

## THE MARRIAGE PROJECT

### "HAPPILY EVER AFTER?"

#### SONG OF SOLOMON 8:5-14

### This Week's Core Competency

**Love** – I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others. 1 John 4:10-12, *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another: No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

Perhaps because our infinite God "is love" (1Jn 4:8) and because we humans are created in his "image" and "likeness" (Ge 1:26, 27), we know first-hand the power of love. Solomon's wife felt its force. According to Song of Songs 8:6, the Shulammitte asks him to make her his own, saying: "Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is strong as death . . ." (SS 8:6a). But she doesn't stop there; she goes on to sum up the nature and power of love (vv. 6b-7). One commentator recaps what she says: "It is as universal and irresistible as **death**, exclusive and possessive (in the sense of being genuinely concerned for the one loved) as the **grave**, passionate (as **blazing fire**) and as invincible and persevering as **many waters** and **rivers**. And all this is true because love is supported by the Creator who possesses all power. The words **like a mighty flame** are, literally, 'like the very flame of the LORD' (cf. NIV marg.). Thus the Lord is portrayed as the Source of this powerful love"

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*Care must be exercised around something as powerful as love.*

– Tremper Longman III

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(Jack S. Deere, "Song of Songs," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 1024).

The love she feels for Solomon is romantic love, but what is said about love isn't limited to love in that narrow sense. The powerful love between a man and a woman described in Song of Songs simply typifies the power of love in general. Consider John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Think on what another commentator has to say:

"This love is, of course, the erotic, sensual love that the poet has expressed throughout the Song. However, as we described in the Introduction, the love between a man and a woman is used to describe the love between God and his people. One thinks of the tenacious love of God for a recalcitrant Israel in Hosea 8:8-9:

*How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, Israel?  
How can I treat you like Admah?  
How can I make you like Zeboiim?  
My heart is changed within me;  
all my compassion is aroused.  
I will not carry out my fierce anger,  
nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim.  
For I am God, and not man-  
the Holy One among you.  
I will not come in wrath.*

"As we turn our attention to the New Testament a couple of passages that articulate the power of love come to mind. The entirety of 1 Corinthians 13 reflects on the nature of love, but, perhaps more than any other part of that passage, Song 8:5 brings  
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to mind Paul's statement that 'Love never fails' (1 Cor. 13:8). In Romans 8:38 Paul lists death as one of our enemies unable to separate us from Christ's love" (Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs*, NICOT, 213).

The link between the romantic love of a man and a woman and the divine love of God for us is linked again in Ephesians 5:25. There Paul tells the Ephesians: "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," and reiterates in Colossians 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them."

## day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Song of Solomon 8:5-14

#### Friends

5 Who is this coming up from the desert  
leaning on her beloved?

#### Beloved

Under the apple tree I roused you;  
there your mother conceived you,  
there she who was in labor gave you birth.

6 Place me like a seal over your heart,  
like a seal on your arm;  
for love is as strong as death,  
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.

It burns like blazing fire,  
like a mighty flame.

7 Many waters cannot quench love;  
rivers cannot sweep it away.

If one were to give  
all the wealth of one's house for love,  
it would be utterly scorned.

#### Friends

8 We have a young sister,  
and her breasts are not yet grown.

What shall we do for our sister  
for the day she is spoken for?

9 If she is a wall,  
we will build towers of silver on her.

If she is a door,  
we will enclose her with panels of cedar.

#### Beloved

10 I am a wall,  
and my breasts are like towers.  
Thus I have become in his eyes  
like one bringing contentment.

11 Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon;  
he let out his vineyard to tenants.

Each was to bring for its fruit  
a thousand shekels of silver.

12 But my own vineyard is mine to give;  
the thousand shekels are for you, Solomon,  
and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.

#### Lover

13 You who dwell in the gardens  
with friends in attendance,  
let me hear your voice!

#### Beloved

14 Come away, my beloved,  
and be like a gazelle  
or like a young stag  
on the spice-laden mountains.

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

\* In the margin next to v. 5 write, "Cf., 3:6."

