

Love, Longing, and the God Who Draws Near



Song *of*
Solomon

RECLAMTODAY®

from Our Daily Bread Ministries

Song *of* Solomon

Love, Longing, and the God
Who Draws Near

RECLAIMTODAY®

from Our Daily Bread Ministries

How to Use This Reading Companion

The Bible wasn't written to be skimmed, mastered in a single sitting, or quoted out of context. It was written to be returned to, so we can read slowly, wrestle honestly, and allow God to shape us over time.

As part of a Bible Engagement ministry, we're inviting you into a simple rhythm: read, reflect, and respond to Scripture four or more times each week. Not perfectly or exhaustively, but consistently and attentively. Research shows that regularly engaging with Scripture can deeply shape our faith and lives.

We created this reading companion with that rhythm in mind.

Why Song of Solomon?

Song of Solomon (also called Song of Songs) is one of the Bible's most beautiful, confusing, intimate, and misunderstood books.

It's poetry—not a rulebook or step-by-step relationship manual—which means it invites slow reading, reflection, and honesty. Some passages may feel beautiful. Others may feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or emotionally complicated. That's okay.

Christians have historically read Song of Songs in several ways:

- as love poetry,
- as wisdom literature,
- and as a picture of God's love for his people.

Throughout this guide, we'll explore all three perspectives.

How to Use This Guide:

This companion is designed to be used over the course of one week, with four short readings. Each "Read" invites you to:

- learn a different way Christians have understood Song of Songs,
- read part of the book slowly,
- reflect through guided questions,
- and respond in prayer.

You might use it like this:

Day 1: Notice the Story

Day 2: Notice God's Love

Day 3: Notice the Wisdom

Day 4: Notice Yourself

You don't need to rush or understand everything . . . and you don't need to force application where it doesn't come naturally. Instead, we invite you to come with openness and read honestly. Let the discomfort teach you, trusting that God still speaks through even the smallest (and strangest) parts of Scripture.

A Quick Note About Hebrew Poetry

Song of Songs uses imagery, symbolism, repetition, and hyperbole to communicate emotion and beauty. Some compliments may sound absurd to modern readers (we rarely compare people to livestock anymore, which is probably good), but the point is emotional intensity, not realism.

You don't need to decode every metaphor (even scholars haven't figured out every figure of speech used!). Instead, notice what the poetry awakens in you: delight, awkwardness, longing, curiosity, resistance, hope, etc.

If you're single while reading this:

Song of Songs speaks to deeply human experiences of longing, delight, vulnerability, and love. It's not only for those who are married or dating.

For some readers, this book may stir hope. For others, grief, confusion, or longing. All of those responses are welcome. Whatever your relationship status or season of life, this book invites you to receive the love of God and reflect that love toward others.

Notice the Story

What is this book, and why is it in the Bible?

Song of Songs has... a bit of a reputation. Even in a Bible full of giant, man-eating fish, world-ending floods, and pages upon pages about blood sacrifice—this book can seem like a weird inclusion.

- It doesn't mention God at all.
- It centers on intense romantic and physical desire.
- And Solomon himself wasn't exactly known for relational wisdom (1,000 wives/concubines, anyone?).

So, what on earth is a book of sensual love poetry doing in the Bible?

We're not the first—nor will we be the last—to ask that question. Even the ancient Israelites had it as part of their sacred texts. It was likely in the Jewish Scriptures when Jesus walked the earth, and it's been part of the Christian Bible from the beginning. So, the question isn't whether it should be there; the question has always been *why*?

Unfortunately for us, there's no introduction to the book where God explains his logic. We're left to draw our own conclusions, yes, but we also have some helpful tools to do that.

As we read Song of Songs together, we're going to look at those tools, and, hopefully, come away not just equipped with a better understanding

of why the book is in the Bible, but also a deeper appreciation for the God who allowed it to be put there.

A Note About Intimacy:

We should probably acknowledge something upfront: Song of Solomon can be uncomfortable to read. It's deeply personal poetry about love, desire, and intimacy, and many of us carry complicated experiences into those conversations: longing, grief, confusion, regret, shame, or hurt.

For some readers, this book may feel refreshing because no one ever talked honestly about these topics in church. For others, even reading these poems may feel uncomfortable or wrong because of shame, fear, or messages you received growing up. However you arrive at this book, this is a space for you!

