



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**ECCLESIASTES &  
SONG OF SONGS**

Week 4

## Open and Honest Communication

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Song of Songs 2:14-17

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Whenever two people marry and live together there will be differences of opinion, debates and arguments. How do you and your partner deal with differences and misunderstandings? Do you try to deal with them early so that they do not fester and result in a major blowup, or do you wait until a crisis is looming?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** “Little foxes” (v. 15) refers to the fact that these animals like to dig and devour blooming vines. Little foxes are examples of the kinds of problems that can disturb and eventually destroy a relationship. This expression is the lover’s concern that little things can sneak into a relationship, gnawing at it and eventually ruining it. The lover indicates his wish to have open and honest communication so that things can be caught before they get out of control.

**2.** Some scholars believe that the “little foxes” can also refer to outside influences on a marriage that may be detrimental.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** In your relationship, who is quick to bring up a problem, seeking to correct it promptly and fairly? Are you comfortable tackling issues when they appear, or do you prefer to “wait and see”?

**2.** What “ruinous foxes” need to be captured in your relationship in order for both of you to grow more deeply in love? Identify some external forces that can create problems for you as a couple.

**3.** For men only: What words, gestures and actions can you take to make your wife feel more confident of your love and loyalty?

**4.** For women only: What words, gestures and actions can you take to make your husband feel loved, appreciated and valued?



*“Catch for us the  
foxes, the little foxes  
that ruin the  
vineyards, our  
vineyards that are in  
bloom.”*

Song of Songs 2:15

## Seeking and Finding

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Song of Songs 3:1-11

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

There are times when our partner seeks us out and times when we need to seek out our partner. When there are distances and lapses in your relationship do you seek each other out, in order to communicate, clarify and be reunited? How is your “seeking” done?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Assume you are a newspaper editor and this chapter is a story you have received. Go through it, dividing it into sections. Place a headline over each section.

**2.** After searching, how does the woman treat her beloved?

**3.** Verses 6-11 depict a royal wedding procession. Describe this impressive group. What noises and sounds do you think would be heard as this group approached?

**4.** What is the king wearing? What unique item has he created especially for the occasion? In addition to this section, read and reflect on the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:7-8.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** How many were in your wedding party? Who did that group include? Why did you make those choices? Did your family give you a special gift on your wedding day?

**2.** If you are single (or single again) who would you want to be part of your wedding day? Why those individuals?

**3.** What was the most impressive wedding you have ever attended? What qualities made it that way?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Scholars are uncertain as to the meaning of verse 4, which states the maiden brought her lover to **her mother's house**. This may be a reflection of Genesis 2:24—the husband is to leave father and mother to be with his partner. Other scholars suggest this may refer to an ancient Israelite marital custom now unknown to us (See Ge 24:67).*

# You Look Like a Goat ... and Other Compliments

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Song of Songs 4:1-7

Consider this observation by Mark Twain: "Love seems the swiftest, but it is the slowest of all growths. No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century." Do you agree or not?

1. One by one, the man outlines the physical charms of his beloved. Make a list of what he appreciates.
2. How does verse 7 strike you? (a) blind love, (b) romantic love, (c) realistic, (d) naïve.

1. Write a poem or note to your partner describing, as elegantly as you can, the beauty you see in him/her.
2. Here's one way to have some fun with your spouse. Try telling each other what animal you associate with one another. Be sure to carefully explain your answer!
3. "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than good marriage," said Martin Luther. Does his statement properly characterize how you feel about your marriage?
4. Try finding a unique way to compliment your spouse, something he or she might not normally hear.

*Obviously, no woman today would like to be compared to **sheep, goats, a tower and pomegranates**. Modern readers need to keep in mind the historical time frame for this writing. Among ancient people from a rural culture, the images used would be viewed as attractive. For example, a herd of goats racing down a hillside and viewed from a distance would look like a woman's long, flowing hair. The writer has a poet's eye and his lover would recognize his gift and be touched by his creative depiction of herself.*

DAY 24

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## Marriage Refresher

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Song of Songs 4:8-16

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Life can bring us hurts and hardships. An important function of marriage is to provide shelter from those storms. Is your relationship a haven of refreshment and nourishment when other things go wrong? If not, why?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** What phrases are repeated several times in this section?