\* Bracket "under the apple tree" in v. 5.

\* Box "like" and "as" indicating *comparison* in vv. 6-7.

\* Circle "seal" in v. 6.

\* Underline "heart" and "arm" in v. 6.

\* Circle "jealousy" in v. 6.

\* Circle "it" in v. 7.

\* Underline "wall" and "door" in vv. 9-10.

\* Box "thus" indicating *result* in v. 10.

\* Circle "vineyard" in vv. 11-12.

\* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 12.

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day **2**

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Who is coming up from the desert?
2. Explain why "apple tree" should be or should *not* be taken *literally* in verse 5.
3. Explain what the beloved is asking her lover to do in verse 6.
4. Put what is said about love in verses 6b-7 in a nutshell.
5. Identify the speakers in verses 6-9.
6. Is the "love" referred to in verse 6 exclusively romantic? Explain.
7. *Contrast* the meaning of the metaphors "wall" and "door."
8. Explain the use of *result* ("thus") in verse 10.
9. *Contrast* the meaning of "vineyard" in verse 11 and verse 12.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the couple's relationship as depicted in verses 13-14.

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

Song of Songs 8:5-7 marks the *conclusion* of the book, even though it doesn't mark its end. These verses speak to the essence and power of love exemplified in the romantic relationship between Solomon and the Shulammitte. *The Message* paraphrases the beloved's observations on love this way:

"Love is invincible facing danger and death.

Passion laughs at the terrors of hell.

The fire of love stops at nothing-  
it sweeps everything before it.

Flood waters can't drown love,  
torrents of rain can't put it out.

Love can't be bought, love can't be sold-  
it's not to be found in the marketplace."

The *epilogue* that follows in verses 8-14 marks the "happy ending" of the book. Solomon's words to his beloved, "Let me hear your voice," and the Shulammitte's reply to him, "Come away, my lover" suggests that their love has lost none of its intensity, leaving the reader with the sense that the two "lived happily ever after."

In the opening poem (vv. 5-7), the couple is seen coming up from the desert. "Off in the distance they can be seen strolling together. Her head is gently leaning upon his chest and his arm is around her. 'Who is this coming from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?' the poet asks, and in asking he draws our attention to the lovers of our song. What will he say are the characteristics of love?" (S. Craig Glickman, *A Song for Lovers*, 95). Following the introductory rhetorical question, the beloved speaks. First, she declares that she awakened her lover to love (v. 5). We would say, she caused him to fall in love with her. She did this "under the apple tree," a familiar symbol for romance in their culture, meaning she did this as a result of their romantic encounters. That is, "their love was born where years earlier he himself had been born. Not under a literal apple tree but under a symbolic tree of romance" (96). Second, she asks him to "wear her ring" (v. 6a). The "seal" she asks him to wear over his heart and on his arm indicates ownership. She wants him to proclaim for all to see that she belongs to him and he belongs to her. Third, she explains that love is the reason behind her request; love is the source of her affections (vv. 6b-7). On the importance of verse 6, one commentator writes: "This verse is arguably the most memorable and

intense of the entire book. M. Sadgrove remarks on this verse and the next that 'this is the only place in the Song where any attempt is made to probe the meaning of the love that is its theme; everywhere else it is simply described'" (Longman, 209). The figurative language the beloved uses points to the fact that "love never fails" (1Co 13:8) and is, in fact, the supreme virtue (v. 13). Why, love is as powerful as death; its jealousy as gripping as the grave. Love's passion burns blazing hot; so hot, it cannot be quenched by water. No river can wash love away. What's more, it is priceless. Love can be neither bought nor sold, but only given away.

The closing poem (vv. 8-14) contains a flashback depicting how her older brothers protected their younger sister in preparation for her to meet Solomon. On this poem Glickman writes: "It would be almost frustrating to end the definition of love by saying all the money in the world couldn't buy it. Most of us probably knew that already. After seeing the end of the wonderful relationship of the song, we'd like to know the right way to find love, not the sure way to lose it. How did this couple find themselves in the most meaningful relationship of their lives? How did they prepare themselves for it, and how did they meet? That's what we'd like to ask. And that just what the poet was waiting for us to ask. In the last few verses of the song he flashes back before the spring of courtship to answer these important questions" (104).

