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**Series:** Song of Solomon

**Date:** November 7, 2021

**Speaker:** Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

**Text:** Song of Solomon 7:1-8:7

**Title:** God's Design for Lifelong Love

Announcement: STARTING POINT TODAY!

### Intro

Welcome back to the Song of Solomon! We are nearing the end of our journey through this book which honestly, I'm kind of sad about. I think this has been a wonderful study for us and I've heard from so many of you about how this has raised some good conversations in your relationships. And at the core of this whole series is the idea that God's way is good. This old bible that the world thinks is arcane and disconnected is actually incredibly relevant and filled with hope and wisdom! Wisdom that is Good for our flourishing. TODAY! In fact, we said the key to the whole series:

God is love, God made love, and God gives love. So, I will pursue his way of love in my life.

We are now at Chapter 7. The couple we are following has been married for some length of time. We aren't sure how much, but we know some time has passed. Long enough for them to have at least one fight. And of course...we saw them make up. And now, what we are seeing towards the end of this book is a love between two people that ages well. And so married people you to pay attention because I know you want your marriage to get better as you age.

I know you don't want to get stuck. Well, I don't mean to make you sad, but most marriages do get stuck. You experience a conflict between you two or maybe a life circumstance and it just throws you into an unhealthy set of rhythms where you start becoming roommates more than spouses. Listen that is universal. Talked to a guy in Nairobi just this last week about how he's been married for a few years, got young kids now, and his marriage feels stuck. He doesn't WANT it to be stuck, just feels that way and he isn't sure of the way out.

These tools we talk about today... are going to be pivotal for you! We expect God to change a life today and maybe you and your spouse are who the Lord has his eyes on today.

But...hear this...the application for MOST of today goes well beyond marriage. Because, as it turns out, the kind of love God calls marriages to is a Jesus kind of love. And while



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that love has some unique expressions in marriage, Christ-like love is something we are called to in ALL of our relationships. This should be not only how your marriage grows stronger with age, but how your friendships do too. Maybe you and a friend have been STUCK in a passy-aggressy stalemate for a while? Maybe you used to be good friends, but you aren't sure you can call each other that anymore? Man, what we all need are friendships that grow old in love. So, while yes, the target is marriage today, the application to friendship should be obvious.

So, let's talk about growing old in love. Courtney and I have been married 17 years. That means Our marriage has been driving for a year and is about to graduate high school next year. But we are dreaming about and planning to be one of those cute old married couples man. We are going to have matching jumpsuits & go on walks & tie each other's shoes cause neither of us can really bend anymore. That's love.

Solomon is going to talk about that kind of love. Love that gets better with age... in terms of fire today. And I love fire. He's going to say that this kind of love has the hotness and power of the kind of fire that even rivers washing over it couldn't quench.

Love's flames are fiery flames — an almighty flame! 7 A huge torrent cannot extinguish love;  
rivers cannot sweep it away. Song of Solomon 8.6b-7a.

See young love is awesome. I told you week one that a lot of this book is celebrating young love. And young love serves to inspire old love. But young love is fragile. It's a new flame that needs attention. That's why newlyweds are all over each other. They are feeding that new flame. But today we are Talking about love that has been burning for a while. The kind of flame that has a deep bed of coals fueling it and you could leave alone at the campsite and then just blow on it a little the next morning and it comes right back to life. That kind of resilient, deep love is what we are talking about today. The kind of love that isn't anxious or wavering. The kind of love that doesn't wonder if the other is gonna leave because of this fight. It's certain and it's got a resiliency and depth to it.

The great thing about God's design for marriage is that if we follow his way of love, it should get better over time like that! And I think we all want that...but most couples have absolutely no idea how to get there. That's why marriages that start off with good intentions but run into trouble.

Because it takes way more than good intentions to build a fire. You can desire to build a warm fire all you want. But without dry wood, kindlin, and some kind of a fire starter...you



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gonna be cold. Actions...not intentions...determine outcomes. Good news is God has given us both instructions and the resources for building a roaring fire of love. And again, not just love in romance. These apply to the kind of deep friendships we desire as well.

Warning – just like it has several times this passage is going to get PG-13. And we aren't shying away from that! The passage is our sermon structure today. I'll pause along the way to make the points for you.

### How to build a deep-bed-of-burning-coals old love

The first 10 verses give us point 1. Remember how I told you there were a few times where they just get lost in praise of one another? Well, chapter 7 is one of those. He starts at her feet, and he works his way up. This is a very sensual passage of scripture I'm about to walk you through. That's intentional. Remember just because the honeymoon is over doesn't mean sexual passion is over. On the contrary, the fire is building. More coals on it now. It's getting hotter.

1 How beautiful are your sandaled feet, princess! The curves of your thighs are like jewelry,  
the handiwork of a master.

