



Series: Song of Solomon

Passage: 4.1-5.1

Title: God's Design for Sex

Intro (5 min)

Recap

- 2 stories happening. First - The love between a man and a woman as they become one in marriage. RECAP Where we've been. Emphasize marriage as covenant v contract. Second – the backdrop of God's love for his people.
- God is love, God made love, and God gives love. So, I will pursue his way of love in my life.

Today

- The wedding night and the celebration of sexual passion that blooms in the marriage of a husband and wife. So today we are going to talk about sex. This will be **PG-13**. Educational. World is talking about it.
- I want to reiterate to you who are **not married** that this is for you too. We are talking about sex as God designed it. Like an artist God has created sex to do multiple things. He's created it for marriage enrichment, for making babies, and to tell us about himself.

- And if you are willing to listen and watch so intently to pop culture as it tells you its view of sex... A sex as meaningless...As no big deal...maybe you should listen to what God has to say about it since God has actually filled sex with great meaning. In other words, if you feel like a sermon on sex is not for you but a grey's anatomy sex scene IS for you, you need to check your heart as we walk into this. Not only that, go back to last week, it may not be for you now but might be later. It may not be for you now, but for somebody you know, and love and God has put you in their live.

Recognize abuse victims. Not lost on me that we live in a broken world. So, I need to say something to you who are survivors of abuse. I know your defenses probably went up already. Listen the message you are going to hear today is that God loves you and he wants you. You are not damaged goods you are a precious son or daughter. And in him, there is healing from pain & hope for tomorrow. You are going to hear me reference sexual sin but being abused...that's not your sin. That's suffering. And God offers abundant hope for those who choose to lean on him in their suffering. God loves you and this church loves you.

And I know that's a heavy thing to say in a sermon intro, but this is real life. We aren't playing games. We believe God can change a life TODAY. In fact, we expect him to. And so, we gotta acknowledge the situations we are in and then acknowledge He has the power to heal the brokenness we experience in this WORLD. What we are seeing in this series is

how powerful sexuality is. It's got power for GREAT good in marriage but also great harm if misused.

Today in chapter 4 into the first verse of chapter 5 is going to show this husband and wife coming together as one and there is no hint of shame or embarrassment or ludeness but instead there is HOLY delight in and celebration of married sexuality... so much so that God is going to conclude the whole thing by speaking directly to the couple in chapter 5 verse 1 and blessing the very moment they come together in the marriage bed.

And I think the thesis for today: **Sex is God's gift for serving your spouse, not yourself**

So, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to let the text speak for itself. We are going to walk through this verse by verse for about 15 minutes. I'm going to highlight some things for you. And then, having received this whole thing I want to show you three truths of the Christian view on sex.

One last note here – If it is your first time to Mercy Church...welcome. This may be a surprising sermon for you to hear. But the world is talking to you nonstop about this subject so I'm actually really glad you will hear just a little bit today about what God has to say about it.

Chapter 4, starting in verse 1. Walk Through (15 min)

These first 7 verses are going to sound like he's just taking inventory of how awesome she is. The setting is the wedding

night and as they are alone now, he is not rushing anything he is pausing to praise her. These 7 verses make up a poetic device called a *waf* where the author gives specific praise to what has captured his eye. This is the first of 4 we will see in our remaining chapters. In 3 of them he praises her and in one she praises him.

Man

How beautiful you are, my darling. How very beautiful!

Behind your veil, your eyes are doves.

Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead.

Verse 1 is a repetition of chapter 1.15. In fact, he's called her beautiful 5 times already by chapter 4. Fellas he doesn't assume she knows how beautiful she is to him. **He TELLS her.** With words. Behind her veil her eyes are like doves. That's not only the whites of her eyes contrasted most likely against her brown skin, but it's also the peace and purity he feels from her. That's what doves symbolize, and he is saying you are pure, and you bring peace into my heart here.