In the first place, the beloved's brothers determine to defend their younger sister's chastity for the day of her marriage. If she proved to be a "wall," that is, if she resisted temptation, they would allow her freedom and reward her self-control. But if she proved to be a "door," that is, if she yielded to temptation, they would restrict her freedom and rebuke her recklessness. "It was like placing an ice cream cone in front of her and a pitchfork behind her to encourage her to go in the right direction" (106). In her own words, she proved to be a "wall" rather than a "door" (v. 10), so when the time comes for her to marry, she is ready for an intimate and satisfying relationship with Solomon. "It is because of her sexual maturity and exclusiveness that she brings peace (*salom*) to her lord/husband. The term *salom* has a rich connotation, including not only the absence of strife but also fulfillment, contentment,

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satisfaction, and wholeness" (Longman, 21).

In the second place, the couple apparently first meets in a vineyard owned by Solomon, which he perhaps has leased to her younger brothers. Remember her words in 1:6, "I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected." According to the terms of a typical lease, each tenant is to grow enough grapes to earn about twenty-five pounds of silver for the vineyard's owner; each in turn earns about five pounds of

silver for his wages. "My own vineyard," a metaphor for herself, is neither for sale nor for lease. The beloved's vineyard is hers alone to give, and she freely gives it to Solomon.

In the last place, the words the two lovers have for each other at the end of the Song indicate that their love has lost none of its intensity along the way from courtship to marriage, and from marriage to maturity. He says, "Let me hear your voice" (v. 13), and she replies, "Come away, my lover" (v. 14).

## *The Message of the Passage*

*Love, which is invincible, captivating, passionate, persevering, and priceless, has the ability to bind two hearts together for a lifetime.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 5 **who is this** . . . "We assume that it is the chorus, elsewhere identified as the women of Jerusalem, who ask this question. After all, what is seen in the distance is the lover and the one who is leaning on him, a fact that rules out the man and the woman as speakers" (Longman, 208). "Before he gives his definition of love he sets before the reader a picture of the couple who had experienced it in their relationship . . . Off in the distance they can be seen strolling together. Her head is gently leaning upon his chest and his arm is around her. 'Who is coming from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?' the poet asks, and in asking he draws our attention to the lovers of our song" (Glickman, 95).

v. 5 **apple tree** "The apple tree was a familiar symbol for romance in their culture. It was the sweetheart tree of the ancient world . . . Their love was born where years earlier he himself had been born. Not under a literal apple tree but under a symbolic tree of romance" (96). "The image here recalls the beginning of their love. The beloved roused (better, 'awakened') her lover to love. The 'awakening' is a metaphor for new life or rather a new way of perceiving life, which her love had brought to him. Much as he was the product of his parents' love and was brought into the world by physical birth, the lover had now received a second 'birth' or 'awakening' through the love of his beloved" (Deere, 1024). "The cycle of life and love had come around full circle under the apple tree. While his mother had awakened his eyes to life, the Beloved had awakened him to love. His parents had made love under the apple tree [figuratively speaking] to conceive him in love, and now Solomon and his Beloved were making love under the same apple tree of love" (The NET Bible, 14sn on 8:5).

v. 6 **seal** The significance of the simile is clear, but does she possess him or he her? "The seal in mind here is the seal of ownership and personal identification. These seals would come in two types, stamp and cylinder, but the function of both is the same . . . In either case, a seal signified an association with, even an ownership of, the object being sealed . . . The woman is asking the man to allow her to 'own' him, but not in some kind of cheap commercial sense; she wants him to willingly give himself to her" (Longman, 209, 10). "The context here suggests that the girl wants to imprint her claim to her lover deeply and openly on him" (G. Lloyd Carr, *Song of Solomon*, TOTC, 186).