Here in verse 1, he notices her feet. Calls her a princess which, she isn't technically but is to him. Remember these are the feet of a woman that's been herding around a bunch of goats. Those aren't exactly the best conditions for pretty feet. But what has he been doing this whole time? He's been speaking life over her where she felt self-conscious. She's got the beautiful feet of a princess. He doesn't just overlook those. Then it gets more sensual – He says the shape of her thighs are like jewelry. He's thinking of stones that have been smoothed out by a master jeweler. And he's calling God the master jeweler and saying how much he loves the way God has sculpted her thighs. And some of you cannot believe this is church right now. But this is his wife. And God celebrates this kind of sensual romance in marriage. And he keeps moving up her body.

2 Your navel is a rounded bowl; it never lacks mixed wine.

Navel...is not belly. Navel is what is between thighs and belly. And he says it never lacks mixed wine. And the way he knows that is exactly what you are thinking.

Your belly is a mound of wheat surrounded by lilies.

Don't know you want to try that one out today guys. But at the time it worked. He's saying her body nourishes him.



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### 3 Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.

I was in Africa last week and had a chance to see gazelles. And I those young gazelles are running everywhere, and I thought...what an interesting metaphor for Solomon to choose. But he's saying they are beautiful and full of life. He's captivated by them. Remember he's already used this metaphor before on their wedding night. He loves his wife's body and he's not embarrassed to tell her so.

### 4 Your neck is like a tower of ivory,

Talked about this already if you remember. He's celebrating her strength.

### your eyes like pools in Heshbon by Bath-rabbim's gate.

Your eyes are so deep I get lost in them. There is a depth to you, and like pools in the desert I find relief and healing in them. Ooo man is he talking to her

### Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus.

Remember guys it's the spirit of the compliment you should repeat. I don't know about calling your wife's nose a tower. Commentators aren't even sure what tower Solomon is talking about. But it's a compliment to her for sure.

### 5 Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, the hair of your head like purple cloth — a king could be held captive in your tresses.

He's calling her majestic. Royal. She's so all together beautiful that a king – one who gets to live in luxury & experience the finest life has to offer - even he would be captivated by her.

He summarizes

### 6 How beautiful you are and how pleasant, my love, with such delights!

### 7 Your stature is like a palm tree; your breasts are clusters of fruit. 8 I said, "I will climb the palm tree and take hold of its fruit."

Remember, this is his bride. And this is a moment of sexual passion between them where they are enjoying one another. He keeps going.

### May your breasts be like clusters of grapes, and the fragrance of your breath like apricots.

The fluidity with which he moves from touch to taste and back in this passage shows you that he's mesmerized by her. Remember the thing the narrator said in chapter 5 where they get married and are on their wedding night and the narrator blesses them coming



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together in the marriage bed and says, “be drunk with love.” Well, here they are. Intoxicated by one another in fact she finishes his sentence in the next verse...

### 9 Your mouth is like fine wine —

Woman

flowing smoothly for my love, gliding past my lips and teeth!

She affirms everything he’s saying & doing. She’s offering herself to him fully as he embraces her. And she says so in verse 10

10 I am my love’s, and his desire is for me.

I belong to him; he belongs to me. He wants me I want him. He loves me I love him. Man, this is full pleasure inside of full belonging. Full security in the relationship. And right here I want to make the first observation about building the kind of love that gets better with age. How you can build old love

### lessons in Building Old Love: Use your words to build up.

Men and Women – Your WORDS are powerful. These verses are a husband UNASHAMEDLY celebrating his wife’s body. He keeps doing this. And listen you don’t hear a word of body comparison. It’s just HER body that God made, and he loves. And he tells her so. She’s already said the same about him. I told you they do this praising thing 4 times. And it’s been an ongoing theme of our series. WORDS ARE POWERFUL!! That’s because God created you in his image. The God who, according to genesis 1 SPOKE the world into existence. He creates with words. And then says you and I are like him. He said Jesus is the WORD made flesh. That’s why Jesus can resurrect. He’s the WORD. He has the power of new creation. Jesus’ words over us are that we are a new creation in Christ! That we are son or daughter of God. That we are not...we are NOT our flaws & our sins.

Satan wants to take your deepest shame and make it your identity. That’s his word over you. But that is NOT God’s word spoken to you. God’s word is Romans 8.1. No condemnation. Favorite lyric we sing at mercy. “I am not my sin and will never be again.” And then the bible says ok Christians – Hebrews 10.25 – don’t give up the habit of meeting together but instead ENCOURAGE one another all the more as you see the day approaching.