**2.** Re-write in your own words how the man feels about the woman. For example:

*Your beauty overwhelms me.*

*My heart is yours.*

**3.** What is the new title given to the woman (v. 8)? How many times is it used in this section?

**4.** What is the woman's response to the man's invitation?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

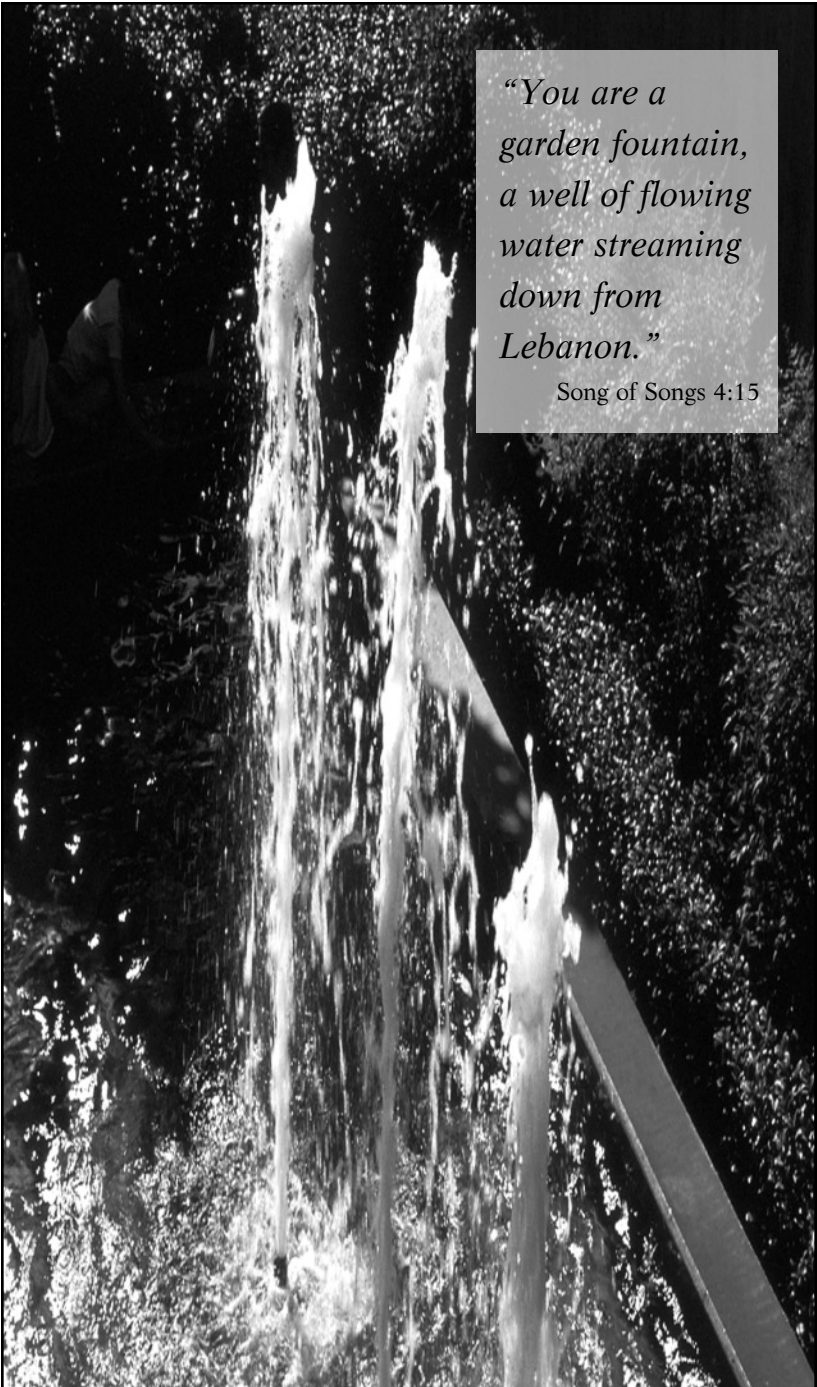
**1.** How do you express your intense feelings of love, admiration and respect for your partner? Through words? Actions? Deeds?

**2.** According to verse 15, Solomon experienced his bride as a refreshing fountain. Would your spouse feel the same way about you? If not, how could your relationship be "refreshed"?

**3.** What are some effective ways that couples can continuously "refresh" each other and nourish their relationship?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*In verse 9 some are caught off guard by the man's reference to his bride as his **sister**. This is a term of endearment that is not limited to an immediate family member. In some churches it is customary to refer to a woman as "sister." It was common to use the term in a similar way in ancient Middle Eastern writings.*



*“You are a  
garden fountain,  
a well of flowing  
water streaming  
down from  
Lebanon.”*

Song of Songs 4:15

## Marital Dreams and Nightmares

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Song of Songs 5:1-8

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

What kind of dreams have you had about your marriage? Were they pleasant? Unhappy? Frightening? Think of one particular dream you have had. How would you interpret it? Can it teach you anything about your relationship?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Verses 2 through 8 describe a dream the bride has. Like most dreams it has conflicting elements. In verse 7 there is a nightmare element as well. Why do you think this dream is included?