v. 6 **heart, arm** "She asks him to mark her on his heart and arm. Perhaps the first refers to his inner being, what makes him tick; and his arm refers to his actions. [Or perhaps, his affections and actions] Taken together, heart and arm signify the whole person" (Longman, 210).

v. 6 **jealousy** Or "ardor" (NIV margin); cf., "passion" (NET, NRSV, GNT, ESV). "The word 'jealousy' is not an apt translation since the English term, in a context of love, implies suspicion of faithlessness on the part of the other. The Hebrew term often refers to this kind of jealousy, but it is not limited to this meaning. Also it is not strictly a sexual passion but rather a strongly emotional attachment to another. This attachment is possessive and exclusive, as in the 'passion' of the Lord for Israel" (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 426). "Jealousy in this context denotes a single-minded devotion to something. In common speech, jealousy is almost always seen in a negative fashion, as narrow-minded and self-seeking. This may be a legitimate reason to substitute a word like passion for *qin'a*, in this context" (Longman, 211).

v. 6 **unyielding** "Just as the grave swallows down men and women, so the passion of love, when it has taken a prisoner, never lets him or her go" (Garrett, 426). Such jealousy or passion is *tenacious* (Longman, 212).

v. 6 **mighty flame** Or "the very flame of the LORD" (NIV margin, ESV). "The Hebrew expression conveys the idea of a most intense flame, hinting that it has been kindled by the Lord" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on SS 8:6).

v. 7 **it** Cf., "If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love, the offer would be utterly despised" (NET). Or "he" (NIV margin); cf., "If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised" (ESV).

v. 9 **wall, door** "This architectural imagery denotes her sexual activity or, so they hope, the lack of it" (Longman, 216). The metaphor "wall" describes accordingly a virtuous young woman who resists assaults against her virginity, while the metaphor "door" describes a promiscuous young woman who opens to sexual advances. In the first instance, her brothers will reward her or reinforce her chastity by further protecting her; in the second, they will prevent her from being sexually open by barring access to her—cf., "we will barricade her with boards of cedar" (NET).

v. 11, 12 **vineyard** To be taken *literally* in verse 11, but *figuratively* in verse 12. "The site of 'Baal-hamon' is unknown. Evidently Solomon leased part of his vineyard to the Shulammitte's brothers who put her to work in it (1:6). There she met Solomon. Her own vineyard probably refers to her own person (cf. 1:6)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Song of Solomon," 2016 ed., 38-39, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com); see the NET Bible, 40sn on 8:12).

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## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Parents, PantegoKids will not be aligning with the adult series, *The Marriage Project*. Instead, we will be studying different aspects of godly friendships in the Bible. In our five-week series, *Better Together*, kids will learn why we should have good friends, how to be a good friend, how to resolve conflict in friendships and Who our best friend is! While our earthly friendships are so important there is one friendship that is more desirable than the rest. Jesus is our forever friend, the One who sticks closer than a brother and the One who laid down His life for His friends. This friendship not only changes your life here on earth but forever in eternity. I remember exactly where I was when I met Him face to face. I had grown up in church, knew all the stories, even had gone through a new believer's class as a child, but the evening I actually trusted Him is forever seared in my mind. I was 16 and at summer camp. I was sitting on a rock wall by a pond. The Lord had been drawing me to Himself all evening through the service and then pointedly asked me on the rock wall if I would trust Him. I said yes and a beautiful friendship began. On occasion the journey has been rough but always worth it. What's your story? Tell your kids about it this week.

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read John 15:13 and write the verse in this space:

### What Do You Think

Read Mark 15:33-39. This scene describes the moment Jesus gave up His life for us. He wants to be your forever friend. Have you trusted Christ as Savior? How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves you so much?

### What R U Going To Do

What is the next step on your spiritual journey? Is it salvation? Baptism? Taking communion? Do you need to come up with a quiet time or prayer plan? Share your faith with someone? Talk to your parents about it and then make a decision about what to do next!

### Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

### Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 13:8 - *Love never fails.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-eight years and have one son, Zach.

**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).