

Love, Sex and Romance

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 24th of November 2002. The preacher is Steve Brown.

His sermon is entitled Love, Sex and Romance and is based on the Song of Solomon, chapter 3, verse 6, through to chapter 5, verse 1.

Well, all you need is love. All you need is love. All you need is love. Love. Love is all you need. Wisdom from the Beatles has become a catch cry for our generation and the generations before, since they've been.

Almost everyone is obsessed with love. Almost everyone's obsessed with relationships in our society. You see, love is really big business. Relationships are really big business.

The entire gossip mag, trash mag industry relies on love and romance and sex. You try to find a Cleo or one of those mags of that genre without anything about love or romance or relationships or kissing techniques or first date advice or latest chat-up lines or sex guidance.

[1 : 26] If you find a magazine without those things, you'll find a magazine that no one buys. You see, people in our society are desperate for advice. They're desperate to make a relationship work.

They're desperate to keep their love aflame. They're desperate to have amazing sex lives. People are just basically desperate. And who can blame them?

I mean, because we're not very good at relationships. We're not good at love and romance. How many people in this world have had broken relationships?

There's lots. How many people have had failed romances? Lots. How many young people here tonight hope to find true love?

A fulfilling love life? Lots. You see, people are desperate for advice. Desperate to get love right. Even one of our major newspapers, the Herald Sun.

[2 : 31] It's almost like a Cleo, isn't it? Last Sunday, in the Sunday Herald Sun, there's a section called Body and Soul. And the body and soul, the major thing in Body and Soul last week was five secrets to happy couples.

They look happy, don't they? Well, seeing it came out last week, they're not secrets anymore, so I'll tell you what they are. Happy couples see the funny side.

It's funny, isn't it? Happy couples. Number two, forgive on a daily basis. That's pretty good advice, I think. Number three, happy couples remember who they are as individuals.

I suppose in an individual society, individualistic society, that one's important. Number four, happy couples work as a team. I think that's good advice.

Number five, happy couples understand the need for genuine intimacy. That's good advice too, I think. Now, I know what all the guys here are thinking right now.

[3 : 34] They're thinking, oh, Steve, I don't go in for all that sort of soppy, girly stuff. You know, that's just all romantic hoo-ha, you know. Guys aren't into that.

Well, the editor of Body and Soul doesn't think so. The editor actually devotes a whole section to guys and them getting their relationships right. In fact, they write a rule each week.

And this rule in this week's one, or last week's one, was rule 75 on how guys get romances right. Rule 75. Don't buy her make-up.

Buying your partner lingerie is highly recommended. Purchasing her perfume is risky.

Adding to her wardrobe is foolhardy. Getting her make-up is downright suicide. Women are very particular about the way they look. Get it wrong and your name will be mud.

[4 : 34] Now, I didn't know that. Now, girls, ladies, is that right? Shouldn't I buy make-up for Melissa? Can anyone tell me?

Is that the wrong thing to do, to buy make-up for my wife? Yes? No? Just nods? Well, guys, I think we've learnt something very important tonight.

Don't buy make-up for your wife or for your girlfriend, all right? Don't do it. You see, we need advice about love, sex and romance and relationships because we're so often bad at them.

And God knows that we're not great at love, sex and romance. God knows that we need advice. So God writes and gives us the book of Song of Songs so that his people can get a right understanding about love and romance, a right understanding about love and sex, so that we can have a relationship with the opposite sex that will last, that will be loving and healthy.

God has written this song in the Bible so that we can get his point of view on it, that we can be wise about this topic.

[5 : 57] That is a very important issue in our lives, relationships. Well, the first bit of advice that God gives us from the song is pretty simple. It's just simply admire your partner.

Admire them. Just look at the way the lovers in the song admire each other. Look in chapter 3, verse 6, the way she admires him.

What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant? Look, it is the litter of Solomon.

Around the sixty mighty men are the mighty men of Israel, all equipped with swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his side because of arms by night. She looks out and she sees him coming.

And she admires him. Listen to the way he admires her. Chapter 4, verse 1. How beautiful you are, my love. How very beautiful.