**2.** What are the woman's issues in verses 2-5? Why did she delay in responding to her lover's presence at the door? When she finally responded, what had happened? What did she do and what happened to her?

**3.** To whom is the bride speaking in verse 8?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Do your friends (v. 1) enrich and nourish your marital relationship?

**2.** What dreams do you and your mate have together for your life in the present and for the future?

**3.** This passage ends with the woman alone. She still loves her man as much as ever, even though they are separated temporarily. Have you and your spouse experienced time apart because of life's demands? Did the separation affect your relationship? What did you do to remain connected? How was the reunion?

**4.** The eighth verse may refer to women in general or possibly some close female friends of the bride. When you are experiencing difficulty and discouragement, which friends do you find most helpful?



# Friends and Lovers

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DAY 27

Song of Songs 5:9-16

Victor Hugo wrote: "When love has melted and mingled two beings into an angelic and sacred unity, the secret of life is found for them . . . they are then but the two wings of a single spirit." Would his words describe your marriage? Are you both friends and lovers? Is it possible to be one without the other?

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**1.** What question is asked of the beloved by her friends? Why do they ask?

**2.** This section is unique because it is one of the few ancient poems written from a female point of view. How does the beloved describe her lover's complexion, head, hair, eyes, cheeks, lips, hands, body, legs, countenance and mouth?

**3.** How does she conclude her description?

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**1.** Before you married, were you first friends, or was it "love at first sight"? Recall your time of courtship and dating.

**2.** "This is my lover, this is my friend," says the beloved in verse 16. In what ways is your lover also your best friend?

**3.** What can couples do to ensure that they always remain both friends and lovers?

**4.** Complete this sentence: What I really love about you . . .

## **OPENING**

up to the Word

## **DIGGING**

into the Word

## **LIVING**

out the Word

*“Sixty queens  
there may be, and  
eighty concubines,  
and virgins  
beyond number;  
but my dove, my  
perfect one, is  
unique, the only  
daughter of her  
mother, the  
favorite of the one  
who bore her.”*

