WISDOM
ACROSS THE SEASONS OF LIFE
Song of Songs • Proverbs • Ecclesiastes

LESSON 03

LOVE DELIGHTS

The Joy of Mutual Belonging

Fall 2026

Calvary Lutheran Church (WELS)

Dallas, TX

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LESSON 03 — LOVE DELIGHTS

The Joy of Mutual Belonging

CORE TEXTS: Song of Songs 2:8–17; 4:1–5:1; 6:3
SUPPORTING TEXTS: Proverbs 5:15–20; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:25–32
LESSON AIM: To discover how the Song celebrates loving and being loved, cherishing one particular person, and the mutual belonging of faithful marital love.

A. FROM AWAKENING TO DELIGHT

Last time we heard love awaken. The Song celebrated attraction and desire, but also taught us that such a good and powerful gift must be received with wisdom.

GOD'S GIFT OF DESIRE IS GOOD ENOUGH TO WAIT.

Today the lovers teach us something more. Love does not merely draw two people toward one another. It finds joy in the beloved and in the relationship they share.

GROUP INTERACTION — ATTRACTION OR DELIGHT?

Compare these statements:

- "Something about that person attracts me."
- "I find joy in knowing and spending time with that person."

What is similar? What is different?

_____

_____

Can delight in another person be experienced outside marriage? How?

_____

_____

LOVE DOES NOT MERELY _____. LOVE _____.

B. "ARISE, COME, MY DARLING!"

READ SONG OF SONGS 2:8–13

The woman hears her beloved approaching. He bounds over hills like a gazelle or young stag. Then he invites her to come away with him. Winter is over; spring has arrived.

GROUP INTERACTION — SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

Find four signs of spring in verses 11–13. Which senses do they engage?

SIGN OF SPRING	ENGAGED SENSE
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Why does the poet surround the invitation with images of spring? What do these images communicate that a plain "Come with me" would not?

_____

_____

_____

The Song's poetry is sensual in the good sense of that word: it engages the senses. Here, the beauty of spring becomes a setting for the joy of sharing life with someone beloved.

DELIGHT IS A JOY THAT WANTS TO BE _____.

C. "LET ME SEE YOUR FACE!"

READ SONG OF SONGS 2:14

The woman is pictured as a dove hidden among the rocks. The man longs to see her face and hear her voice.

GROUP INTERACTION — MORE THAN APPEARANCE

What might the hidden dove suggest? What does the man want?

_____

_____

_____

How is delighting in a person's presence more than admiring that person's appearance?

_____

_____

_____

The Song celebrates the particular delight of a man and woman. Yet the joy of seeing a familiar face, hearing a beloved voice, and being known is not limited to marriage. God gives such joys in friendships, families, and the fellowship of believers.

THE JOY OF BEING _____ AND _____ IS A GIFT IN MANY RELATIONSHIPS.

D. THE LITTLE FOXES

READ SONG OF SONGS 2:15

Suddenly, the poem mentions little foxes that ruin vineyards in bloom. What are foxes doing in a love song?

GROUP INTERACTION — SMALL CREATURES, BIG DAMAGE

Why would little foxes threaten a blossoming vineyard?

_____

_____

If the vineyard evokes the lovers' relationship, what might the foxes suggest? What kinds of small things can damage precious relationships?

_____

_____

The poem does not identify the foxes precisely. The image suggests that something beautiful and growing may also be vulnerable. We will return to difficulties in love in Lesson 04.

WHAT IS _____ IS WORTH _____.

E. "MY BELOVED IS MINE AND I AM HIS"

READ SONG OF SONGS 2:16 AND 6:3

- "My beloved is mine and I am his." (2:16)
- "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." (6:3)

GROUP INTERACTION — WHO BELONGS TO WHOM?

What do these declarations share? What changes in their order? What truth remains unchanged?

_____

_____

How does mutual belonging differ from treating another person as a possession?

_____

_____

Read 1 Corinthians 7:3–5. What does Paul teach about mutuality in marriage?

_____

_____

_____

Marriage is a distinctive, faithful, lifelong bond in which husband and wife give themselves to one another. Mutual belonging is not a license to control; it is a call to self-giving love.

LOVE DELIGHTS IN SAYING BOTH "_____" AND "_____."

A LOVE BEYOND MARRIAGE

Scripture also celebrates deep, faithful bonds outside marriage. Read 1 Samuel 18:1–4 and 20:17, 42, where David and Jonathan pledge friendship and loyalty.

GROUP INTERACTION — DEEP LOVE WITHOUT MARRIAGE

What do friendship and marriage share in affection, trust, and faithfulness? What makes marriage distinct?

_____

_____

What does David and Jonathan's friendship teach us about the depth of love God gives outside marriage?

_____

_____

MARRIAGE IS A _____ GIFT, BUT NOT GOD'S _____ GIFT OF DEEP HUMAN LOVE.

F. "HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE!"

READ SONG OF SONGS 4:1–7

The man praises his beloved with images of doves, goats, sheep, a scarlet ribbon, and more. Some comparisons may sound strange to modern ears. Remember: ask first, "WHAT IS THE IMAGE DOING?"

GROUP INTERACTION — LEARNING TO HEAR THE COMPLIMENT

Choose two images. What quality might each emphasize? What feeling does each communicate?

IMAGE	QUALITY	FEELING

Taken together, what do these compliments tell us about how he sees his beloved?

_____

_____

The point is not that the woman literally resembles each object. His poetic praise expresses delighted attention to this particular person.

LOVE _____. LOVE _____. LOVE GIVES _____ TO ITS DELIGHT.

