

What Makes Your Lover So Special?

Heather's story stands in contrast to the model relationship between the man and woman in the Song of Songs. Or does it? We all live in a broken world, a world that we know, if we are honest, is capable of touching us and breaking us when we least expect it. Sociologist, Brene Brown says:

We are "those people." ...Most of us are one paycheck, one divorce, one drug-addicted kid, one mental health diagnosis, one serious illness, one sexual assault, or one affair away from being "those people" – the ones we pity... the ones bad things happen to ...the ones we don't want living next door.ⁱ

Why don't we want them living next door? Because they are a daily reminder of what is true – that this world is a risky and dangerous place.

We come in our song to a climactic chapter. Charles Dickens' first line from his novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, would be appropriate – "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Let's examine it together. First, we need to remind ourselves:

I. Why Has God Written Us this Song?

Many have wondered why this book is even IN the Bible. We said in our first week that, first, this is a love song and a love story between a real man and a real woman. It is describing their love for one another, what drew them together, and how they demonstrate a model relationship within the bounds of biblical love.

But we also noted that it teaches us by analogy that the source of love and the perfect model of love are found only in the love of God for us. We said that this "perfect" love could be described in two principles:

First, it's not about my getting what I want, but my giving what others need. Second, on the human level, selfless love is impossible without a passionate love for God on the spiritual level.

So, the core melody we hear in this Song of Songs is not being sung by a human voice but by a divine voice. This is why this song is in the Bible – it gives us a picture of what human love should look like and it leads us to consider how we have responded to the perfect love of God.

Which leads us to another major truth in today's chapter which is that...

II. Our Nature Determines Our Desire

While this poem is about a real, historical man and woman, it also represents men and women in general. There are, of course, specific exceptions to the rule, but the fact that men and women have gender distinctions that are generally true across even cultural boundaries, is something that even most secular social scientists acknowledge.

This chapter is picking up where chapter four left off. It is describing the couple's wedding night. I actually agree with the Hebrew scholar, Dr. Duane Garrett, whom I have been referring to throughout this study. He believes that the imagery of this chapter, the knocking at the door, the reluctance of the bride, the

disappearance of the husband a short time later is all poetic cover for the drama of their physical intimacy. I'm not going to interpret it detail by detail for you.

But I don't need to unravel the *double entendres* of this passage for us to see several important truths. First, God has placed different character qualities of Himself in the nature of men and women. These qualities are not only seen in the way we approach physical intimacy but also in the ways we approach our need for relationship with each other.

Christian marriage counselors, Dr. Emerson and Sarah Eggerichs, call this the Pink and Blue distinction. They draw this truth from Eph. 5:33 which says:

...each one of you (husbands) also must love his wife... and the wife must respect her husband.

Dr. Eggerichs goes on to say:

...the Love and Respect Connection is the key to any problem in a marriage... How the need for love (by women) and the need for respect (by men) play off of one another in a marriage has *everything* to do with the kind of marriage you will have. ⁱⁱ

His point is that we tend to think that, if there's a problem in a marriage, it's because both people aren't loving each other enough. But Dr. Eggerichs believes that the Bible actually says, "It's not the amount of love, but the kind of love that matters." Dr. Eggerichs supplies a list of what "love" means to a woman and what "respect" means to a man:

Love to a woman means:	Respect to a man means:
A desire for Closeness	A desire to Work and Achieve
A desire for Openness	A desire to Protect and Provide
A desire for Understanding	A desire to Serve and to Lead
A desire for Peacemaking	A desire to Analyze and Counsel
A desire for Loyalty	A desire for side-by-side friendship
A desire for Esteem	A desire for sexual intimacy ⁱⁱⁱ

These are very different lists! I don't have time to unpack what each of these means except to point out that they are both godly lists! Except for the "sexual intimacy" characteristic, they ALL are also desires of God. Both men and women are truly created "in the image of God," BUT we do not have identical DNA mixes. The differences are obvious physically, but these differences are not so obvious in what we desire. But our nature, how God created men and women differently, does determine our desires. Where we get into trouble in male/female relationships is when we start expecting our spouse to desire what we desire. Dr. Eggerichs' point is this: when a woman is loved by this definition of love, she is much more likely to give her man respect. And when a man is respected by this definition of respect, he is much more likely to give his woman the love she desires.

These gender differences are demonstrated to us in Song of Songs 5. The groom wants the relationship to move fast! He doesn't want to do the slow dance. He doesn't want to hear every detail of his woman's day. He wants to achieve something. If there's a problem, he wants to analyze it, create a plan of attack, put it in motion and move on! He thinks a great relationship is either working hard side-by-side or going to bed early and often!

But his woman is different. As someone has said, “Men are microwaves. Women are slow cookers.” She says:

I slept but my heart was awake. (Song of Songs 5:2)

Most men here have no idea what that means. Most women here know exactly what that means. Men are either awake or asleep, conscious or unconscious. Women have all known many nights when their bodies may have been asleep but their hearts were wide awake listening... listening for the cry of a feverish child, listening for the phone call from a teenage son or daughter who is out, listening for the answer from God on how to heal the broken relationship with a friend. Women know how to sleep with their hearts awake.