[7 : 00] Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats. Moving over the slopes of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sure news that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins.

And not one among them is bereaved. Your lips are like crimson thread and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like the halves of pomegranates behind your veil. Your neck is like the Tower of David, built in courses.

On it hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors. Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that feed among the lilies.

I grew up in Mulgrave, about half an hour down Springvale Road, the middle of suburbia. And it was pretty boring at the best of times.

But my parents' place was great. It's a fantastic house. Because you walk through the house, you sit on the veranda at the back, and you look out and there are the Dandenong stretched out before your own eyes.

- [8 : 05] It's beautiful. And I used to get a chair regularly, put it on the veranda, and just sit out there and look. I would stop what I was doing. I'd just stop and look.
- And just admire. Admire the Dandenongs. You see, every time I looked at them, they weren't the same. They were so beautiful.
- In the winter, they'd be wrapped in cloud and be mist, and you'd see the rain coming down. In the morning, the sun would come over the back of the Dandenongs, and it would be silhouetted, and the outline of the Dandenongs would just be black.
- Or in summer, there'd be fires, smoke just coming up off the Dandenongs, and you could smell it. And you'd see that red tinge at night as the sun went down.
- The Dandenongs never looked the same twice. It was different, and it was beautiful all the time. But Dad and I, we'd get our running shoes, and we'd head up to the Dandenongs to do training sessions for running.
- [9 : 10] And as I was running around there at top pace, I wouldn't see the beauty when I was running. I wasn't stopping. I wasn't looking. I wasn't admiring.
- The Dandenongs weren't beautiful when I was running past at top pace. And we need to learn in our lives how to stop what we're doing, to look and to admire our partners, the ones that we love.
- Hands up if you're married. Hands up. All right? It's a fair few. Great. When was the last time you stopped and you looked and you admired your husband or wife?
- When was the last time you admired their beauty, their laughter, their hair, their silliness, their quirkiness, the special talents that they have?
- When was the last time you admired the way they breathe at night as they're asleep? The way they eat, the way they put up with you when you're a real hassle?
- [10 : 19] When was the last time? Think about it. When you stopped and you looked and you just admired. Because in Australia we live busy, busy lives, don't we?
- We don't have time to admire. We don't have time to just stop and look. We're running around at top pace in life. Our lives just don't seem, or just seem to be getting quicker and quicker and more frenetic.
- We've got caught up in the rush and we've stopped looking. And we don't stop anymore to look at our partners. We don't admire as much as what we should.
- Because we're running at top pace. But if you have a look at the lovers in the song, look at the way they admire each other. They stop and they look at each other. You see, they're infatuated with each other.
- They're amazed at the other's beauty. They're just knocked out when they look at each other. Listen to how infatuated he is with her in chapter 4, verse 9.
- [11 : 28] You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride. You have ravished my heart. With a glance of your eyes. With one jewel of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride.
- How much better is your love than wine. And the fragrance of your oils than any spice. He's ravished. He's knocked out.
- He's not distracted by other stuff. He isn't worried about wine. You see, her love is better than that. It's more intoxicating.
- He isn't worried about the spice. She smells better. She's much more pleasing to his senses. I mean, when was the last time we stopped husbands and wives and just smelt each other?
- I'm serious. You see, the first thing God's teaching us in the song is simple. This is how to love.