Spouses listen to me – it may be that the way to get unstuck...the way to fan the flame...is going to start with speaking words to your spouse that builds him or her up! It can be about how beautiful or sexy or stallion-like they look. Take a moment on the way home and say YOU LOOK GOOD TODAY! And if you think “you are just saying that because the pastor told you to” WELL YES. Applying biblical principles to your life is GOOD. But go beyond that. You are like...pastor we just did this a few weeks ago. YES. And that’s



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the point. Building one another up doesn't just happen in a moment. It happens through repetition over time. I can't put one log on the fire and have a roaring fire. Gotta tend to it. Keep feeding it. And this is scripture, isn't it?

In the New Testament Jesus & the authors of the letters keep speaking words of LIFE. THIS IS WHO YOU ARE. Now walk in it. Woman caught in adultery...he says neither do I condemn you...go and sin no more. Ephesians – 3 chapters on how incredibly loved & forgiven you are by God – followed by 3 chapters on how to walk as a free person.

WE gotta speak words that build up ya'll. And that only comes out of an overflow of the heart. Bonhoeffer – we are bringers of grace to one another. I got some grace from the Lord this morning and just wanted to share it with you. I see you. This is how you build really great friendships. You celebrate what God is doing in one another. You build up.

**Reflection: Are my words building the fire or extinguishing it?**

By the way this is both in private and even more so in public. A huge problem sign is if you are bashing your spouse behind their back. Or your friend behind their back. That's going to reveal the true condition of your heart. And as brothers and sisters listen the BEST thing we can do – don't allow it on your watch. Gossip is the devil's playground. Probably the words that keep the fire of the holy spirit burning in the church & in the home & among friends as much as any: "I love you, but it sounds like you have a problem with that person. You should talk to them about it and nobody else."

Ok that one took too long next ones will go faster.

**11 Come, my love, let's go to the field; let's spend the night among the henna blossoms.**

I told you in week 1 that in their marriage she is going to take the lead sometimes. And this is one of those times. He's built her up with his words, she's received that, and She invites him out on an evening picnic in springtime and well, it gets spicy.

**12 Let's go early to the vineyards; let's see if the vine has budded, if the blossom has opened,**

**if the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you, my caresses.**

**13 The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our doors is every delicacy, both new and old. I have treasured them up for you, my love.**

**Lessons in Building Old Love: Get away together**



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Pretty simple right? If your marriage is going to grow stronger as it grows older...you need time together! You need to keep dating one another. You figure out the rhythm, but it should be regular.

If you've got kids, make arrangements. Can't afford babysitter, barter. Your kids need to know That they come third in your priorities. In your home they are bronze medalists. First place is your relationship with God, and second is your marriage. They come in third. It's GOOD for them to see that your world actually doesn't revolve around them. In fact, one of the reasons for the great exodus of 20 somethings from church – not the only but one of them – is that their parents prioritized THEM over God. Different sermon. Put your marriage above your kids.

My point in all of this – prioritize quality time away together. PLAN it. CALENDAR & BUDGET reveal priorities. This is deeply convicting for me to preach because I know I have work to do too ok.

Homework – sit down together with your calendar and plan one date night before thanksgiving. And listen the plan should be for this to be a romantic night out that gets spicy. Not chili's takeout and a tv show. And if you are like yeah, we aren't there. Well, then like I've said let's get you the help you need to get you there. Counseling.

## CHAPTER 8

If only I could treat you like my brother, one who nursed at my mother's breasts, I would find you in public and kiss you, and no one would scorn me.

Ok so that might sound quite weird. Like foreplay talk has gone sideways here. Ok here's the deal – public displays of affection were reserved only for immediate family – fathers & brothers & sisters. But NOT for husbands and wives. So, she's saying she wishes she could kiss him publicly. But since she cannot...she's gonna take him away to a private spot

2 I would lead you, I would take you, to the house of my mother who taught me. I would give you spiced wine to drink from the juice of my pomegranate.

3 May his left hand be under my head, and his right arm embrace me.

It shouldn't be weird moms for you to teach your daughters about sex. Not just in terms of the technical stuff but also about the God given joys and delights of it. One of the best things our counselors said in the "talking to your kids" breakout at our conference was - Sex isn't weird or awkward. YOU are weird and awkward. But you don't have to be

4 Young women of Jerusalem, I charge you, do not stir up or awaken love



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until the appropriate time.

Here again we are reminded that God does give love. Sex is not a sin. It's a gift from God. BUT we sin with it when we engage it outside of the appropriate time. It's God's gift for marriage. See sermon 4.

### Young Women

#### 5 Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning on the one she loves?

Ok right here is a play on the same thing they said back on the wedding day. Remember on the wedding day chapter 3 the women said who is this coming up from the wilderness? And it was Solomon and his groomsmen? Well now they are seeing them together. And instead of Solomon alone on his bed, she's right there with him. Leaning on him. It's a beautiful picture of marriage and a beautiful picture of the gospel.