G. A GARDEN OF DELIGHT

READ SONG OF SONGS 4:8–5:1

The poem now describes a garden rich with fragrance, fruit, and beauty. It is also an enclosed garden, precious and not open to everyone. The passage speaks candidly, through poetry, about the exclusive joy of marital intimacy.

GROUP INTERACTION — WHY A GARDEN?

What do the garden's beauty and enclosure communicate? Why might the very thing that makes the garden exclusive also make it precious?

_____

_____

How does the woman's invitation in 4:16 change the scene? What does the exchange reveal about mutual delight?

_____

_____

We need not turn every fruit, flower, or spice into a precise physical code. The larger picture brings together beauty, privacy, invitation, and shared enjoyment.

FAITHFUL LOVE _____ A GIFT THAT IS NOT SHARED INDISCRIMINATELY.

H. WHEN THE TEACHER AGREES WITH THE LOVER

READ PROVERBS 5:15–20; 17:17; 18:24

The Lover speaks in poetry. The Teacher speaks in practical wisdom. Proverbs celebrates faithful delight within marriage and also praises the loyalty of a true friend.

GROUP INTERACTION — TWO VOICES, ONE WISDOM

Compare Proverbs 5:15–20 with Song 4:12–5:1. What images and convictions do they share?

_____

_____

What do Proverbs 17:17 and 18:24 teach about faithful friendship?

_____

_____

FAITHFULNESS DOES NOT EXCLUDE _____. IT GIVES DELIGHT A _____.

I. AND SOMETHING GREATER

READ EPHESIANS 5:25–32

Marriage does not finally point only to itself. Scripture uses the bond of husband and wife to help us understand the closeness, commitment, and self-giving love of Christ for his Church. The comparison is not physical or sexual, and the reality is greater than the analogy.

GROUP INTERACTION — FROM THE SONG TO THE BRIDEGROOM

1. What have we learned about delight, belonging, and faithful love that helps us understand why Paul uses marriage to picture Christ and his Church?

   _____

   _____

2. What does Christ do for his Bride that no earthly spouse can accomplish?

   _____

   _____

Jesus himself did not marry, yet he lived a full human life and knew deep human friendships (John 11:5; 15:15). Marriage is a precious gift, but it is not necessary for a full and faithful Christian life.

THE LOVER'S SECOND LESSON

We have heard the lovers rejoice in springtime, praise one another, guard their love, and delight in belonging to each other. Lesson 02 celebrated the desire to *be with* someone. Lesson 03 adds the joy of *cherishing* that person. Love delights not merely in what another person gives us, but in who that person is.

Marriage expresses this delight in a unique way, but God also blesses us with deep friendships, family affection, and Christian fellowship. All are gifts from the same gracious Giver.

FAITHFUL LOVE _____ IN MUTUAL _____.

Yet even our closest human relationships are imperfect. We fail to cherish those we love. We disappoint one another. And even the most faithful earthly love cannot overcome death.

But Christ the Bridegroom never fails his Bride. He loved the Church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). He forgives her sins, makes her holy, and promises her a future with him that death cannot destroy. Our belonging to him rests not on how perfectly we love him, but on how completely he has loved us.

WE BELONG TO THE ONE WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US.

LOOKING AHEAD — LESSON 04: LOVE STRUGGLES

So far, the Song has celebrated love awakening and love delighting. But love is not always springtime. What happens when the beloved seems absent? When an invitation goes unanswered? When the person we long to be near suddenly feels far away? And what about those little foxes that threaten the vineyard while it is still in bloom?

The Song does not pretend that love is free from longing, disappointment, or difficulty. Next time we will listen as THE LOVER gives us another kind of wisdom: how to understand love when the joy of togetherness is interrupted.

FOR NEXT TIME: Read Song of Songs 3:1–5 and 5:2–8. Revisit 2:15.

As you read, consider:

- What is missing in these scenes that was present in today's lesson?

_____

_____

- What emotions do you hear in the woman's words?

_____

_____

- What might these passages teach us about the vulnerability of loving another person?

_____

_____

DURING THE WEEK — PRACTICE DELIGHT

The Song has taught us that love does not merely feel appreciation. It expresses appreciation.

Think of someone God has placed in your life: a spouse, friend, family member, fellow Christian, or someone whose faithfulness you may have begun to take for granted.

This week, do three things:

1. NOTICE. Identify something particular about that person for which you are thankful. Not simply what the person does for you, but something about who that person is.
2. SAY IT. Find a fitting opportunity to express that appreciation. Be specific. Let the person know what you value.
3. GIVE THANKS. Thank God for that person and ask him to help you cherish the relationships he has entrusted to you.

A QUESTION TO CARRY WITH YOU: *Do the people I cherish actually know that I cherish them?*

Love does not merely appreciate another person silently. It finds ways to express that appreciation. The lovers in the Song notice, speak, listen, invite, and delight in one another.

YOUR TURN: In the space below, write down **3–5 specific ways you can show the people you cherish that they really are cherished.** Need some ideas? Consider:

- **Be specific.** Tell someone what you appreciate about them.
- **Pay attention.** Listen without distractions.
- **Make time.** Invite someone to share a meal, walk, or conversation.
- **Remember little things.** Follow up on what matters to them.
- **Show up.** Be there when life gets difficult.
- **Say thanks.** Send an unexpected note or message.
- **Forgive freely.** Extend the forgiveness Christ has shown you.

MY 3–5 WAYS TO SHOW THAT I CHERISH SOMEONE:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

THIS WEEK: Don't just write them down. Choose at least one and put it into practice.