Rather than avoiding those realities, this book invites honesty. Because there is a reason for Song of Songs sitting snugly in the center of our Scriptures. The Bible doesn't treat human embodiment, affection, or covenant intimacy as embarrassing accidents to ignore. God created our human bodies, with all of their organs, longings, and needs, and called them very good. He created us for relationships, intimate and otherwise, that can share a glimpse into his self-giving love. Song of Songs reminds us that

desire, tenderness, and physical affection can reflect something beautiful about the way we were made. But we need to go in with our eyes—and our hearts—wide open.

Open a Bible and Read Song of Solomon.

(the whole thing this time!)

Reminders Before You Read . . .

- You don't need to understand every metaphor.
- You don't need to agree with every interpretation.
- You don't need a perfect relationship history.

Come curious. Notice what surprises you and what stirs your emotions. Like any part of Scripture, Song of Songs can be approached either with openness to God or simply as material to consume. If you notice yourself reading only to indulge fantasy while ignoring the dignity, covenant love, and mutuality the poems emphasize, pause and re-center. This book ultimately invites us toward reverence, honesty, wisdom, and deeper love for God, others, and ourselves—not consumption.

Reflect

- Who is speaking more in the different chapters of the book? Who initiates? What words describe love?
- What questions or emotions surfaced during this initial read of Song of Solomon?
- Was there anything especially awkward to you?

Pray

Jesus, Word who became flesh, be present with me as I begin this study. Open my ears to hear the message you have prepared for me. Open my eyes to see your love in every story, especially the tough ones. Let me not become trapped by my knowledge, biases, or desire for merit, but keep my heart open to the guidance of your Spirit. And, Lord, as I continue to learn more about you through the Bible, transform me by your love.

Amen.

Notice God

How might this poetry reshape our understanding of God's love?

The Bible is the story of how God has revealed himself to people like you and me, and how he has been and continues to be at work in the story of our salvation. Because of this, many readers have primarily understood Song of Songs as an allegory—a story or poem that points beyond itself to reveal a deeper (in this case, spiritual) reality.

After all, Song of Songs doesn't mention God, but it *does* mention the intimate relationship between a bride and her groom in erotic—if also ancient—language. Plus, throughout Scripture, God often describes his relationship with his people using the language of marriage and covenant love. Jeremiah 3:6-18 and the Book of Hosea use the metaphor of an adulterous wife abandoning her husband as a way of tackling Israel's infidelity to her God. Ezekiel 16 is even more explicit (than Song of Songs) in using sexual conquests as a metaphor for calling Israel to account for the people's refusal to love their God. Jesus describes himself as a bridegroom, and the New Testament ends with the imagery of a wedding feast between Christ and his people.

So, many readers throughout history looked at Song of Songs and asked:

What if these poems point beyond human love? What if their near-scandalous language of intense longing, desire, delight, and devotion echoes the intensity with which the God who created the universe loves the people he made?

The erotic poetry of Song of Songs intentionally disrupts our complacent perspective of God and pushes us to see him and his love for us in a way that can be uncomfortable. Being known in the kind of intimate, almost invasive way that Song of Songs communicates can be, at the very least, awkward. And for others, it can be downright terrifying. But the book invites us to at least recognize that the God who spoke the skies into existence sees each one of his people with the passionate love and captivation as a groom does his new bride.

The language of Song of Songs, with all of its intensity, challenges us to be willing to be *loved* in a way that may be difficult, scary, or awkward. And that's a good thing.

Open a Bible and Read Song of Solomon Chapters 1 & 2.

As you read these chapters, notice: delight, admiration, attraction, desire, beauty, and pursuit.

A God Who Delights

At first glance, these opening chapters may feel surprisingly simple. The lovers notice one another, pursue one another, and speak words of affection over one another. They delight in each other's presence.

Some readers notice echoes of Eden here, too. Before shame entered the world, Genesis describes embodied partnership marked by trust, delight, and mutual belonging (see Gen 2). Human intimacy was created to exist within God's care and vision for our flourishing. Our desires are not beneath his attention. Song of Songs offers a poetic glimpse of love that, while imperfect and human, still reflects something beautiful about intimacy rightly ordered.

And if we pause here long enough, we can really consider the question: What if this poetry is inviting us to rethink the way we imagine God's love?

Many of us are comfortable thinking of God as holy, powerful, wise, or forgiving. But *delighting* in us? Pursuing us? Speaking tenderly to us? Looking at us with affection rather than disappointment? That can feel...harder to believe.

If these poems echo something true about God, then perhaps they challenge us to imagine a God who is not emotionally distant or reluctantly tolerant but deeply invested in relationship with his people. A God who pursues, delights, and longs to be near.

