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# Introduction

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## Read the Song of Songs

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A helpful first step in studying a Bible book is reading it in its entirety and preferably in one sitting. It gives the reader an overall impression of the book and brings out themes which may not be apparent when studying small sections. Reading the Song of Songs as a whole will help to see the flow of the song and to identify the different parts of the song. It will also allow the reader to appreciate the power of the poetry and the playfulness of the imagery in the Song. Leave questions about the Song as a whole or about certain details until the discussion of that particular section. For now, get a sense of the flow and the themes of the whole song. While reading the Song it will be helpful to write down things you notice.

- 1. Having read the Song of Songs, what is your overall impression? What did you learn from reading the Song of Songs? What are some the items that stand out for you?*
- 2. What are some of the main themes? Did you find an overall division within the Song?*
- 3. If you study the Song of Songs together, compare your answers and learn from each other. Using different translations can be very helpful in this regard.*

There are several items that need to be considered before digging deeper into the Song of Songs. They need to be considered because of their impact on understanding the Song.

## Title

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The title of this Bible book comes from its heading, chapter 1:1 “Solomon’s Song of Songs.” This is the way the NIV translates the heading. The ESV and NKJV have “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” The expres-

## Outline of the Song

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The Song of Songs can be divided into five parts:

- 1:1 - 2:7 the beginning of the relationship
- 2:8 - 3:5 the relationship grows
- 3:6 - 5:1 the wedding day
- 5:2 - 8:4 married life
- 8:5 - 14 conclusion

These five parts follow the development of the relationship between the “he” and “she” in the Song. The 1st, 2nd and 4th breaks are clearly indicated since these parts all end with the same refrain. The 3rd break is different. In that instance the change in mood is the indication of a change; part 3 (5:1) ends with the bliss of their wedding, whereas part 4 (5:2) begins with the pain of separation.

We will look at each of these five parts. The discussion of each part will begin with a summary and outline, followed by notes of explanation. These notes will not deal with every verse in the text, but draw attention to some key elements that will help in understanding and discussing the Song of Songs. Throughout the comments there are questions to be used for general, personal or family Bible study.

## The Lord's hand brings two together

### 1:1-2:7

#### Summary and Outline

Every relationship has a beginning; also the relationship between two who eventually will be united in marriage. How special that beginning can be! The first touch, hug or kiss. The relationship between the two main persons in the Song of Songs is no exception to this. True, we do not find out when they first met, but this first part of the song describes the beginning of their relationship. The two speak about each other. As we listen to them we come to know them as two persons who are passionately in love with each other. They speak about themselves, describe the other and express to each other the joy their relationship brings. Theirs is not a quick, shallow relationship, but they joyfully receive this relationship as a gift from the Lord, granted to them by his grace.

Part 1 can be outlined as follows:

1:2-4	Opening
1:5-8	Introduction
1:9-14	What they see in each other
1:15-2:3	Love duet
2:4-7	Deepening love and Refrain

#### Notes of Explanation

##### *1:2-4 Opening*

The opening verses of the Song bring us right into the heart of the matter: this is a love song. The female opens the Song by sharing her feelings and longings. “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth”. She does not tell us who she is or where she lives. Instead this young woman wants the world to know that she deeply loves this man. He is her “king”. He is everything for her. No wonder that he comes to her mind first. She wants a kiss from

him. And not just a quick kiss on the cheek, but she wants to taste his lips and mouth (v. 2). She wants to smell his perfume (v.3) and be held by his strong arms (v.4). It is clear from these opening words that the two are not together at this point, but she longs to be with him. Being separated at this time, she thinks of the moments they were together, when he held her, and they kissed each other. Maybe it was the first time and how the joy of that moment has changed her life! She longs for the next embrace and kiss. Verse 4 expresses her sense of urgency. She is in a hurry.

The song puts into words how wonderful the beginning of a relationship can be. The first time the hands touch, the lips meet. That first encounter marks the beginning of a process that can be so special and irreversible. She vividly remembers it, longs for it to happen again and wants it to continue. Since it is God's hand that bring these two together, who would begrudge her this longing? The friends agree with this, as is evident from verse 4.

1. *Note the wonderful poetry in the opening verses. The verses 2 and 3 work with parallelisms. Which ones?*
2. *The Song begins with speaking about the physical contact, hugging and kissing. What place does hugging and kissing have in a relationship? What should we teach our children about physical contact in relationships, such as hugging and kissing, in general? What should we teach them about physical contact when it comes to a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend? Is a boy who dates a girl allowed to ask or expect a kiss and hug? How soon should kissing and hugging be part of a relationship between a boy and girl?*

#### *1:5-8 Introduction*

After hearing what is foremost on her mind, we then learn more about these two who love each other. Who are they? As we go through the song we will meet many people, a mother (8:5), brothers (1:6), King Solomon (3:7), watchmen (3:3), and the daughters of Jerusalem (1:7), but the two main personalities are a young man and a young woman. They are in love with each other.

In the verses 5-8 the two are introduced. It is not a formal introduction, in the sense that they give us their name and address. Yet from the way they speak to each other, it becomes clear who they are. First is the young woman. She is a girl who lives at home with her other siblings (v.6). The family lives in an agricultural setting and owns vineyards. As part of the family she is supposed to do her share of chores, taking care of the vine-