Her hair is like a flock of goats. He's saying its full and thick and its cascading down her naked body and its beautiful to him.

2 Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn sheep coming up from washing,

each one bearing twins, and none has lost its young.

This one might seem funny but he's basically saying. Dang girl blessed are you among women because you actually have all your teeth. They are white, they look alike, and are all there. And in the world before orthodontics and cosmetic

dentistry...hey man that was a rarity. But he doesn't just say "oh what nice teeth you have" no he figures out a way to praise even her teeth. By the time Courtney and I started dating I had already had braces...twice. And when I saw her smile, I was like...oh that's the greatest smile on earth. I wonder if she had braces even more than me. And she never had them at all. It was like God was her orthodontist. I LOVE her smile and I tell her that. Ya'll don't be awkward about that with her though ok.

3 Your lips are like a scarlet cord, and your mouth is lovely. Behind your veil, your brow is like a slice of pomegranate.

Ok so the brow – that is better translated "your cheeks." He's not talking about her eyebrows; he's moved on to her mouth. Her lips are red, her mouth is lovely, and her cheeks... They have just a hint of rosiness to them. The point in all of this is to say your mouth is intoxicating and I want to kiss it.

4 Your neck is like the tower of David, constructed in layers. A thousand shields are hung on it — all of them shields of warriors.

I LOVE this one. Remember, metaphor. He's not saying she's a giraffe. He's likening her neck to the tower of David as a way to honor her character. She stands tall & holds her head up like Israel's great warrior king. She has the strength of a tower that could hold a thousand shields. No man can just conquer this woman. She is too strong. And he appreciates her strength. And in this I see such a wonderful word to today's church. A godly woman can have the gentle & quiet spirit she's called to have in 1 Peter 3 AND the strength of the

Shulamite woman. These are not at odds. **Meekness does not mean WEAKNESS. It means power under control.** Men, it's not feminism creeping into the church to honor the strength of your queen. And when we encourage them to hold their heads high as the strong women God made them to be, they have less desire to seek approval in other places.

5 Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that feed among the lilies.

He's seeing his wife naked before him, sees her breasts and is saying they are beautiful and full of life. So important in such a vulnerable moment that he is making her feel safe and secure with his words. He's honoring her so specifically.

6 Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will make my way to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.

Pretty much speaks for itself right. He changes metaphors from two fawns to two mountains.

That's his way of channeling LIONEL RICHIE and saying he is going to enjoy her beautiful body all night long.

7 You are absolutely beautiful, my darling; there is no imperfection in you.

So, verse 7...he says. You are perfect. In fact, if you go back through that list, you will see he highlighted 7 physical features. That's because 7 is the number of perfections in the Old Testament. And it comes from the 7 days of creation. He's saying you are perfect perfect perfect. Now is she actually without imperfection? No. she's human. But what he's doing is saying you are perfect TO ME. And in this we hear an echo

of God speaking to his bride, the church. Remember Ephesians 5? Paul says the job of the husband is to love the wife like Christ loved the church. And the way that Christ loved the church:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. 27 He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless -- Ephesians 5:25-27 (CSB)

See God looks at the church and calls us holy and blameless. Not because we are perfect. We are surely sinful messed up people. BUT that's what makes grace so amazing. He looks at IMPERFECT people but ascribes to them the perfection of CHRIST when he looks at them. So, Christ makes us perfect in God's eyes. That's why we need Jesus! We need his perfection to cleanse us from our sin so that we can be reconciled to God!

Remember this whole book, even this chapter on sex, has another narrative at work. God's love for his church. Don't forget that! That's why sex is about serving your spouse not yourself. It's because it is to be a celebration & reflection of God serving us not God serving himself. You might say, yes but these opening verses seem self-serving. No, if he was self-serving, he wouldn't say anything. He's speaking this over her. Serving her through affirmation and praise to create a haven of love and trust where she can be naked and totally secure about it.

