

Song of Solomon 5–7

Fighting for Lifelong Love

TSC, Bonus: *Finding Love: How Does This Work?*

UFN: Handling conflict well.¹

Been in this relationship series now for the last four weeks, looking at what some of the most ancient texts in the world say about finding love. This week, we're finishing it up back where we started so if you have your Bible, open it up to Song of Solomon. This is what Pastor J.D. was originally gonna end with last week, until the Holy Spirit redirected him. It was either that, or he actually got around to reading some of this **incredibly detailed and awkward stuff** in Song of Solomon and decided to hand it to me instead. Spirit or just scared? Who knows.

INTRODUCTION: Conflict

If you've ever been to a wedding, you've likely seen this before: Unity Candle. Ceremony: "Two become one" and then extinguish the individual ones. That's cute and all ... but that's not how relationships work.

- Those individual candles represent more than **husband or wife**: conflict style, personality type, upbringing, way of thinking, family of origin, expectations, quirks ...
- We don't **lose ourselves** when we get married; we bring our **whole self** into this *new* thing called marriage ... and the stuff that **this sinner brings** as they are **united to this sinner** is going to cause conflict.
- Honestly, I never knew how self-centered a person could be until I married Liz ... and that self-centered person was me.
- This is one of those "flames" my wife and I brought into our marriage. We had to learn to engage in conflict and fight fair:
 - She grew up and her fighting style was **all-out brawl**; mine was **sweep everything under the rug and hope it goes away**
 - She was **fight**; I was **flight**. I would run away while she was verbally swinging.

Throughout this series, we've tried to show you that there's no **assembly guide** for dating and relationships—*Step 1. Step 2.* Even if such a thing existed, I think the most helpful guide for relationships would actually be a "**fix-it guide.**"

- See, I think, in general, we're better at assembling things than we are at fixing them ... and that includes relationships.

¹ I owe a lot of inspiration (and illustrations) in this sermon to Matt Chandler's sermon [Fighting Fair](#).

That's what I want to talk to you about today: not just *finding* love, but *fighting for love through conflict*. The word "honeymoon" literally means "sweet month." Specifically for marriage, there's gonna come a point when that **honeymoon phase** has worn off and reality is gonna set in: That person doesn't **load the dishwasher** like you do, they don't have the **same routine** as you ... one of you is an **early bird** and the other is a **night owl**.

- She didn't know **this many bad smells existed** until she married him; he thought **only the moon** had this many **phases** and **cycles**.

Married or not, the one thing that every person here has in common is that we all experience conflict.

- While the context of Song of Solomon is marriage, the principles we're gonna talk about in conflict today apply to ALL types of relationships—whether it's in **marriage, dating**, or even **friendships**. So even if you're not dating or married, don't check out on me cuz 90 percent of this is still gonna apply to your relationships! As Pastor J.D. reminded us last week, the church is God's family, so we have to learn how to love each other well, which means we have to learn to **do conflict right**.

Here's what conflict can do for us, though: Whether you're married or single, there's a way in which healthy conflict actually **sanctifies** us, **matures** us, and **grows** us more into the **likeness of Christ** and the **wholeness that God desires for our relationships**.

- (Now, I want to be 100 percent clear here: We all have conflict, but what I'm not talking about here is abuse. **There is a difference between healthy conflict and abuse**. If you think you're in an abusive situation, please share that with someone you trust, or share that with someone here. We wanna walk through that situation with you and help you find **safety and healing**.)

Now, first I'm gonna walk you through some conflict that's happening in Song of Solomon, and then show you how *fighting for lifelong love involves knowing*:

1. How to fight WITH each other
2. How to fight FOR each other

The Fight: Unmet Expectations

Song of Solomon 5

²I slept, but my heart was awake. (The bride is dreaming here, but her dream is indicative of the poetic relationship they've been having this entire book.) A sound! My beloved is knocking. He says, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks

with the drops of the night.” That means it’s basically morning and he’s just getting home. Her response: ³I have taken off my dress, How can I put it on again? (She’s saying, “I’ve already got my PJs on.”) ⁴I have washed my feet, How can I dirty them again?⁽²⁾

Here’s what’s happening: **This is the beginning of a fight.** He’s just getting home from working way later than he was supposed to. He didn’t give her a heads up. He didn’t come home for dinner. He didn’t call or text. He didn’t communicate his whereabouts, so she locked the door, put on her jammies, and she’s in bed.

But hubby’s not thinking about that—no, no, no; he’s been working all night, and now he’s on his way home and he starts thinking about his girl: those **goats leaping down her hair**, that **nose of Lebanon**, those **fawns**. He’s coming home and **he’s playing this whole thing out in his head**. *My love. My dove. My perfect one.*

- **You know who’s not playing it out? Wifey.** Wifey’s already in bed. She **gave up**. That **window closed like four hours ago**. She’s done **showered**, put on her **46 lotions**, she’s done her **hour long face routine** that costs **\$57 per night**. She ain’t thinking about NONE of that. . . . she says, *“I’m not even gonna get out of bed to open the door for you cuz I’ll get my feet dirty again. Sorry.”* That’s the Bible’s version of **“I’ve got a headache.”**

They say **four big things** cause most of the fights in marriage: sex, money, family, and communication.

