

# A Sermon for DaySpring

By Burt L. Burleson

“The Great Romancer”

Song of Songs

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Do you remember what it’s like to fall in love? Can you remember? Maybe even drift back from time to time to 15 or 16 and see yourself walking the halls of your high school?

My friend, Kenny Wood, wrote a song a few years back that could tap into the eternal teenager in each of us.

*I know you’re waiting.*

*Most every morning, you turn your radar on.*

*There must be someone just for you.*

Remember? You’d spotted that someone. The object of your devotion had somehow come across your radar screen.

He was in your math class.

Her locker was across the hall from yours.

You saw... something in you stirred...

It fixated like a tractor beam on this other.

You had a crush. I never understood the etymology of that word, crush. I suppose it’s that your heart is being overrun by infatuation.

Concentration is hard now. You’re trying to do homework but your mind drifts to her. You lie down and wonder if he’s lying down.

And you start to scheming. You have to connect somehow... to meet this person. You start rerouting the way you walk to class each day, having memorized your beloved’s schedule, so that you’ll see her... maybe accidentally bump into him.

Finally, the moment comes...

someone introduces you...

there’s a conversation...

some opportunity to impress.

And you give it your best shot. You flirt... guys usually try this with humor. I don’t know for sure how girls did it... I just know that it worked.

This crush moves into another stage... call it “**The Declarative Stage,**” where intentions are made known... made clear. Often for teenagers, this comes in the form of asking a friend to ask a friend to ask the person if they’re interested.

Somehow... the message gets declared... the interest made known. It might be a phone call. I agonized over many a phone call. Rehearsed them... “**Hi, is Janice there? What am I doing? O, not much, I was just sitting here obsessing about you.**”

Phone calls were amazing things because you could go from the agony of dialing to ecstasy when you heard the happy words on the other end of the line, “**Hey... I’m so glad you called.**”

Of course, you could get the old, “**O... Hi!**” I still have to endure that when I make phone calls to those who’ve visited. You can tell right off if the person wants to date DaySpring. After you say, “**Thanks for being with us Sunday.**” It’s either,

**“Yeah, I really enjoyed the service,”** followed by some question about our church. Or it’s, **“You’re welcome…”** Then silence.

But I digress. We were talking about what it’s like to realize the one you’ve been stalking is interested and interested in you. Interest is declared.

Stage three is the most fun. It’s ecstasy in the purest form. You’re together... for the first time in some setting... maybe it’s a date. You’re sitting in the theatre... pretending to be really into the movie but secretly staring at the hand of your date.

The question is pounding in your mind. **“Is he going to take it or not.”**

The debate is raging, **“Should I hold her hand... Does she want me too? What if I try to hold her hand and she pulls it away? Go for it... no wait... maybe it’s too soon. C’mon you weenie.”**

Finally... you just can’t stand it anymore and guys, you’ll remember, you just sort of drop your hand down where your pinkies can touch. If she pulls away you might get away with making it look like incidental contact. But if her pinkie stays put, then you risk another finger... then another...

Then bolstered by that you just say, **“What the heck.”** And you reach over and grab her hand...

He finally grabs your hand...

He holds your hand...

You hold his back.

And hormones and endorphins explode. Every inch of your body can feel it. It’s affirmation... it’s the touch of a human being choosing you... it’s sexuality and every cell in you is screaming. **“We like this.”**

A glow is emitted from this exchange. Everyone in the theatre can see it. It’s like something radio active is being sent forth.

You’re smiling... still oblivious to the plot but pretending you’re watching the movie because it wouldn’t be cool to look too excited or scream out something like, **“I’m holding her hand, I swear.”** Though that’s what you’d like to do.

Then you get home... and you’re light as a feather. You actually want to talk to your parents... about anything really... the stock market... some recipe for meatloaf. A friend’s 15 year old came home recently after having a moment like this and he said she was **“glowing... bounding through the house.”**

Do you remember what it’s like to have those kinds of feelings?

Do you remember longing for the couples skate to arrive.

Do you remember you’re first kiss?

The kiss at the door?

The longer kiss on the couch?

Do you remember scouting out the campgrounds for a dark corner so you could grub with your camp fling? (I didn’t do that but some of the guys told me they did.)

Talking for hours... all night. Looking for just the right present for valentines. Thinking each other’s thoughts... complete togetherness.

If you can tap into that part of you, then you're ready to hear and understand the Song of Songs... or Song of Solomon, as some of your Bibles entitled it. Song of Songs is a better title... I think. It's a love song... the love song of a generation.

It's like "Moonglow" for you who were teens after WWII.

It's like "Earth Angel" from the 50's.

Like "Love Me Tender" or "In My Room" from the 60's.

"Color My World" from the 70's.

After the 70s there were no good songs written...

The Song of Songs was the first slow dance song. Couples loved it. They played it on the juke box. They danced to it at school dances. Everyone knew every word.

And they're great words... sensual words. Lots of the adults thought a little too much so. Some kids weren't allowed to sing it but when they got together at slumber parties they always did.

Listen to some of the lines... This Golden Oldie was a Lectionary pick for today and the lines are sung back and forth to one another between "Lover" and "Beloved."