Soulwork: Husbands & Wives – Write down 7 specific things you treasure about your spouse. At least three of them should be physical. THEN TELL ONE ANOTHER THESE THINGS. Do it in the bedroom just like they did. You can call it your Song of Solomon Night. Verbalizing affection will increase affection. And if you feel like your marriage is NOT in a place where you can do that...then talk about THAT. You need to be vulnerable with one another, probably get some marriage counseling, and make progress there. Talk more about that later.

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon! Descend from the peak of Amana, from the summit of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards. 9 You have captured my heart, my sister, my bride. You have captured my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

This is full vulnerability met with full delight and celebration. She has captured him. He sees NOTHING ELSE. This is the ideal, the way the marriage bed should be. My sister, my bride... (sister does not mean incest. No, it's a term of closeness and endearment not unlike sister in Christ would be today. I'm just saying don't get lost there). She is the sole object of his heart. It isn't just her torso that is captivating...he goes back to her eyes and neck. To HER. SHE, the whole woman (mind, body, & soul), his bride, has captured his heart. She's all together lovely and is now the object of his undivided praise. So, they go to bed.

10 How delightful your caresses are, my sister, my bride. Your caresses are much better than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any balsam.

11 Your lips drip sweetness like the honeycomb, my bride. Honey and milk are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

Ok Honey and Milk – How does he know they are under her tongue? Cause they are kissing. Back in the day we called it French kissing. But what you see here is that God invented that long before the French came around. It's really Hebrew kissing. But check this out - Do you know this is ALSO a call back to the exodus? Where God said...Exodus 3.8...that he would bring them out of slavery to a land flowing with milk and honey. And would dwell with them there. **He's calling her his promised land.** Because he has longed to be with her and now finally the day has arrived where he can enter the promised land. Now THAT is how spouses should talk to each other in the bedroom.

12 My sister, my bride, you are a locked garden —a locked garden and a sealed spring.

This is him acknowledging that up to this point, she is a virgin. Her garden has been sealed and he is praising her for it. And ya'll we spend so much time it feels like, in the church, saying to our kids and single people "DON'T DO IT" that we can downplay how fruitful a locked garden is.

A locked garden can grow fruit undisturbed that will ripen at the right time. It's a good thing for her garden to be locked until now. We'll talk more about the goodness behind God's design for women's gardens to stay sealed until marriage and

for men to stay out of gardens until marriage in a minute. But see here there is no shaming going on. Only celebrating.

13 Your branches are a paradise of pomegranates with choicest fruits, henna with nard,

14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense,

myrrh and aloes, with all the best spices. 15 You are a garden spring,

a well of flowing water streaming from Lebanon.

He evokes all the senses as he embraces his bride. The sight of a lush garden, the Taste of pomegranates, the smells of cinnamon and saffron, the sound of flowing water. And that feeling of sensory overload is intentional. That's what married sex is meant to be. A blissful consummation of their loving union in the act of sex.

Woman

16 Awaken, north wind; come, south wind. Blow on my garden,

and spread the fragrance of its spices. Let my love come to his garden and eat its choicest fruits.

Having said all of this to her. Praised & honored her and taken her to the safe secure place of the marriage bed. The bed that represents the security of their marriage.... AWAKEN – remember how she has said do not awaken love until its time? Well...NOW ITS TIME. And she holds nothing back. calls on the winds of the corners of the earth to come in and blow the

doors of her garden open. She is opening herself to him & inviting him to come into her and to enjoy all of her.

Man

I have come to my garden — my sister, my bride. I gather my myrrh with my spices.

I eat my honeycomb with my honey. I drink my wine with my milk.

She invited him in, and so he went. And here they are enjoying one another in full as they become one. In fact, he says “my” here 9 times and you could think...that’s a little possessive. BUT, in Hebrew that’s actually a suffix on the word it precedes. Which is him expressing that he is becoming one with his sister & bride. It’s actually a beautiful declaration of unity.

