

Intro:

Thank you for the stories. God has been at work here in some powerful ways. I want to share with you a final word of encouragement from our Bible book companion on this journey- song of songs. How can we summarize our journey this series? I think the book brings us to a fitting close with this message: **Guard and give your sexuality with confidence.**

Let's read our text: Song of Songs 8:5-13.

Text: I love the way the woman shows us how she has guarded and given her sexuality with confidence- she reflects on how she has done this in light of the opinions of the influential men in her lives.

First, her brothers (v.8-9). Brothers back in that time were keepers of their sisters, and she reflects on what her brothers were saying while she was young. What should we do? If she's a wall- if she maintains her purity, virginity- a wall is the symbol of protection, we will make sure she is made beautiful. If she is a door- if she is not chaste, has lost her virginity, we will make sure we protect that and see to it that it does not happen again. Nice brothers, it may seem. But you need to remember- in the story these brothers really don't seem to have her best interest at heart. In chapter one, they were the ones who had brought oppression in her life.

And so what does the woman say? You know, I actually have done the job that you weren't really doing: I was a wall- I was chaste, I guarded my sexuality well, thank you very much. And I was actually quite attractive- my breast were like towers. But even more- I chose to give myself to the right man- then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. I've done a great job of guarding and giving my sexuality.

The second influential male opinion in her life is Solomon (v.11-12). Now, if you remember, when we first started this series we said that you can read the Song of Songs in two ways- with Solomon as the woman's lover. Or you can read it with Solomon being a third figure that the two lovers contrast themselves to- there are 3 characters in this setup, the man, woman, and Solomon. Chapter 3 and our text here are the texts that bring about this discussion, and I believe that Solomon is indeed given as someone we are supposed use as a comparison.

Here I believe he is brought up as a negative comparison (v.11). Because what she is saying is that Solomon had this vineyard- remember, the vineyard refers to the sexuality of person in this book- and this vineyard was given out to many people. It says that it was in Baal Hamon, literally translated as "master of a multitude," and it was given to others for management. The imagery here is almost certainly of Solomon's harem, full of women that he had to pay for- a sad and cheap thing because, as we saw above, money can't buy real love. So here's Solomon's harem, Solomon's cheap sex life.

And here our woman says- my sexuality is mine to guard and give; you keep your cheap sex to yourself! See her sense of confidence in how she guards and gives her sexuality.

Why is this such a big deal for her, and why should it be a big deal for us today? More than that, how is she able to do this, how are we able to do this today? The answer is the same. We need to realize that:

1. Love and sexuality are powerful and priceless.

It is just not something you carelessly give away.

Text: As the couple comes back from a time of intimacy, the woman reflects on the beginning of their married love (the mother's room is where marriages were started), and makes a declaration of what she wants their love to be, revealing to us the power and pricelessness of love. Remember that the Bible's sees sex as something to enjoy in the larger context of love, and specifically the covenantal love of marriage.

She wants to be the man's seal: seals were worn around the neck, or as a ring, and they were used to press images or names into clay as a signature. The woman wants them to be so meshed together that she is his signature. And she wants to be this way because she caught up in the power of love- it is as strong as death, and is fiercely jealous. Jealousy in this context is a good thing- it is something that, according to the Bible, should be a part of relationships where there is singular devotion. Two types of relationships are like this in the Bible- marriage and our relationship with God- and so they are the only two relationships where jealousy is explicitly allowed. It is so powerful it is like a fire that consumes. And it is so powerful that water- symbolic in the Bible for chaos and evil- water cannot

overwhelm it. This is powerful. And it is so priceless- money cannot buy this- in fact, if someone tried to exchange money for love, they would be rejected, despised.

And so she has this sort of attitude about love and sex because she knows it is so powerful and precious. But if we were to take a step back and look at the whole story of the Bible, I think there is another related reason why we would want to guard and give our love in the right way- God has loved us this way. And if we have given into His love, our lives are meshed with his. As such, we should guard and give away our sexuality with confidence, a confidence that is rooted in Him.

2. God has loved us in this way, and made us His.

God's chose to mesh our lives together with his.

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world... in love..."

Ephesians 1:4,5

God's love is stronger than death and turmoil.

"I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:28-30

In fact, he gave not money for this relationship- that would be despicable and not really love, according to Song of Songs. He gave his life instead.

"You were ransomed... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ..."

1 Peter 1:18, 19

He gave his life for us like this, because the God of the universe is one who plans to rid the world of evil one day.

Unfortunately, we all have evil within us, and that means we would be wiped out as well. But God did not want it to be so, and so he became one of us, to take on our evil, and die the death we should have died. This is how we became his, this is the price he paid.

As such, we are his, and are called to guard and give our sexuality in the way that reflects how we belong to him.

"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

1 Cor 6:19-20.

This may seem restrictive, suffocating. If you've ever stepped into intense love- well, it is. Many back out at this point. But this is only a phase- for those who have walked through this initial feeling, you know that the freedom and flourishing we are longing for is ultimately there with love, and with God.

It's like anything else in life that has certain boundaries or restrictions- sports, for example. It may seem so restrictive the certain rules of play, the boundaries on the field! But there is so much potential to be discovered within those rules and boundaries and plays.

And so guard and give your love with confidence- confidence in the ways of God. You are His. He loves you, and longs to carry you through to something wonderful and beautiful.

Challenge:

Will you commit yourself to giving yourself?