

Song of Solomon 4:1-5:1: Marital Sex

Member Guide



Small Group Study – Each week our small groups team works alongside Pastor J.D. to create a small group study which corresponds to his sermon that week. The study examines a related passage of scripture to the text he preaches through with the goal of challenging small groups to grow both in their confidence in studying the bible and in their application of the truths brought out in the sermon.

Context: That Song of Solomon, a book containing graphic scenes about passion and sex, exists in Scripture confirms that God has created and intended sex to be a part of the human experience. In the Garden of Eden, God creates the woman for the man and the two are naked and not ashamed. Genesis 2:25 “describes perfect marital harmony as nakedness without shame, which is another way of saying the first couple was physically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually one. Song of Solomon 1:2-5:1 does not duplicate this original oneness, but it comes very close to doing so.”¹ Remember, Genesis 2 was before sin had entered the world. In Song of Solomon 4:16-5:1, both the woman and the man speak of intercourse as entering into her “garden.” This intimacy is approved and intended by God for married couples.

That Song of Solomon is part of the “wisdom literature” means that this passionate scene is an example of good living. Proverbs 5:18 advises that the wise young man should “rejoice in the wife of your youth,” and “be intoxicated always in her love.” Proverbs 30:19 marvels at the way a man interacts with his maiden. Ecclesiastes encourages men to enjoy life with their wife. Conversely, both chapters in Proverbs (5 and 30) continue by warning the young man about the utter folly of exploring adulteress relationships. The implication is that sex can bring great joy and passion within marriage, but results in destructiveness outside of marriage.

The Apostle Paul affirms this conclusion. Paul warns repeatedly that Christians ought to abstain from sexual immorality, and that this is God’s will for their lives (1 Thess. 4:1). Paul’s writings affirm the sacredness of marriage as perhaps the best model for how deep love can be (Ephesians 5:22-33). 1 Corinthians 7 explicitly says that marriage partners should have sex and have it frequently! Sex, in this instance, is a spiritually positive act, but when it involves a prostitute, it can have particularly disastrous effects on a person and the community of believers (1 Cor 6:12-20). Paul is writing these words to a city that has been influenced by Stoicism, which is a Greek philosophy that would have viewed any sexual act as dirty and unholy. Unfortunately, Stoic philosophy did have influence on the early Church, and for centuries Song of Solomon 4:1-5:1 was interpreted only as an allegory, mainly because the early Church did not want to encourage physical intimacy. But the rest of Scripture confirms that sex in a marriage relationship can be a joyous, spiritually positive part of life.

Theme: The theme of Song of Solomon 4:1-5:1 is that passionate sex between a man and his bride can be a beautiful experience that fosters emotional, physical, and spiritual intimacy. In verses 4:1-6, the man admires her beauty from her head to her breasts and declares finally in verse 7 that she is flawless. In verse 8, the man bids her to join him. In Verses 9-15 the man continues his complimentary language and declares that his heart belongs to her. 4:16 - 5:1 depicts the couple having sex and echoes the voice of approval that this is a good thing for them to immerse themselves in.

Aim: Sex in marriage is good. The Christian community ought to promote and cultivate this as wonderful part of the human experience, which was created and intended by God. Sex in marriage can be so wonderful that it is worth waiting for. Accountability among group members should seek to not only preventing each other from falling into sexual sin, but also to help each other actively cultivate a better sex life with marriage partners. Singles who want to be married can prepare themselves to be good lovers by practicing faithfulness to their partner even now, and by gaining a right understanding of how sex helps to cement marriage bonds.

¹ House, Paul R. *Old Testament Theology* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1998), page 467.

Study Questions:

Warning: the questions and the nature of this study may become intimate. Read through the questions and decide whether or not you should split your group into men and women. Have Fun!!

Openers: Had you ever studied Proverbs 30:18-20 before? What did you learn from JD's sermon on Sunday?

Opener: For those that were at church during summer 2008, what do you remember from the sermon series on Song of Solomon?

[4:1-5:1] How would you characterize the man's approach to his bride?

[4:1-5:1] What emotions are evident in this passage? How do emotions relate to sex?

Why is it important that a couple wait until marriage to have sex?

[4:1-5:1] Why is this passage in Scripture? What is God's view on sex?

Why do you think sex has historically been such a taboo topic in the church?

What can the Church do to promote sex within marriage?

How can your Summit small group maintain a healthy, ongoing accountability for one another in this aspect of your lives?

What advice would you give a single person who desires to be married about preparing for sex in marriage?