Song of Songs 6:8-9

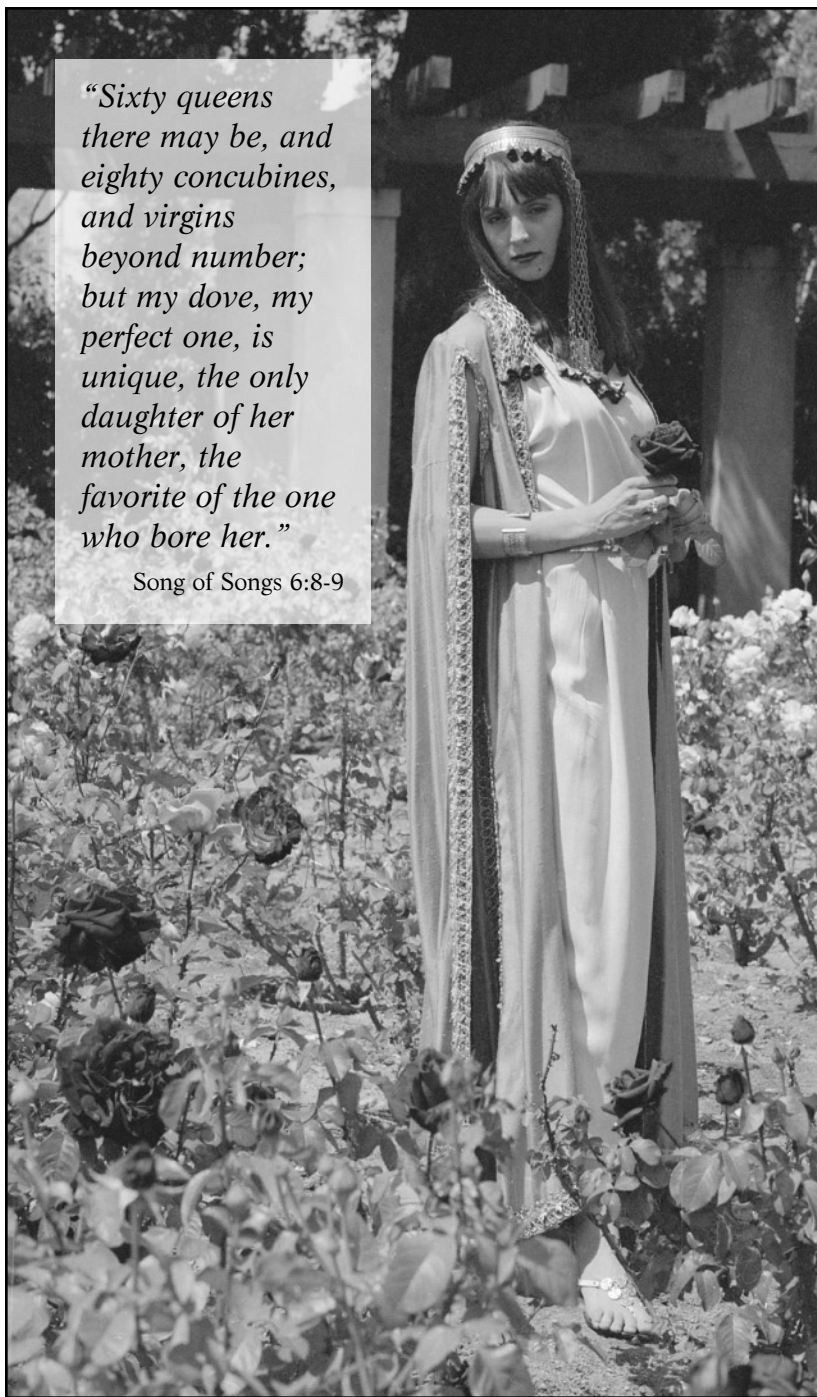


Photo by Hal Finch—PTM

# Receiving Help From Friends

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DAY 28

Song of Songs 6:1-13

At one time or another, all of us need a little help from friends (v. 1). This is also true for our marriages. Think back to a time when your marriage received a boost from a friend(s). Describe their help. Think back to a time when you were instrumental in helping a friend with his or her marriage.

1. Who speaks first in this section, and what is conveyed? Who speaks next, and what is said?
2. How does the third speaker characterize his “darling”? What does he say about her eyes, hair, teeth, temples? What is his ultimate compliment for her?
3. Compare this description with those in sections 6:4-9 and 4:1-7. Are there any differences or additions?

1. Which friend would you turn to most quickly if you had a pressing marital issue? Why that particular person?
2. Solomon clearly delights in his bride. What aspects of your partner bring you delight and joy in living?
3. The lover says his beloved is as “lovely as Jerusalem.” What present-day city would best describe the beauty of your partner? Why that choice?

*The **dance of Mahanaim** refers to the fact that wedding festivals in ancient times were filled with music and dancing. Some scholars believe the reference to **Shulammitte** (v. 13) is the young woman’s name while others believe it simply indicates she came from Shuem, a village near Jezreel.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## Marital Maturity and Freedom

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Song of Songs 7:1-13

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

In some relationships, either partner feels free to initiate lovemaking. Do you feel such openness is learned from one's culture?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Once again, the lover offers a litany of praise about his beloved. How does he describe her feet, legs, navel, waist, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, hair?

**2.** Solomon also compares his lover to famous places in his kingdom. Name the cities and areas he cites.

**3.** How does the woman respond to her lover (v. 10-13)? In these verses, the woman takes the initiative in lovemaking.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** It is said that good marriages are held together over the years by hundreds of tiny threads that people sew together. What are the many threads that have kept you and your mate connected across the years?

**2.** You and your spouse might consider asking yourselves: Are we overcommitted to other activities? Is there any time left over for just us? Do we "schedule" free moments in the day to communicate and connect?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

***Mandrakes** were plants, prized in the ancient world for their aphrodisiac properties. Note also Genesis 30:14-16. The mandrake was also believed to enhance fertility, assuring couples of a large family.*

# Leaning on Your Lover

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DAY 30

Song of Songs 8:1-14

How do you and your lover “lean” on each other? Recall some times when one of you had to lean on the other, perhaps a time of depression, a time of illness, a time of unemployment, a time of despair?

1. What words and phrases describe the strength of the love described in this section?
2. Read this chapter carefully and underline the verses that speak most to you. Explain why they appeal to you.
3. What phrases best describe the indestructibility of the love between this couple?

1. Make a list of words and phrases that describe the strength of your relationship. Share them with each other.

2. Look carefully at verse 7: “Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.” Are those words an accurate assessment of your marriage? Why or why not?

3. What are some “sealing” elements in your relationship (v. 6)? Do you actively and openly show that you prefer your mate above all others? How do you do that?

4. Reflect on these wise words from Martin Luther: “The Christian is supposed to love his neighbor, and since his wife is his nearest neighbor, she should be his deepest love.”

5. Finally, would you recommend a study of this book to someone?

## **OPENING**

up to the Word

## **DIGGING**

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out the Word