Then suddenly in our song, her heart wakes her body up:

Listen! My lover is knocking: (I think he’s from New York...)

“Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one.

My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.”

He’s like, “Come on, come on, come on; let me in, let me in, let me in already.” He’s in a hurry. He’s in a big rush. But not her. She’s trying to slow him down...

I have taken off my robe – must I put it on again?

I have washed my feet – must I soil them again?

I arose to open for my lover... I opened for [him]...

but my lover had left; he was gone...

I looked for him... I called him [on my cell phone] but he did not answer.

The watchmen found me as they made their rounds...

They beat me, they bruised me... (Song of Songs 5:3, 5-7)

This is a classic description of the different desires of a man and woman. But watch this. Look at what the woman finally says. She’s talking to the daughters of Jerusalem, her friends, and she says:

...if you find my lover, what will you tell him?

Tell him I am faint with love. (Song of Songs 5:8b)

Dr. Garrett says that a better translation of the Hebrew in the context of this verse would be, “tell him:”

I am wounded by love.

This is true of both men and women, isn’t it? As different as we are, we are both capable of being wounded, deeply wounded, by love. Who wounded you? What should you do about that wound? It is at this point that the bride’s friends ask the golden question:

How is your beloved better than others? (Song of Songs 5:9)

And here, we must jump to the higher plain of this song for it’s only there that we see...

III. What Makes Our Savior So Special?

Christ is our spiritual groom and we are His spiritual bride. Even in a perfect relationship there can be pain, however; there can be a wounding. Separation causes pain and we are physically separated from Christ. Jesus will ultimately protect us from evil and the Evil One by coming to rescue us, but many members of the universal Bride of Christ have been terribly wounded by representatives of the Evil One. Some have even been killed because of their loyalty, commitment and refusal to

compromise their vow of love to Christ. But what makes our Savior so special? How is He any different from any other absentee religious leader?

In our Song, the woman records ten physical character traits that qualify her lover for the title of *“outstanding among ten thousand.”* What ten traits could you list as character traits of Jesus that qualify Him as being better than any other religious leader? Shout out your favorite right now. One at a time. Who’s got one?

[I’ll repeat them as they’re said]

Now, how about you in Bristol? Come on. Shout ‘em out. Yes. And over in the Venue. Let’s hear ‘em. What traits of Jesus are on your top-ten list?

All right. That’s great. Whatever traits you came up with, let me point out one more. In the last verse of this chapter, after listing her top-ten traits, the bride says:

This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (S. of S. 5:16b)

So, what do you do if you have been wounded by a friend, by a lover?

Jesus was wounded by friends. We think of His crucifixion as the time He was wounded by enemies, but Peter and all His disciples abandoned Him, too. And as He hung on the cross, He cried out, “My God, My God why have YOU abandoned me?” Christ was wounded by friends and family. Is that who has wounded you? What should you do? You should follow Jesus.

In John 20, the resurrected Christ appeared to the disciples but Thomas wasn’t there. And Thomas said he wouldn’t believe that Jesus was alive, healed from His wounds, unless he could see the wounds and touch them. So, a week later, Jesus came back. He said to them:

“Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” (John 20:26-27)

Jesus showed His wound to those who had caused it (Isaiah 53:5 says, *“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*). He said to Thomas, “Peace be with you.” Then He gave him the ministry of forgiveness. He

If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven... (John 20:23)

Show your wound to the one who caused it, grant them peace and then empower them to go and do likewise – to forgive others. Jesus has the power to heal your wound, no matter who has wounded you, but He also wants you, as a wounded healer, to go and grant peace and heal others.

It has been said sarcastically that Christians are the only people who “shoot their wounded”, meaning that we elevate the wounds others have caused us to the level of the “unpardonable sin” and then we refuse to grant them peace. This is not the example of Christ. He didn’t even wait for the disciples to ask to be forgiven. He went to them, showed them His wound, which they had caused, and gave them peace. There’s a song that puts this principle into poetic form. The words are these:

*See all the wounded
Hear all their desperate cries for help
Pleading for shelter and for peace
Our comrades are suffering
Come let us meet them at their need
Don’t let a wounded soldier die*

*Obeying their orders
They fought on the front lines for our King
Capturing the enemy's stronghold
Weakened from battle
Satan crept in to steal their lives
Don't let a wounded soldier die*

*Come let us pour the oil
Come let us bind their hurt
Let's cover them with a blanket of His love
Come let us break the bread
Come let us give them rest
Let's minister healing to them
Don't let another wounded soldier die ^{iv}*

Heather spoke of how her home church did just that for her when she was wounded, weakened and desperate. Will we be that kind of a church for wounded people in our community?

What makes our Savior so special? Is it not that, beyond all His other wonderful traits, He came to you when you were wounded and He poured the oil. He bound your wound. He ministered healing to you. Why? Because He was and is not just your Savior; He is also your closest friend. Let's pray...

ⁱ Elisa Morgan, *The Beauty of Broken* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), p. 25

ⁱⁱ Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), p. 15

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. V, VI

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