



THE SONG OF SONGS | A THEOLOGY OF DESIRE (17)

January 18, 2026

Song of Songs 2:7-17

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Question

- What is the most excited you have ever been in your life?

WORSHIP 10 MIN

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Isaiah 52

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
**Who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."**

The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;

**For eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.**

Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,

**For the LORD has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.**

The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations,

**And all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.**

SCRIPTURE READING

Song of Songs 2:7-17

*⁷I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the does of the field,
that you not stir up or awaken love
until it pleases.*

*⁸The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he comes,
leaping over the mountains,
bounding over the hills.*

*⁹My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.*

*Behold, there he stands
 behind our wall,
 gazing through the windows,
 looking through the lattice.*
¹⁰*My beloved speaks and says to me:
 "Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
 and come away,*
¹¹*for behold, the winter is past;
 the rain is over and gone.*
¹²*The flowers appear on the earth,
 the time of singing has come,
 and the voice of the turtledove
 is heard in our land.*
¹³*The fig tree ripens its figs,
 and the vines are in blossom;
 they give forth fragrance.*
*Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
 and come away.*
¹⁴*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
 in the crannies of the cliff,
 let me see your face,
 let me hear your voice,
 for your voice is sweet,
 and your face is lovely.*
¹⁵*Catch the foxes for us,
 the little foxes
 that spoil the vineyards,
 for our vineyards are in blossom."*
¹⁶*My beloved is mine, and I am his;
 he grazes among the lilies.*
¹⁷*Until the day breathes
 and the shadows flee,
 turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
 or a young stag on cleft mountains.*

BIBLE STUDY **Summary** **40 MIN**

We are continuing our sermon series in Song of Songs, and our passage for this week provides us with a biblical lens to understand desire. Desire is part of humanity's original created goodness (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24), a divine gift that is given to help us draw near to God and to one another. However, because of the Fall, this faculty is now susceptible to distortion and misuse. Scripture consistently teaches that desire itself is not sinful, but that it can become sinful when it arises apart from obedience to God's will (James 1:14-15; Galatians 5:16-17). Although human nature was created good, it is now wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body, including in our desire (Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF] 6.2). Therefore, it must be directed by grace rather than ruled by impulse. When ordered rightly, human desire mirrors God's own covenantal longing for his people (Hosea 2:16-20; John 17:24). To put it simply: godly desire reflects God's desire for us.

The poem's first movement in verses 7-9 centers on the woman's charge to not "awaken love until it so desires." This is a warning against the danger of disembodied imagination. Imagination and emotion have a tendency to run ahead of what our actual, physical relationships can bear.

When the abstract imagination outpaces the “fully personal” development of a relationship, the “danger signals” of sin should begin to flash. Scripture treats even these inward imaginations as a matter of moral concern (Westminster Larger Catechism 139). While the world encourages us to indulge every impulse, the woman recognizes that love is only healthy when the time is “ripe.” By calling for restraint, she resists the post-Fall pattern of disorder and domination. In Genesis 3:16 and 4:7, “desire” is linked to a struggle for control and mastery. Love, therefore, must be cultivated in harmony with God’s timing and purposes. What is good by original design now requires the restraining, healing, and directing grace of God, since our fallen hearts are naturally inclined to disordered desire and the sinful impulse to dominate rather than to love.

In the second movement of the poem, seen in verses 10-14, there is an urgent yet tender invitation from the man. Unlike the sinful pattern of dominating desire, the man’s call is marked by delight and properly ordered affection. His invitation does not overwhelm the other person’s agency. Desire that is good, then, seeks mutual joy and service of the other instead of coercion. In the final movement of verses 15-17, the poem expands on this idea of mutuality: “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” This is the theological “undoing” of the curse. Where sin introduced a power struggle into human relationships, the Song presents a bond of reciprocal self-giving. Neither party dominates, and instead, they are connected in a bond of service and submission that anticipates the relationship between Christ and his Church (Ephesians 5:21-25). The poem concludes with a final call to wait “until the day breathes” (v. 17). This reminds us that even the most intense, godly desire must be held in check by hope. Growth in holiness is the gradual process of “weakening sinful impulses” and “strengthening godly affections” (WCF 13.1). Self-control is not a feat of human willpower but a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). While desire is powerful, it is not ultimate. Our desires will one day finally be perfected and fully satisfied in the presence of God (Revelation 19:7-9).

1. Looking at the Bible

- Share with the group some key phrases or ideas that stood out to you from the passage.

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- In verse 16, the woman exclaims, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” While this describes the beauty of human marriage, it also points to the covenant language God uses with his people (e.g., “I will be your God, and you will be my people”). Looking at this through the lens of Ephesians 1:3-14, how does our union with Christ fulfill this desire for mutual belonging?
- Specifically, what does it mean for your daily peace to know that Christ is yours (and all his spiritual blessings/inheritance are now yours)? How does the reality that you are his (purchased by his blood) change the way you view your own body and your desires?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Compare the mutual, patient desire of Song of Songs with Amnon's desire for Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-15). What differences do you observe between love that waits and lust that demands? How does Amnon's hatred after he "gets what he wants" expose the emptiness and self-disgust that often follow sinful desire?
- Some commentators see the foxes (verse 15) as representing things that distract us from intimacy with God and with one another. What are some things that tend to distract you?

4. Looking at our World

- The prevailing Western culture promises fulfillment by instant gratification: sex without covenant, pleasure without patience, desire without limits. How does this passage help us expose the lie that immediacy leads to freedom?
- In what ways can the Church offer a more compelling vision of desire — which is ordered, directed, and fulfilled in Christ — to a world exhausted by its own cravings?

PRAYER 15 MIN

Pray for each other: Share any prayer requests you have.

"My beloved is mine, and I am his" is a common refrain in the Song of Songs. While this points to the powerful love between the man and the woman in this story, it should also stand as an ideal for us to strive for in our intimate relationship with God. This intimacy should be expressed in our prayer life through a practice known as adoration. Take some time to draw near to God in prayer by telling him how much you appreciate him for who he is and for what he has done for you.