At the same time, these poems also teach us something profound and wise about human love. Healthy love truly notices the other person. It delights rather than diminishes. Love values presence, tenderness, mutual affection, and admiration. In a culture where relationships can sometimes feel transactional, performative, or disposable, Song of Solomon offers a picture of love that is attentive, intentional, and life-giving.

And perhaps one of the first invitations of this book is simply to become people who receive love more honestly and offer it more generously.

For some readers, this language of delight may feel comforting. For others, uncomfortable. Maybe being deeply known feels vulnerable. Maybe affection feels unfamiliar. Maybe your experiences with love have made trust difficult.

Wherever we are, Song of Songs invites us to consider what it might mean to be loved more tenderly than we expect.

Reflect

- Which descriptions of love or delight stood out to you?
- Is it easy or difficult for you to imagine God delighting in you? Why?
- Is it easier for you to picture God as a lover or a judge? Why do you think that is?
- What qualities of healthy love do you notice in these poems?

Pray

Father, whose voice spoke over Jesus at the Jordan, speak your truth over me today. When I forget who I am, when the names the world gives me grow louder than your own, remind me: I am your child, your beloved. You are the Shepherd who calls me by name. You are the One who engraves me on the palms of your hands. Let your voice be louder than shame, steadier than fear, and stronger than every other name placed upon me.
Amen.

Notice the Wisdom

What does this book teach us about love, desire, intimacy, and relationships?

While many Christians have read Song of Songs as a picture of God's love, others emphasize its place within the Bible's "wisdom literature." That literature is the ancient equivalent of what we call practical philosophy today—musings about the deeper questions of life with a grounded understanding of how it should be lived out in our lives. In other words, Song of Songs is also deeply interested in what it means to live wisely in love, desire, intimacy, and relationships.

The intimate and intense love between a bride and groom is something ancient people felt as important to investigate as the nature of death and the meaning of life. The book characterizes intimate, erotic love as a kind of force all of its own—something no one can tame and no one should handle lightly.

And there is wisdom in that understanding. We live in a culture where human sexuality dominates nearly every conversation in one way or another. It has become so commonplace that it would be easy to trivialize sexual relationships—or reject them altogether. But the book of Song of Songs pushes back against both those responses, and it pushes back hard. The poetry wants us to hold an extremely high view of the intimate love between a bride and her groom, to appreciate its profoundness, and to treat it with utmost respect.

We all have baggage when it comes to sex and physical intimacy, and that baggage often ends up

dictating how we approach all kinds of relationships in our lives. Some of us were taught to trivialize intimacy. Others were taught to fear it altogether. The Song of Songs challenges us to treat the intensity of human sexuality with care. It is a beautiful, powerful thing. And wisdom invites us to treat it with respect.

Open a Bible and Read Song of Solomon Chapters 3 through 5.

As you read these chapters, notice: searching, absence, vulnerability, waiting, distance, and reunion.

Requirements of Love

For many readers, this is where Song of Songs becomes more complicated.

The poem moves between closeness and separation, delight and longing, pursuit and waiting. The lovers seek one another, miss one another, misunderstand one another, and find one another again. Love here is beautiful, but not effortless.

Song of Songs portrays love as mutual and reciprocated rather than possessive. Both lovers pursue. Both admire. Both long. The relationship unfolds through invitation, attentiveness, and trust rather than coercion or demand.

And, it's here as well that we continue to see the book's two major themes intertwine.

If Read Two invited us to consider what this poetry might reveal about God's love, these chapters ask us to wrestle with an uncomfortable truth: love, whether divine or human, often involves longing.

The God of Scripture isn't distant or indifferent. Again and again, we see a God who pursues, waits, remains faithful, and desires closeness with his people. Yet many of us know what it feels like to experience seasons of distance, confusion, silence, or searching in our relationship with God. Like David saying, "My soul thirsts for you" (Psalm 63:1), Song of Songs gives language to that ache.

At the same time, the poetry offers wisdom for human relationships.

Love isn't merely chemistry or convenience. It requires vulnerability. Patience. Pursuit. Presence. Trust. The lovers in Song of Songs move toward one another again and again, reminding us that intimacy grows through attentiveness and faithfulness. The poetry seems deeply interested in timing, too, repeating the invitation not to awaken love before its proper time. Desire is good, powerful, and beautiful, but wisdom teaches us to handle powerful things carefully.

In a culture that often treats intimacy as either ultimate or disposable, Song of Songs offers a fuller vision: love is beautiful, vulnerable, costly, and sacred.

For some readers, these chapters may also surface pain. Not all of us have healthy relationships. Not all of us have experienced intimacy safely. Some of us carry wounds, regret, confusion, betrayal, or grief.