Here are some of her lines.

***"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth... My lover is to me like myrrh resting between my breast... Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes leaping across the mountains bound over the hills. My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag..."***

You kind of have to use your imagination musically. I think it could be sung to the tune of "The Way You Look Tonight." ***"Well let him kiss my mouth... and leap across the hills. He's like a young gazelle and he brings me thrills."*** Everybody...

Of course, the Lover has lines to sing too. Most of them are describing his beloved.

***"How beautiful are your sandaled feet.***

***Your graceful legs are like jewels.***

***Your navel is a rounded goblet***

***Your belly is a mound of wheat..."***

(I bet those lines got their hearts pounding back then. "Hey baby, nice navel.")

***"Your breast are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.***

***Your neck, like an ivory tower.***

***Your nose, like the tower of Lebanon?????***

***Your body is like a palm tree... and your breast like clusters of fruit.***

***I will climb the tree and take hold of its fruit."***

You can see why some of the adults wanted to censor this. Fundamentalists were having "scroll burning" rallies and making pledges never to sing the Song of Songs. But they didn't prevail and over time the community of faith said, **"That tune's a class and we should leave it in the good book. It's good stuff."**

Which is a very important thing for us to see. That when we pick up any Bible, which is so full of stories of pain and failure... war... pestilence... prophets screaming about sin and consequence... there's also this great love song. The Bible is full of tough stuff... It's not exactly an easy read... tempting snakes, dry desserts, long exiles... And in the New Testament you have a cross looming very large.

But in the middle of this book there is this song.

A song about love and passion.

About desire and joy, eros and relationship.

It's celebrating a deep human mystery.

It's a song that helps us to remember the goodness of being human and being a part of this world. What a good thing God has done for us! We need to remember that... remember that for all of the Bible's honesty about suffering... it's also a story that begins in a good Garden of Joy. Eden means joy.

That's part of why this Song is here. It's saying, **“Don't forget... life is suppose to be... ALIVE. It's supposed to be full of passion and joy. If we're only enduring we're missing the point. Or even if we only see ourselves as instruments to fix what ails the world... or as vehicles for the Great Commision we're missing it.”** If you aren't having fun now... you haven't understood God's intent in making this world in the first place.

Listen to these lines in your Bdible. **“I have come into my garden, my bride. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey. I have drunk my wine.”**

The Song of Song gets kept in the Top 40 to remind us to love life and be a real person. It blesses all of who we are.

But... it's also important to remember that, at the end of the day, the Bible... is a word about God. It's a word about what God is like... what God thinks of us and feels about us. And what this story says is that God... is passionately in pursuit of us.

Some books of the Bible picture God... off angry somewhere sulking about humanity. Or God ready to lower the boom at the first sign of rebellion. Or God waiting in some throne for some price to be paid so you can be admitted. Father... Fighter.

The Song of Songs pictures a God that is in love with you with **“outgoing, ecstatic love.”** God is beside Himself about you and going beyond Himself to interest you, captivate you, and be in a relationship with you.

Like a 9<sup>th</sup> grader adjusting the way she walks to class... and batting her eyes... and giggling... just to get the attention of the one she loves. God's like a flirting 9<sup>th</sup> grade girl.

God is like a young man, head over heels, writing a love poem... so smitten that he even sees something beautiful in his beloved's navel.

God feels this way about you and is in pursuit of you.

The brightest, most poetic minds in the early church, loved this book. They often wrote about the Song of Songs. They wrote about the ecstasy of God... God's eros. God's love for us and of our love and passion for God.

One of the things they loved to point out about this love song, is that the bridegroom... as in love as he is... seems to have an exasperating habit of disappearing.

He **“calls to his beloved...**

**knocks on the door...**

**even pushes his hand through the door for a moment”...**

But then when she goes to the door to let him in, he's gone.

He's playing with her. It's foreplay. She even says to her friends, **Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you... do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.**" "It'll drive you crazy." Listen to her lines of frustration...

**"All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves. I looked for him but did not find him... I will search the city for the one my heart loves. 'Have you seen the one my heart loves?'"** Then when she finally finds him... **"I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother's house... to the room of the one who conceived me."**

**"Have you seen the one my heart loves?"**

The Early Church Fathers read that and said, **"We know what that's like..."** Origen wrote, **"I have felt that the bridegroom was drawing near to me and was as close to me as possible. Then all of a sudden he has gone away and I have not been able to find the object of my search."**

Gregory wrote, **"When the soul at the call of its beloved goes out to look for him who no name can reach, it learns... that it is enamoured with one on who is inaccessible, and is desirous of one who cannot be grasped."** Like a freshman having a big crush on the Homecoming Queen.

So... even while this love song affirms God is chasing you, it paradoxically reminds you that God is and will forever be... out beyond you... enticing you into greater depths of eternal love... pulling you further into the mystery of God's passion.

This is who God is... who God is for you. Pursuing you and wooing you with single minded obsession... and... enticing you to pursue in return... wanting and needing you to pursue.

And when you do, you'll chase Him and chase Him and chase Him (as they say) until He finally catches you. Amen.

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