- [12 : 29] Admire each other. Tonight we need to admire our husbands and wives. Boyfriends and girlfriends. Even friends.
- Admire your friends. And we need to stop running at top pace in this life. Slow down. Stop and look. Well, admiration, I think, though, isn't enough, basically.
- It's a good start. But it's not quite enough. Only a couple of weeks ago, the Holy Trinity staff went away to Hillsville. And we were there to plan next year.
- So it was almost pretty much two days, flat-out work. And Melissa, while she was up there, started up a pretend criticism jar.
- A pretend bagging out jar. And every time someone criticised someone else or had a bit of a joke at their expense or, you know, bagged them out, it was an imaginary 50-cent piece had to go in there.
- [13 : 33] So every time they did it, we sort of said, ah, there's 50 cents. Ah, you did it again. There's another 50. Sometimes you'd say, ah, there's \$10. That's worth \$10. But I've got to tell you, by the end of the two days we're up there, we owed hundreds of dollars.
- And I'm not going to say which staff member owed the most. It wasn't me. But in Australia, it's so acceptable to bag each other out, isn't it?
- It's the Australian way. All the criticism at the staff retreat, it was in jest. We had a great time. It was good fun. You know, it was okay.
- But, but, it's an easy cop-out way of relating to one another. It's an easy cop-out way of relating to one another in the end.
- You see, it's easy to bag out. It's easy to hang it on people. It's easier to do that than to praise and compliment. It's so much easier, in fact.
- [14 : 44] And it's so hard to do, to make compliments. I'm going to do something really crazy right now. I'm going to ask everyone to stand up, just right now. Stand up. And I'm going to ask you, even if you don't know the person next to you, on either side, just turn around and give them a compliment.
- It's hard, isn't it? Come on. Okay. Thank you.
- Have a seat. Okay. Thank you. Oh, okay. Well, I really got into it.
- I was expecting everyone just to stand there like this and not do anything. It's hard, isn't it? It looked like, actually, down the back there, you guys are doing really well.
- But, that's good. But, hang on, you're steep. It's hard to do it. It's hard to give compliments. We don't naturally do it.
- [16 : 10] We're not very naturally gifted at it, are we? Instead, we just, we normally look at the bad stuff and criticise. It seems like the easier thing to do. It seems like the easier thing to do. Even then, I heard some criticism.
- I reckon now there's two reasons why we do that. And some of us, the first reason, I think some of us find it easier to criticise because we're lazy at our relationships.
- We're just really lazy. We're lazy. We don't put the effort into praising and complimenting the people who we care about. It's just much easier to bag them out.
- And it might mostly, most of the time, be in jest. But we still do it. You see, we need to stop being lazy about our relationships.
- So, stop being lazy tonight, husbands and wives, and praise each other. Boyfriend and girlfriends, don't bag each other. Don't be lazy. Praise each other.
- [17 : 14] Even friends, don't hang it on each other. Praise. Praise is better. Secondly, some of us find it easier to criticise because we don't like to take risks with our relationships, do we?

We're not willing to take risks with praising and complimenting each other because it opens us up. It's risky. And when you're bagging other people or you're sort of jesting about it, what you're really doing is building up walls.

You're running the risk. And if you open yourself up, you're running the risk of emotional vulnerability. So, tonight, I think we need to stop protecting ourselves.

We need to be more of a risk taker with our relationships. As Christians, we need to do that. We think we're called to do that. We need to open ourselves up to others and praise them.

Take the risk. Take the risk. Husband and wives. Boyfriend and girlfriends. Friends. Just have a look at the way the lovers in this song take a risk.

[18 : 34] The way that they just admire but praise. She's full of praise for him. Chapter 3, verse 10.

You see, she's bragging about him to the daughters of Jerusalem.

She's saying, come out. Have a look at him. He's a hunk. Look how strong he is. How noble he is. Isn't he a dream?

She praises him to all the others who are willing to look. And look at him. He's full of praise for her as well.

I'll just pick up a couple from chapter 4. Your lips are like crimson thread and your mouth is lovely. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that feed among lilies until the day breaks and the shadows flee.

[19 : 40] I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful. My love, there is no flaw in you. You see, he's telling her how beautiful she is.

He's praising her. He's chatting her up. He's pretty slick at it too. He's very good. You see, the lovers don't just admire one another.

They praise each other as well. They don't criticise each other. They're not lazy. And they're willing to take risks. You see, the second thing that God is teaching us in the song tonight is that we need to praise.

The first thing, admire. The second thing, praise. But there's a warning. A big warning. If you're going to admire and praise one another, the relationship is going to fire up.

If you know what I mean. The relationship is going to get a little bit hot under the collar. You see, admiration and praise leads to love. Admiration and praise leads to lovemaking.

[20 : 51] And guys, if you're married and you admire and praise her, she'll want to make love to you.