#### 3. lessons in Building Old Love: Lean on one another.

Now let me tell you what I mean – in order to lean your weight onto someone, you trust they will hold you up. You see where I'm going? For marriage to grow old in love, you are going to have to trust your spouse enough to depend on him or her. That dependence will look different in every relationship. Maybe it will be trusting him or her to provide financially. Maybe it will be trusting him or her emotionally. You are going to finally open up about your feelings. This is a hard one for me. Historically I have a tough time understanding my feelings. So, then I have to TRUST Courtney not only enough to share my feelings, but that when I do share them, she will not judge me for them but will help me. Sometimes I'm struggling and have to lean a little more on Courtney, sometimes it's the reverse. When her dad died, she had to lean on me a great deal for support. And we recognized that. When we first moved to Charlotte & started Mercy, I had to lean a lot on her.

But – and this is important – trust does not mean co-dependence. Listen to me – your spouse is not there to carry the weight of your soul. Lean on is different than Carry. This is also true in friendship and for sure dating. In fact, sometimes friendship & dating is where I see this get even more mixed up. If you are looking to a human to make you feel loved and valued – they will disappoint you. Because that need you have was meant to be filled by God's love, not a person's love. Now a person's love is a beautiful gift for sure, but a person's love is meant to reinforce DIVINE love. God's love for you in Christ is the only love that is strong enough to save you, strengthen you, and sustain you. And if you aren't abiding in his love, you will lean too heavy on other people. And crush them under the weight of your neediness.





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So yes, lean on others. You are not meant to live an independent life. But trust your life to Christ.

#### Woman

I awakened you under the apricot tree. There your mother conceived you; there she conceived and gave you birth. 6 Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death; jealousy is as unrelenting as Sheol. Love's flames are fiery flames —an almighty flame! 7 A huge torrent cannot extinguish love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If a man were to give all his wealth for love, it would be utterly scorned. -- Song of Songs 7:1-8:7 (CSB)

The final lesson I want to offer you today is probably the most important. See how she calls him to set her as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm. She says love is as strong as death. What she's talking about is permanent commitment. The kind that starts way down on in the heart. I AM YOURS AND YOU ARE MINE. FOR LIFE. I'm exclusively fully yours. That's the seal on the heart. And the seal on your arm – that's so that everyone else can see it. That's the wedding ring of the day. The seal.

#### 4. lessons in Building Old Love: Commit for life

This is why Courtney and I have this verse stamped on the inside of our wedding bands. We are in this til one of us dies. Period. Divorce is not an option. Murder maybe. But not divorce. Last thing we said in our wedding vows after til death do us part was "I will never ever divorce you." And in the security of that commitment, we can devote ourselves to putting more logs on the fire. To figuring out conflict. To working through things. Because there is no other option. And I do not say that lightly right now. I recognize there are a couple of ways you could be really skeptical about what I'm saying. But I'm confident this is God's intent. I know about where Jesus talks about adultery in Matthew 5, and I know where the apostle Paul talks about abandonment in 1 Corinthians 7. I know. But even if you take these clauses as grounds for divorce, they are not what God wants or desires for you nor are they your first reaction. They are at best allowances for sin in a broken world.

Let me tell you why: marriage is a representation of the love of Jesus for us.

- To those of you who put a low value on marriage – you don't care about sex before marriage, and you don't need some piece of paper to tell you how you feel about someone. What this series has been saying is that God's way of love that he has given for your flourishing – works best when it isn't about you. It's about HIM.



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And his love for you. Thank God Jesus commits to us as his bride and not his long-term live-in girlfriend. He set us as a SEAL upon his arm. He said I love you to the grave and back! And I know listening right now are some who are in a relationship that is treating marriage lightly and probably treating Jesus lightly too. I want to implore you to commit yourself to CHRIST and either commit or not to the person you are with. “I don’t know if it will work out.” WHAT do you mean by that? What if they leave me? Well Christ never will. What if they cheat? Well Christ never will. You need to set CHRIST as your source of love and security. Not that person. And then you can love that person well all the way to the end.

- To those of you who are married, and you are thinking about leaving. Listen let me say the Lord has so much grace for you. First, if you are in an abusive situation, we want to help you get out right now. I’m not talking about that. That is unsafe and your only application from this sermon is, if you can, TELL SOMEBODY. I’m talking to the husband or wife who is tired or hurt. Or to the one who has done the damage. I implore you right now – go to Christ. I actually have no idea how it’s going to go from here. Every situation is different. But – I know a God who resurrected from the grave. Solomon says Love is as strong as death. That’s human love. But that was a foreshadow of Jesus. Whose love is STRONGER THAN DEATH. I’ve seen this resurrected God resurrect souls. I’m looking around this room and seeing Christians – people once bound for death that God has brought BACK TO LIFE! And I’ve seen this resurrected God resurrect marriages! And one thing I know – He wants to do it again!
- Altar Call