



THE SONG OF SONGS | A THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE (19)

February 1, 2026

Song of Songs 4:9-5:1

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 one song you'd love to hear live one time in your life?

WORSHIP 10 MIN

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Revelation 19

"Praise our God, all you his servants,

You who fear him, small and great."

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude,

Like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God,

The Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult

And give him the glory,

For the marriage of the Lamb has come,

And his Bride has made herself ready;

It was granted her to clothe herself

With fine linen, bright and pure."

SCRIPTURE READING

Song of Songs 4:9-5:1

Lover

⁹*You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride;
you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.*

¹⁰*How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!*

¹¹*Your lips drip nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue;
the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.*

¹²*A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a spring locked, a fountain sealed.*

¹³*Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard,
¹⁴nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all choice spices—
¹⁵a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.*

¹⁶*Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden,
let its spices flow.*

Beloved

*Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.*

Lover

⁵*I came to my garden, my sister, my bride,
I gathered my myrrh with my spice,
I ate my honeycomb with my honey,
I drank my wine with my milk.*

Chorus

*Eat, friends, drink,
and be drunk with love!*

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

Continuing our sermon series in Song of Songs, this week's passage provides a biblical lens for a theology of marriage. While we should be sure to remember that the Song is poetry rather than narrative — and therefore should not be pressed into a rigid storyline — this specific cycle clearly concerns the consummation of marriage, marked by the unique appearance of the term “bride” (4:8-12; 5:1), the only time the phrase appears in the whole Song. The literary unity of this section is reinforced through repeated imagery — Lebanon, wine, milk, honey, spices, and the garden — which links the Lover's intense longing with his eventual satisfaction. What is desired in chapter 4 is realized in 5:1, when the previously locked garden is finally entered. In fact, 5:1 stands as both the literal and the emotional center of the Song, portraying marital union as the covenantal culmination of love.

The passage opens with the Lover's confession that his heart has been captured by his bride (verse 9). While the “heart” in Old Testament Hebrew often denotes the seat of the will, the mind, or the conscience, here it clearly expresses a depth of personal affection that leaves the Lover bowled over and helpless in his delight. He is undone by her beauty and fragrance; her presence overwhelms him. Sight, smell, taste, and touch converge to portray an intimacy that is fully embodied and openly celebratory. The deliberate engagement of all the human senses is both poetic and theological. It signals that marital love is positively bestowed by God. Properly

bound by holiness and fidelity, marital intimacy is received with gratitude as part of God's wise and generous design. As we have covered in previous weeks, the Song refuses any denigration of the body or wholesale suspicion of desire, and similarly, it presents covenant intimacy as a sanctified delight — a truth reflected in our understanding of the goodness of marriage and the lawful enjoyment of one another within it (1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5; Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. 24).

Read with the backdrop of Ancient Near Eastern betrothal customs in mind, this scene depicts lovers who are pledged and prepared, awaiting only the final wedding and consummation. This pattern of betrothal — of completed preparation and pledged commitment — provides an interesting analogy for the Church's relationship to Christ, in which the covenant bond is already secured and richly endowed, even as its final consummation awaits fulfillment. Princeton theologian Geerhardus Vos described this by referring to the "already/not yet" of the Kingdom. Believers are already betrothed, having received every spiritual blessing in him (Ephesians 1:3), yet we still await the final consummation at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9). This eschatological tension is intensified by our own histories of unfaithfulness. Like the Old Testament figure Gomer (cf. book of Hosea), each and every one of us in the Church is a frequently unfaithful bride, and yet we are still graciously taken into covenant by a faithful husband. Because this primary and decisive bond is with Christ, earthly marriage cannot function as the measure of human worth or fulfillment. Whether married or single, all believers share the same covenantal status and hope, so both callings are to be received as legitimate gifts of grace ordered toward the same final end.

That being said, this equal dignity of callings does not relativize marriage itself. Marriage is portrayed here as a permanent, exclusive, covenant bond, metaphorically pictured as a cultivated and guarded garden (Song 4:12, 16; 5:1). Its beauty makes it attractive to the world, yet its sanctity requires fierce protection. Scripture consistently defends this bond, warning against separating what God has joined (Matthew 19:4-6) or redefining marriage contrary to the design of creation. Opposing modern reductions of marriage to mere companionship or emotional fulfillment, the Song presents it as a covenant of mutual delight and self-giving love ordered toward God's glory. In this way, marriage functions as a living sign of Christ's love for the Church, marked by service and submission, and reflecting the historic understanding of marriage as a divine institution rather than a human invention. Properly understood, marriage therefore demands not casual participation but reverent stewardship, since it ultimately serves as a signpost pointing us to the faithfulness of Christ toward his redeemed people.

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.

- The Lover in the Song is “undone” by the beauty of his bride. In considering our own sin (our “Gomer-like” unfaithfulness), what does it tell us about Christ’s love that he chose to be “undone” and broken on the cross to make us beautiful and “without spot or wrinkle” (Ephesians 5:27)?
- How does Jesus demonstrate a heart perfectly and exclusively set upon his bride, the Church, even as she is unfaithful?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- The Lover says his heart is “captured” by the beauty and character of his bride. If you look at your thoughts and time over the last week, what has truly “captured” your heart?
- Are there idols or distractions (career, digital entertainment, or even good things like children) that have stolen the focus and delight that rightfully belong to your spouse or to Christ?

4. Looking at our World

- Modern culture often views exclusivity and lifelong permanence as “walls” that stifle personal freedom. Yet, despite having more “freedom” than ever to move in and out of relationships, our society is facing a historic “loneliness epidemic.” How does the image of the “locked garden” (verse 12) suggest that true intimacy is actually a byproduct of patience, exclusivity, and limitation?
- In what way does the gospel reality that Christ has “locked” himself to us in a permanent covenant (Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 1:13-14; Hebrews 6:17-19) subvert our fear of being trapped and instead fulfill our longing to be truly known without the fear of being un-chosen?

PRAYER **15 MIN**

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

Anxiety is something that many people struggle with, regardless of relationship status. Pray for the members of your group — whether single, dating, or married — to feel a deep sense of security in their relationship with Christ.