Song of Songs doesn't ignore those realities but invites us to recognize how deeply love shapes human lives, for good and for harm.

Reflect

- Where do you notice longing in your relationship with God?
- How might reverence change the way you think about intimacy or commitment?
- What are some of the wisest principles you've learned about relationships so far?
- What qualities of healthy love do you notice in these poems?

Pray

God who is Love, teach me to receive your love and reflect it to others. Help me offer peace even in the midst of stress, patience in the midst of hurry, and empathy in the midst of exhaustion. Restore me, Lord, and help me be an agent of restoration and comfort to others.

Amen.

Notice Yourself

What is God inviting me to notice, have healed, hope for, or surrender?

Song of Songs is a kind of surgical examination of a seemingly small thing in the grand context of the Bible, which is concerned with kings and nations and gods and war and redemption. But Song of Songs surfaces something profound about the intensity of sexual love. At the surface level, the book challenges us to think deeply about intimate relationships—to not set them aflame or aside recklessly, but instead to cultivate them with respect for the power they hold over us and others.

That can be a challenging message. Not all of us are married or will ever be called to marriage. Not all of us have healthy sexual relationships with a spouse. Not all of us are free from scars or pain, or the trauma of the wildfire of human sexuality turned against us. A book of the Bible that focuses exclusively on something that—for many of us—carries hurt can be challenging, and we may be tempted to run from it.

But God saw fit to include an awkward book in the Bible. And through that book, we learn not only about the profound power of human intimacy, but also the intensity of a God who created us to love him.

Whether we prefer an allegorical reading of the book or a slow, literal reading, it's inescapable that the perfect God who crafted each of us loves us in a way that transcends even the erotic love between a man and a woman. That love finds its purest expression in Jesus—one who loved

so fiercely that not even death could quench the fire. His faithfulness and loyalty to those he loves, led him willingly to the grave, and, like the Song of Songs says, that love was as strong—stronger even—than death.

Open a Bible and Read Song of Solomon Chapters 6 through 8.

As you read these chapters, notice things like commitment, devotion, endurance, permanence, and covenant love.

Love is Stronger Than Death

Toward the end of the book, Song of Songs reaches its emotional and thematic climax:

“Love is as strong as death . . .

Many waters cannot quench love.”

The poetry portrays love as something fierce and enduring—something capable of surviving hardship, separation, suffering, and even death itself.

And here, the book's themes converge. Whether readers begin by viewing the poetry as a celebration of human intimacy or as an allegory of divine love, both paths ultimately point toward the same truths. Song of Songs reminds us that in friendship, dating, marriage, family, or Christian commu-

nity alike, faithful love involves devotion, attentiveness, sacrifice, and perseverance. It cannot be manipulated or rushed. It honors the dignity of another person rather than seeking control.

And for Christians, the clearest picture of that kind of love is found in Jesus.

His love remained faithful even to death. His devotion was not extinguished by suffering, betrayal, rejection, or the grave itself.

The God who created human intimacy is not embarrassed by longing, tenderness, desire, devotion, or embodied love. Not only is he not embarrassed, but he allows these experiences to become echoes—however imperfect—of the covenant love God has for his people, including us! From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture repeatedly returns to the imagery of relationship, belonging, and faithful love.

The fire of love described in Song of Songs finds its fullest fulfillment in Christ: the bridegroom who pursues his people, the Savior who remains faithful, and the one whose love proved stronger even than death itself.

Song of Songs doesn't hand us straightforward answers about love, desire, intimacy, or God. Instead, it invites us into wonder and experience—to recognize that human love is God-given, powerful, vulnerable, beautiful, dangerous, and sacred all at once. And somehow, through even these ancient poems, we glimpse the relentless love of the God who continues pursuing humanity with unending faithfulness.

Reflect

- What challenged or surprised you most in Song of Songs?
- Where do you long for healing, hope, or deeper trust?
- What might it look like to treat love and relationships with greater care?
- Turn these reflections into prayer—what do you most want to talk to God about after reading Song of Songs?

Pray

God, who knows and delights in your people, thank you for coming close and pursuing me.

Help me to receive your love and presence more honestly. Where affection feels unfamiliar, bring healing. Where trust feels difficult, bring patience. Teach me to love others with gentleness, attentiveness, and faithfulness, reflecting the love you have shown to me.

Amen.

Thanks for reading with us!

Interested in going through another book of the Bible?
We have journeys through [Psalms](#) and [Obadiah](#).



Want to check out our other free guides on topics like mental health and sharing your faith? Visit reclaimtoday.org/guides.