Listen to chapter 416. She says, You see, he's admired and praised her.

And now she wants him. She wants to make love. Ladies, if you're married and you admire and praise him, he'll want to make love to you.

Listen to what he says in response to her. I come to my garden, my sister, my bride. I gather my myrrh with my spice.

I eat my honeycomb with my honey. I drink my wine with my milk. She's admired and praised him. And she's now inviting him to come in.

[22 : 09] And he wants her. He wants to make love. You see, the song, the context of the song is that it's a build-up to marriage. And the first couple of verses, the majority of the first verses in chapter 3 and 4 are a build-up of their longing for one another.

And in the last two verses that we've read out here, the last verse of chapter 4 and the first of 5, is their consummation on the wedding night. They get married.

They make love. But there's a warning also for those of us who aren't married here tonight. Those of you who aren't married, I encourage you, admire and praise your boyfriend or girlfriend.

Do that. It's healthy. But the relationship will fire up. It'll start to get hot under the collar. Admiration and praise will lead to love.

And it leads to lovemaking. And you must stop and wait. Admiration and praise is good. But you must wait.

[23 : 29] Because it's not just her beauty that he admires. It's not just her beauty that he praises. Listen to this. In chapter 4, verse 12. He says, You see, he admires and praises her.

But he waits. He admires her virginity. He admires her locked garden and her sealed fountain. And girls, tonight, the advice is here that I'm giving you, and I think the song is giving you, is keep your garden door locked.

Keep your fountain sealed. Don't let him come in until he commits to you. He commits to staying in.

Don't let him come in to leave the gate swinging. Don't let him come in to come in and out whenever he wants. Don't let him come in to steal your precious fruit.

Keep your garden locked and your fountain sealed. Keep your sex life locked and sealed until you marry. And the man you marry will admire you for it.

[24 : 48] He'll love you for it. He'll look at you with love and admiration because he knows. He knows that he's the one, the only one, who will get to go in the garden.

Because he alone gets to browse in the garden. He alone gets to eat the choicest fruits. Listen, girls, to what he says.

I come into my garden, my sister, my bride. I gather my myrrh with my spice. I eat my honeycomb with my honey. I drink my wine with my milk. The emphasis is on my.

That happens when you marry. Your garden, your sex life becomes his. And you can enjoy it together. That's enough advice for the girls.

Now guys, here's some advice for you. Wait until she says this. Wait until she says this. Awake, O Northwind, and come, O Southwind.

[25 : 54] Blow upon my garden, that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its choicest fruits. Wait until she says that to you. Wait until that wedding day when she can say that to you.

Don't force the garden gate. Don't force your way in and steal her fruit. Don't leave the garden gate swinging behind.

Don't break the seal of her fountain. Don't pollute her fountain. Don't destroy her garden. Instead, wait until you're married and committed to staying in there.

Until you're married and her garden becomes yours. Her fruit becomes yours to enjoy. And her fountain becomes yours to bathe in.

When her sex life becomes yours to share in. And your sex life becomes hers. Until you're married. If those here who haven't done that.

[27 : 13] If you've already gone through the gate. You can always walk back out. And close the gate behind. Guys, you can close that gate. And tell her that you want to admire and praise her.

Until you get married. You'll wait though. You can do that. And girls. If he doesn't want to leave, throw him out. Tonight, I suggest that we need advice about love, sex and romance.

Badly. Look at the world. It doesn't have much of an idea. And for the people of God, our first place of call is God's word.

And God, in his grace, has given us the song to give us wisdom on these things. So let's read it. Go home tonight and read it.

If you're married, read it together. That'd be a good thing. If you're not married, still read it. And read it and read it and read it. Until you get wisdom in this area. Because that's what it is.

[28 : 22] It's wisdom about love. Tonight, let's learn to love one another. Learn to love the ones that we are close to and have to build up.

Our wives and husbands. Our girlfriends and boyfriends. Let's admire. Let's praise. And if you're married, enjoy browsing in the garden of love.

Enjoy the fruit. But if you're not married, wait. Wait for the right time. When you're both committed in marriage, to start exploring that garden together.

Amen.