

STUDY 3 || *SONG OF SONGS 2:8-3:5*

# THE TROUBLE WITH LOVE

Last week we got our first glimpse of a beautiful love between a woman and a man. But we also saw in Genesis that, in this world broken by sin, not everything is perfect, even in love... perhaps *especially* in love. This week the woman and man explore more deeply their love for each other... and more deeply what it takes to make it work in this broken world.

It's often claimed that: "It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." What's your take on this?



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## TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Read Song of Songs 2:8-17.

1. Last week you might have noticed how others around the couple, including their “friends,” actually come between them (1:7-8). What’s the man’s response in 2:10,13?

### *Divorce in Australia*

71% of divorcees blame "affective issues" for the cause of marital breakdown. Affective issues include:

- communication problems (27%)
- loss of connection (21%)
- infidelity/trust issues (20%)

Other causes of divorce in Australia include:

- physical and emotional abuse (7.4%)
- alcohol and drug abuse (7.4%)
- financial problems (4.7%)
- work/time pressures (2.7%)
- family interference (0.6%)
- physical health or mental health (4.7%)

Quoted from: <http://www.couplecounseling.com.au/what-breaks-us-up/>

2. Look at v15. There are “foxes that ruin the vineyards.” “Vineyard” is used throughout the Song as a metaphor for a person’s body (1:6, 8:11-12) and for a place where love can be enjoyed (7:12). What kind of “foxes” ruin relationships today?

The hint of danger in the “foxes” reference becomes sleep-depriving panic in a dream recounted by **Song of Songs 3:1-5. Read it together now.**

3. What’s the mood of this reading? How does it compare to the previous reading?

4. Which is greater here, the joy of love found or the fear of love lost? Or are they related somehow?

5. The concluding warning comes again in 3:5 (recall 2:7): “Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.” What do you think this warning means? From what we’ve seen this week, why is it here?

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## A SONG FOR US

In previous weeks we’ve seen how God designed the man/woman relationship as a picture of his relationship with his people. So according to Paul, in Ephesians 5:21-33, a husband and wife must each be centred not on themselves but on the other, just as Jesus served the church by dying for us, rather than serving his own interests. In the same way we too ought to centre not on ourselves but on Jesus by obeying him.

6. Lasting relationships require us to “catch the foxes that ruin the vineyards.” How could Christ’s example of *other*-centredness help us do that?

**1 Corinthians 7:28, 32-35**

<sup>28</sup> But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this... <sup>32</sup> I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. <sup>35</sup> I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

In another letter, Paul suggests that, given the troubles that come with marriage in a fallen world, it would actually be better not to marry at all (1 Cor7:6-9,36-40). Instead, he encourages his readers to focus on the relationship marriage ultimately points to. **Read 1 Corinthians 7:28-35 in the sidebar.**

7. According to Paul, what's the big advantage of staying single?
  
8. Even with this advantage, what's still difficult about being single?
  
9. How could a full and connected Christian community provide some of the connection needs that are often met within marriages? What could Christian individuals and couples change in their lifestyles to achieve this?
  
10. Should either single or married people place their ultimate hope in marriage? Why or why not?