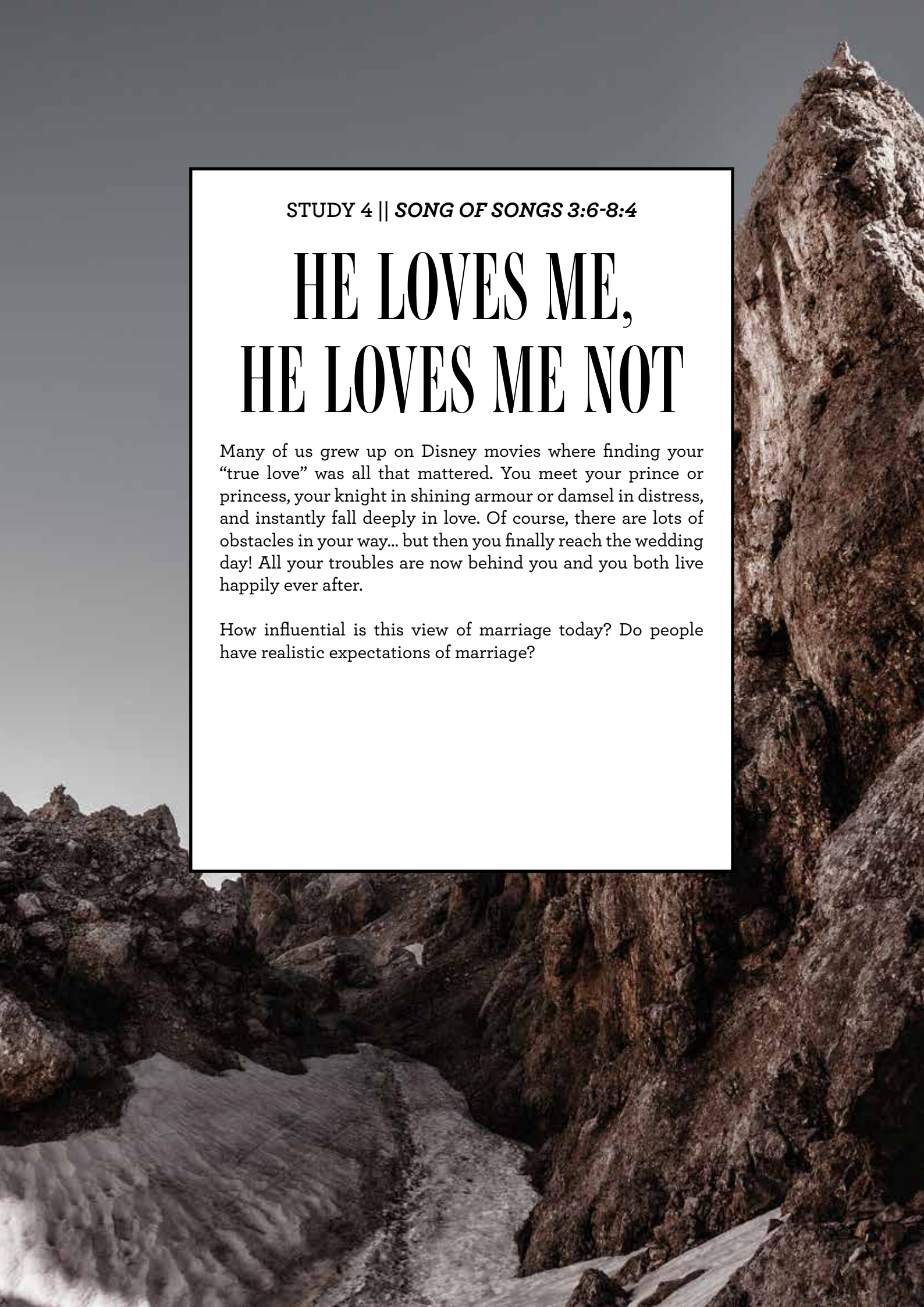


STUDY 4 || *SONG OF SONGS 3:6-8:4*

# HE LOVES ME, HE LOVES ME NOT

Many of us grew up on Disney movies where finding your “true love” was all that mattered. You meet your prince or princess, your knight in shining armour or damsel in distress, and instantly fall deeply in love. Of course, there are lots of obstacles in your way... but then you finally reach the wedding day! All your troubles are now behind you and you both live happily ever after.

How influential is this view of marriage today? Do people have realistic expectations of marriage?



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## HE LOVES ME...

The bride and groom of the Song have their own fantasy about their wedding day. **Read Song of Songs 3:6-5:1.**

1. We've already heard the bride describe her groom as if he were the king (1:4,12). What does she do with that imagery in 3:6-10?

2. We've already heard the groom describe his bride as if she were a flower (2:2). What do they do with that imagery in 4:10-5:1?

3. How does this relate to the **garden of Eden story**? What might this be saying about love when it works as it's meant to?

4. Did you notice the unusual thing the groom calls his bride in 4:9,10,12 & 5:1? What might he be implying about the intimacy and security of their relationship?

### ***A Locked Garden - Genesis 2-3***

<sup>2:8</sup> Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

<sup>9</sup> The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <sup>10</sup> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden...

<sup>3:24</sup> After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

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## HE LOVES ME NOT...

Like last week's section of the Song, this week's has a second half which is much darker than its first half. Again, the darker second half centres on the bride's bad dream. And just as the first half is even brighter than last time... so the second half is even darker. Disney fairytale gives way to adult drama. After their beautiful fantasies about their wedding day, we're confronted with the off-again, on-again turmoil that actually unfolds. **Read Song of Songs 5:2-8:4.**

5. How is the dream in 5:2-7 similar to the one in 3:1-5? How is it different?

It turns out this dream actually has some substance to it. In 5:8 the couple really are apart. The bride asks the young women of Jerusalem to help, but they take some persuading. First, they're not convinced the groom is as special as she says he is (5:9). Is he worth it? Then they're not convinced he's committed to her. If he's so keen on her, then "Where is he?" (6:1-2).

6. What's her response in 6:2-3? How convincing is that when he's not with her but is 'browsing among the lilies' instead?

7. What judgement does he pronounce upon his return in 6:8-9? Remembering that the Song of Songs is a critique of King Solomon's love life, how does this "**Solomon**" end up comparing to the real one?

### ***Solomon's "Love" - 1 Kings 11***

<sup>1</sup> King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women... <sup>3</sup> He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines...

Unfortunately, by the time he returns to pledge his commitment, she's gone herself! (6:13) But he pledges his commitment yet again (7:1-9) and finally she responds in 7:10: "I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me." So they do end up together again in the end! But it was pretty insecure there for a while. Especially as he'd left and she had reason to doubt his commitment.

8. What does she wish could be different about their relationship in 8:1-2?

9. Again we meet the concluding warning in 8:4 (recall 2:7 & 3:5): "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." Let love blossom naturally when it does, but don't make yourself fall in love or make them fall in love with you. From what we've seen this week, what's the reason for this warning?

### ***The Happily Ever After Wedding - Revelation 19 & 22***

<sup>19:6</sup> Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. <sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) <sup>9</sup> Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" ...

<sup>22:1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse.

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## FAIRYTALE ENDING

For many of us, love hasn't turned out the way we hoped. Tragically, that's life in a world broken by sin. Romantic relationships were meant to be more secure than family (Genesis 2:24). But the possibility of break-up makes them less so. Actually, though, Disney did get it part-right. There really will be a fairytale ending, a wedding day that leads to happily-ever-after. **Read Revelation 19 & 22.**

10. How much do you look forward to this wedding day? What do your hopes tend to centre on instead? What does it make sense to bank on and why?