry in the middle of the Old Testament, written about three thousand years ago.

Here's how explicit it is; it is read in its entirety at the annual Jewish celebration of Passover; everyone gathers for the reading except the boys 12 years old and younger. Yes, it's the world's first PG-13 rating.

In fact, it's so explicit that some have struggled over the centuries over whether it should even be a part of the Bible. Christians have debated in the past over two things; the sexual content, and the fact that it never mentions God.

Here's the thing, God has a purpose in giving us this book:

[Slide] **2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)** *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

[Slide] **Song of Solomon Teaches Us.** When Paul wrote that, he was referring to the Old Testament, including Song of Solomon. It is "useful to teach us," God has a purpose for it, it's important for us to study it! Why?

There is a lot in the Bible about sex. A lot. God's intent for it to be between a husband and a wife, the importance of protecting marriage faithfulness, warnings against sexual sin. Man, it's wild. There are sections in Leviticus where the author basically sat down and thought of every sinful sexual thing someone could do, wrote it all out, and said, "that's bad!" What's beautiful and important about the Song of Solomon is it communicates God's desire that sex be a gift, a joyful uniting of two people in a marriage. When God created humanity, He said, "it is good," and that includes sex, but without Song of Solomon, it would be easy to miss the goodness of sex in the context of what God designed it for.

So, let's get into it. Buckle up.

[Slide] **Song of Solomon 1:1 (NLT)** *This is Solomon's song of songs, more wonderful than any other.*

Solomon was the king of Israel, the son of David. Many know him as the wisest king. This opening line makes this collection of love poems sound like something he's written, but the ancient Hebrew is not that clear. In fact, that sentence, "this is Solomon's song of songs," could have four different meanings^{1 2}:

- "By Solomon." It could mean that he's the author.
- "To Solomon," or "Dedicated to Solomon." In other words, this may have been the best book ever given to Solomon. The book of books.
- "Concerning Solomon," this is a collection of poems about Solomon and his different relationships.
- "In the tradition of Solomon," as in, it was written in his writing style.

With something like 60% of the poetry written from the woman's voice^{3 4}, something I find it hard to believe an ancient king would have done, I think it makes sense that this could be a mix of poetry written by Solomon and others, collected and passed down through the ages.

Here's an example of the woman speaking:

[Slide] **Songs 2:1-6 (NLT)** *[Young Woman] ¹ I am the spring crocus blooming on the Sharon Plain, the lily of the valley.*

She is using a common flower to describe herself; it was a self-deprecating remark.⁵ She's essentially said, "I'm just one of a million common flowers in the valley."

¹ Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs (New International Commentary on the Old Testament)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), Kindle location 210.

² Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 235.

³ Longman, *Song of Songs*, Kindle location 299.

⁴ Richard S. Hess, *Song of Songs (Baker Commentary On the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), Kindle location 300.

⁵ Longman, *Song of Songs*, 110.

[Young Man] ² Like a lily among thistles is my darling among young women.

His response? “If you’re ‘just’ a flower among the flowers, all those other ‘flowers’ are ugly thorns!” He’s telling her there is no comparison!

[Slide] [Young Woman] ³ Like the finest apple tree in the orchard is my lover among other young men.

Apples were considered erotic; in the culture of the time there was sexuality associated with them, perhaps as an aphrodisiac.⁶ There is sexual connotation to her compliment.

I sit in his delightful shade and taste his delicious fruit.

She’s not talking about literal apples!⁷

⁴ He escorts me to the banquet hall; it’s obvious how much he loves me.

Another way to translate this would be, “his banner over me is love.” It’s a military phrase; armies would have a banner declaring who they are committed to.⁸ She was saying, “he is loyal to me.”

⁵ Strengthen me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, for I am weak with love.

Raisins and apples were considered aphrodisiacs⁹; so she communicated, “let’s get in the mood!”

⁶ His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me.

The description of their posture makes that clear that they are laying down together, as they’ll put it elsewhere, they were “awakening love.”¹⁰ If you don’t know what that means, ask your mother, I’m not explaining it.

[Slide] I heard someone once describe the lovers in Song of Solomon as **enthusiastic**, which I think is just a beautiful word to use. God created sex and sexuality to be this enthusiastic, exciting, joyful gift. But we’ll come back to that; let me show you one more poem, this time from the man’s voice. You might notice, he followed the pattern of ancient love poetry of

⁶ Ibid, 114.

⁷ Ibid, 111.

⁸ Ibid, 113.

⁹ Ibid, 114.

¹⁰ Ibid.



Week Three | Awaken

LOVE IS A FIRE

Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5 (NLT)

Promise me, O women of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and wild deer, not to awaken love until the time is right.

Song of Solomon 8:4 (NLT)

Promise me, O women of Jerusalem, not to awaken love until the time is right.

DO NOT AWAKEN LOVE UNTIL IT IS TIME

Psalm 86:5 (NLT)

O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help.

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.



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