

# Songs from the Heart

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Psalms, Song of Songs

Detailed outline from the Sermon on November 25, 2007

Song of Songs (attributed to Solomon; a love story.)

Beloved (1:1-4)

Friends (1:4)

Lover (1:15)

*Back and forth*, with brief affirmation from onlookers.

The woman is somewhat more effective in her choice of words, lending certain realism to the dialogue. The man struggles a bit to find the right analogies: (4:1-5a) He hasn't learned much since he repeats virtually the same thing in 6:4ff. By chapter 7, he's getting better. (7:1ff) While her nose is like the tower of Lebanon, at least her hair is now like royal tapestry, instead of a flock of goats.

Why is this in the Bible?

For centuries, people have turned this into an allegory of God's love for his bride, his people, and our affection for God. There's not much internal evidence for that reading of Song of Songs; it's true that our *marriages* are both actual and emblematic. I like to read this for what it is, primarily a love story that reminds us how precious our marriages, our husbands, our wives really are; and it holds the banner high for a healthy, affectionate, reconciled, intentional, affirming, supporting, adoring relationship.

There's a lot I could say about marriages today; but for now, don't settle for a bad to mediocre marriage and don't walk out on it. Do the work, make it a priority, get the help and tools you need, and keep the love alive; rekindle the love, and define love as God defines it: stubborn, self-giving agape.

Psalms – prayers, poems, songs, chants, litanies, liturgies, responsive readings (many by David) for public worship and personal devotion; mostly memorized by the people in a day before hymnals or published Bibles.

Proverbial Psalms: Psalm 1, 14, 32, 37, 49, 127 - Truth laden, with practical wisdom.

Decree from the King: Psalm 2, 11, 44, 45, 50, 52 – Truth, proclamation, warning, promise.

Prayer for deliverance: Psalm 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – Cry for help; reiteration of truth and consolation; determination to own God's promises; resolution.

Praise and Thanksgiving: Psalm 8, 9, 18, 19, 24, 34, 100, 150. Psalm 100 is the most famous.

Blessing: Psalm 20, 67

Testimony: Psalm 23, 27, 30, 40, 46, 116

Prophecy: Psalm 22

Consecration: Psalm 25, 89, 108 self presentation

Repentance: Psalm 38, 39, 51, 131

Lamentation: Psalm 42, 55, 56, 57, 61, 63

The Book of Lamentations : Poetic prayers of distress, grief, appeal, repentance, songs out of exile; sad, hard memories.

Ron Allen, Old Testament scholar, puts it in simple terms in his book, *And I will Praise Him*: Two great themes:

1. God is good.
2. Life is tough.

Psalms is all about that interplay. So it will forever be a comfort to us. It is not written purely in idealistic terms. There is a stark honesty to the prayers that captures well the doubt and desperation of everyday faith struggles. Those dark and even violent prayers do not lead us to be dark and violent. Instead, they engage us when we find ourselves in that way, and then they lift us out with demonstrations of God's strength and restatements of God's ultimate goodness. Ultimately, this is a book about hope, and songs are all about hope. We trust in God's character. We trust in His ability to intervene and lead. We trust in his ultimate plans.

A few thoughts on life, God, sadness, struggle, renewal.

- Life goes in seasons..."This too shall pass."
- Songs rise out of me in times of trouble and nurture me. They also help me to know and remember scripture.
- Prayer should be an honest exercise or it will disappoint.
- Ultimately, we have to come back to trusting God. Not always to fix, but to forever to redeem. (Psalm 77)

1. Try writing a Psalm.
2. Find one that fits your life.

\*Also used as a resource, *You Just Don't Understand*, by Susan Tannen.