And then here in the most intimate of settings...where husband and wife are having sex / making love /? ... THAT is where the author himself speaks up to affirm their love making.

Narrator

Eat, friends! Drink, be intoxicated with caresses! -- Song of Songs 4:1-5:1

BE DRUNK WITH SEX! That is right there in the bible. In other words, lose your inhibitions in the safety and security of your marriage bed. Some think this is the daughters of Jerusalem,

some think Solomon, and some think God himself speaking his approval directly. No matter what line you follow it leads to the same point. God affirms, and even calls for, our enjoyment of sex in marriage. “He takes pleasure in those bodies he has carefully designed for pleasure...now having pleasure. He is our cheering section. Affirming what is happening here in the marriage bed as good and glorifying to him.”¹

Part 2 of sermon: Ok having seen the wedding night, I want to draw out a few truths here that I think reveal to us God’s Design for Sex.

Sex is God’s gift for serving your spouse, not yourself

This is my main point today and also the first of our truths. I made it out main point because it gets to the heart of so many issues people deal with in this area. Here’s what happens – we fall victim to the **lie that sexual desire equals sexual entitlement**. That because the desire is there, we are entitled to fulfill it. This has always been the lie of Satan. In the garden Satan stoked in Adam and eve a desire for the forbidden fruit and then he told them they were entitled to fulfill that desire. And ya’ll right here is where the greatest amount of HEART work needs to be done maybe in all of us. And truthfully this is where *some* of our singles are wonderful models of Christlikeness that married couples should listen to and learn from. We’ve got single people who of course have sexual desire but because they know that desire doesn’t mean they are entitled to fulfill it...because they have submitted their desires to the Lordship of Jesus, they abstain. See the heart of

¹ O’Donell, Douglas Sean. *Invitation to Intimacy: The Song of Solomon* (Wheaton, IL Crossway 1990) 83.

marriage, scripture says, is demonstrating the gospel through how we serve and love our spouse. And this is even true with your physical body & sexual desires. You don't serve yourself; you serve your spouse. And you TRUST your spouse will serve you. This is the way of Christ.

2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband. 3 A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. 4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another — except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control. -- 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Ok now here is what is so cool to me...Your body is not your own, it is your spouses. Right? Look at the verse RIGHT before this

19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So, glorify God with your body. -- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Isn't this awesome? You are not your own. You belong to God! Just as Christ served you...gave his life for you & your needs...surrendered his body to the father's will...you and I are to do the same. Glorify God in our body. And a clear, God

commanded expression of that in marriage is that we give our bodies to our spouses in an act of trust. They will meet our needs and not abuse the trust given to them. And the only time we will abstain...is for prayer. Which means we will be deeply intimate in a different way.

Can this be abused? Yes of course it can. When desire becomes entitlement, it will be abused. That's why sex must be an act of service. I can't take your body; I can only receive it. And you can't take my body, because it's entrusted to me by God to glorify him with. So, I give my body to you. THAT is what happens in Chapter 4. He is receiving his bride. And THEN...when both husband and wife give their bodies to one another...just as they've given their lives to one another...oh man we've got wind blowing spices in all directions and love so blissful you lose your mind in it.

Sex is exclusive to marriage, just like our worship is exclusive to God

Ok that's a big statement and one that the modern world weaponizes against Christianity. SO, let me explain it. And if you aren't a Christian here this is great because hopefully you can hear a thoughtful explanation of the Christian sexual ethic. Also, I'm going to do a little more on this at the conference next weekend. First, I want you to see how all consumed the husband and wife are with each other. Before I show you the biblical command, I want you to see the POINT.

