

Song of Sexuality

SONG OF SONGS 1, 1 CORINTHIANS 7, 1 TIMOTHY 4

I've been there. In that room, hearing that lesson where they split the boys and girls into separate rooms and give them the sex talk. Not the "this is how it all works" talk, but the purity culture talk.

I sat and watched the teacher hold a rose up in front of me and a handful of other teenage girls and pick the rose down to nothing.

The image of how each time I got closer to sexual intimacy as a teenager, it was as if each precious petal was painfully plucked away from my God-given identity—until there was nothing beautiful or special left for the individual I was supposed to be saving myself for... Nothing beautiful left of me.

There was nothing beautiful or special left for the individual I was supposed to be saving myself for... Nothing beautiful left of me.

So, in fear of failing and layers of shame, I did as they told me.

I wish I'd heard about the three different Hebrew words for love sooner.

- *Rayah: **Neighborly love**, but in a romantic sense, it is also the **infatuation***
- *Ahava: the **covenantal commitment** of a loving relationship*
- *Dowd: the erotic, **sexual expression** of love*

I wish books like **Shame-Free Sex Talks by Kelly Edmiston** already had been written.

I recently picked it up to prepare for writing pieces about Song of Songs such as this Companion and instead was healed in so many ways I didn't know I still needed healing.

One thing is certain. God created us with a desire for sexual intimacy and a passion for love and belonging, but no one ever told me this was okay. That those emotions and feelings and desires were God given. No one ever let me actually read Song of Songs.

It was so difficult reaching for this level of perfection and purity when all the while that wasn't what God was asking me for anyway.

Instead I was taught to cover up in order to not lead boys into temptation. I was taught to save myself for marriage, but not any true, spiritual reason of why. I was taught that sex and desire was bad until my wedding night, but left with no accessible "switch" to shift this mindset when the day came.

It was so difficult reaching for this impossible level of perfection and purity when all the while that wasn't what God was asking me for anyway.

Shame-based ideology and theology can be dangerous, and many of us have similar stories of well-intentioned fear mongering and shame dumping. Maybe we were even part of the problem. *Where is the wisdom in the shame-based perspective of sexuality? What reality does this create for the single person, living a beautiful life of celibacy? What weight does this add to the person in the room who was sexually abused?* Because that girl was sitting next to me in that lecture on purity, and she watched as each petal fell to the floor.

How do we teach future generations a different, healthier understanding of sexuality and what that can be to those who seek to follow Jesus? Because in our hyper-sexualized and hypersensitive culture, kids are asking—adults are asking—what is a healthy, Christ-centered sexuality like?

How do we teach future generations a different, healthier understanding of sexuality?

It should sound like The Greatest Commandment—to love God and love others. It should look like:

- mutuality and consent,
- service and others-centeredness (joy for others)
- appropriate place of passion and intimacy without shame

When you read Song of Songs, where do you see these truths? Whether this book is allegorical, a poem reflecting on a true love story, or a little bit of both is beyond the point. This book is placed within the books of Wisdom for a reason. We want to learn all we can from it because it is not the act of sex that is the wisdom in this book, but it is everything sex can teach us in our vulnerability. If we believe this all lies in shame, what wisdom might we be missing?

PRAYER

*To the one who created me and called me “very good,”
thank you for never giving up on me.
To the one who knows me like the dearest of friends,
the most kindred of Spirits,
thank you for seeing me.
To the one who knows me intimately—my spirit, body, and soul—
thank you for holding me.
Your love abounds, through image and song,
through truth and love.
Thank you for loving me.
I love You.*

Amen

THE FOUR PILLARS

BEMA Discipleship is built on four pillars; a **Four-Pillared Perspective** to help us remember **to elevate the words of God** (not ours) and help us identify the principles that we see recurring in the story of God's people.

Here are some applications for this episode echoing the ideas of the four pillars:



TEXT

What stands out to you about the wisdom we may be overlooking or shying away from in Song of Songs? What could you meditate over or memorize?



COMMUNITY

How does your community help one another grow in wisdom without shame and fear? Who can you look to for wisdom in sexual spirituality – not just sexual purity?



DISCIPLESHIP

Who are you modeling your own journey with wisdom for? Who do you look to for guidance? How might you need to reframe the way you talk about sexuality and purity?



WRESTLING

What are you wrestling with about wisdom in Song of Songs? How might looking for how sexual intimacy teaches us more about God heal you? Make things uncomfortable?



Are you a music listener?

Listen along to our BEMA Music Playlists on Spotify.

Song suggestions? Send them to bemabesorah@gmail.com.



BEMA SESSION 2



MEDITATION & PRAYER

REFLECTION, APPLICATION & IMPACT

There are three emphases that we are always thinking about in terms of application at BEMA. These may be stated explicitly at times, but often we will want you to do the work of finding ways to connect the dots to the things we are learning. Much of this is what makes the work of BEMA distinct as a ministry of Impact Campus Ministries.

CREATING A SPACE SPIRITUAL FORMATION

*True success is developing intimacy with God. In Session 1, we encountered the idea of “Creating Space for God” in our lives. We believe that **if we do our part of creating that space, God will fill it** as He desires. You’re already doing this as you dive into the Text and jump into a place to discuss. God will meet you in these places! Look for places the Holy Spirit can do work in and through you as you go about your everyday life.*

CONSIDERING CAMPUS YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS

*We believe that young adults are shaping the **future of this world**. Jesus modeled a ministry of discipling young adults, and that approach has and will work. If you are a college student who is listening, we want this material to be directly helpful to your pursuits. If you are not a college student, we want to challenge you to come alongside one and work together.*

SACRED STATION THEOLOGY OF WORK

*This isn’t only for church or Bible study; this is about what we do every day. How we do our job and how it may take advantage of or bring life to others is something God says is central to our presence in the world. Justice is very much something God cares about. Does our physical work (our 9–5 job) bring shalom or chaos? Does it exploit creation? The way we manage our employees, interact with customers or coworkers, care for our children, or create products can provide relief to others. **The work we do every day is sacred and matters!***