Last week we talked about how marriage is a covenant not a contract. And the reason is because God designed marriage to be a human depiction of his relationship with us. Covenant. He

commits himself fully to us and calls us to commit ourselves fully to him. You cannot be a Christian AND worship any other god. That's not Christianity. Our worship is reserved for the one true God. And our marriages are designed by that same God to be as exclusive as our worship. The exclusive committed love of husband and wife are...remember Ephesians 5...ABOUT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. Christ has one bride – the church. And likewise, the church has one groom – Christ. Add to that 1 Cor 6 – we BELONG to our spouses not to ourselves reflects that relationship we have with Christ.

This is why in the Old Testament every time Israel...God's people...start worshipping another god (golden calf, gods of the land they are in, etc.) God calls it adultery. It's his bride having spiritual sex outside of their marriage with God. Whole book of Hosea is about this relationship between exclusive sex and exclusive worship. And sex being exclusive to marriage is so important it gets codified in the 10 commandments. Exodus 20.14 – "Do not commit adultery."

You say well that's OT. And if you aren't married...is sex adultery? Glad you asked.

Jesus comes along and ups the stakes

27 "You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery.
28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. -- Matthew 5:27-28

True for men and women here. Every time the bible employs the word lust (epithumia) it is used negatively because it is

talking about indulging a sexual craving. Lust is a sign of sexual entitlement cropping up in the heart. It's not about serving, it's about taking. For example: that's what porn does. You take to satisfy yourself. And listen this is one of MANY reasons PORN is SO dangerous – you are feeding and growing a massive entitlement monster in your heart. And some of you think, you'd never say it, but you are thinking it, that when you get married your spouse is going to be your God-approved porn. No. You are going to destroy that person with your entitlement. I've never seen a porn addict get just married and have a healthy marriage. I HAVE porn destroy marriages.

In fact, every time you see in your New Testament the term "sexual immorality" the Greek word there is porneia. Where we get our word pornography. Our word is basically "graphic sexual immorality." The New Testament consistently says any sexual activity that is outside of the marriage bed. Pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, anything in the 'yeah but it's not technically sex' category...its porneia. It's directly in violation of scripture.

4 Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. -- Hebrews 13:4

So, to those of you who may be asking "ok where is the line?" That is the WRONG question. It's not where is the line but **WHEN is the time?** Real frankly – You shouldn't be slinking around a locked garden messing with the gate asking I wonder if God approves of this or not. We just nap together we don't do anything. That's like saying our heads are made of butter

and we just sit by the fire...we won't melt. WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT? Either you are hoping to sin OR you are some kind of sicko who wants to torture yourself with temptation. FLEE TEMPTATION don't take a nap in it!

You don't need to test the fruit of the garden to see if you are compatible with that garden. Some of you have bought the lie of compatibility. You need to live together to see if you are compatible. You need to sleep together to see if you are compatible. It is the logic of the world. Because it puts SELF on the throne. But it is not a practice of biblical Christianity.

If you are a Christian, then neither your sexual sin nor your suffering is your identity.

Obviously today was about the ideal. Because that was our text. BUT, like all bible passages they point us to Jesus. Let me start with the suffering. I've got enough friends who have experienced sexual abuse to know that you hear a sermon on this and think man, somebody broke into my garden and stole from me and it wasn't my fault and it messed me up. I am so sorry. I am. It's not right. And any perpetrator of abuse should be criminally prosecuted for it. And I also know from those friends how hard that is to even talk about to your closest friends. So, I want you to hear you are not alone. What happened to you, is not you. Your virginity is something YOU make the decision to give. And I know there is a common thought that says well, since I'm broken, I'm going to run towards darkness instead of light. Listen this is a church of and for broken people. None of whom deserve the light of Christ but who long to be healed and transformed by it. So please, run to Christ. It won't be easy. All I can tell you is we want to

walk with you and God WILL walk with you. It might be a long road. But oh, will you experience a depth of grace and healing that you long for.

In fact, maybe this area is what has built up a wall between you and God. That can be broken down today and you can find renewed intimacy with the Lord.