- But I think there’s one overarching thing we should add to that list that ends up being the **root of almost all conflict in relationships: unmet expectations.**
- See, you have these **two differing unmet** (and my guess is also UNSPOKEN) **expectations** that cause the conflict here.
 - His expectation: long day’s work, long night of loving.
 - Her expectation: long day of being alone, long night of sleeping alone . . . *so leave me alone.*

Now, look at what she says he does: ⁴My beloved put his hand to the latch, my heart thrilled within me. ⁵I jumped up to open the door for my love, and my hands dripped with perfume. My fingers dripped with lovely myrrh as I pulled back the bolt.

He’s basically sprayed some of his A+F cologne on the handle as if to say, *“I know we’re fighting right now, but I want you to know that I love you.”*

What we’re seeing here is an example of:

² V3 is NASB

How to Fight WITH Each Other

And look at what his response causes her to do: *I opened to my lover, but he was gone! My heart sank. I searched for him but could not find him anywhere. I called to him, but there was no reply.*

Now, to be fair, he's not simply looking to use her to fulfill his own sexual desires—he doesn't just want her body, he wants *her* (that's what we've seen for the previous 4 chapters). He doesn't **press** the issue or **blow** up ... he doesn't **bang** on the door and **yell** ...

He doesn't GUILT her into doing something she doesn't wanna do:

- *I've been working all night for OUR family ...*
- *Remember the marriage covenant ... submit to me.*
- *You know if you withhold this from me, you know how I tend to run to the computer instead.*

He doesn't MANIPULATE her into getting what he wants:

- *What do you need me to do? Chores? Housework?*
- You can't use "serving her" to get something *from* her. That's not service; that's **selfish** and **sinful**.

Especially you men, listen to me: Love NEVER takes what's not given. **Guilt** and **manipulation** are not only **careless** and **cruel**, but they're not **Christlike**. Jesus NEVER **guilts** us or **manipulates** us into a loving relationship with him ... he's patient, loving, kind, steadfast.

- Philippians says we should "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant (more important) than yourselves" (2:13).

In the middle of this conflict, the husband is obviously disappointed, but he decides to do what a lot of you should do when conflict arises. This is super deep; you ready? **He takes a walk.**

Sometimes the godliest response to conflict you can have is to give some distance between **the conflict** and **your response** to it. Taking a walk—literally or metaphorically—ensures you don't respond in anger and say something you'll regret later.

- **Proverbs 15:18:** A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.
- Now, that distance should only be used to **process** and **prepare** to respond, never to **punish** or **manipulate**.
 - He didn't say, "*Do what I want or I'm out of here.*"

- No, when he left the cologne on the door, that was his way of saying, “Hey, I’m not bailing on you or us—I love you. I just need to chill before we chat.”

Sometimes “taking a walk” means sleeping on it. And I know, I hear the *“Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.”* But the main point of that verse is that **we need to deal with our wrath and vengeance and get it out of our hearts**, not that it needs to be dealt with before midnight. Sometimes a little time can help us separate unrighteous, selfish irritation from righteous, loving anger.

Here’s a few practical tips to fight well WITH each other:

1. In confrontation, **use “I” language about your feelings rather than “you” language about their actions.**
 - For example, rather than saying, “*You hurt me*,” say, “*I was hurt*.”
 - Or, instead of “*You’re never at home*,” say, “*I want to spend more time with you*.”
 - Just phrasing it that way can birth **compassion** in their heart rather than trigger **self-defense** maneuvers.
2. **Avoid superlatives (always, never).**
 - Don’t say, “*You always do that*,” or “*You never do this*.” Superlatives tend to escalate the problem to something fundamentally wrong with them.
3. Which leads to the third thing: **Attack the problem, not the person.**
 - Most of the time, we think we can fix a problem by attacking a person. That never works.
 - *LIZ: “You lead everyone except for me.”*
 - Gentle confrontation is done with respect, not sarcasm or name-calling.
4. Also, related to this: **Resolve one problem at a time.**
 - If while you’re talking about that issue, another one comes up, write that down as issue #2 and come back to it later. *Avoid piling on.*
5. And when it’s time to address the problem: **Avoid confronting your spouse publicly.**
 - As basic as it gets: Praise in public; confront and criticize in private. Nothing will shut a person down as quickly as being criticized in front of others.
6. Most important: Fifteen years of marriage has taught me this resolves most conflict in life: **Eat protein. Take a nap.**
 - A lot of relationships have been saved by food and sleep. Amen?

Alright, that’s how you fight WITH each other ... now let’s see how to fight FOR each other. Back to our story: **There’s conflict between these two—he’s taken a walk to clear his head ... what does she do?** She does what most women do in conflict: **She finds her girlfriends:** ⁸**I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.**

FRIENDS' response:

⁹What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? (*Girl, you're so much better than him. He ain't special. Any guy would be lucky to have you. You're perfect. He's an idiot.*) What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?

Look at how she responds:

¹⁰My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.

¹¹His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven.

¹²His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool. (A dove, dipped in milk, sitting beside a pool? His eyes are blue. Just say that.) ¹³His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. ¹⁴His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. (Never once have I finished working out and my wife said these things to me.) ¹⁵His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. (My man's never skipped a leg day.) His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. ¹⁶His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. This is about when someone should put the "Parental Advisory" sticker on this book.

Her friends are like, "Oh dang! This is like Chris Hemsworth, Michael B. Jordan, David Beckham, and Idris Elba all in one ... we gotta find this dude!" So they say, **Chapter 6:** ¹Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?

Long story short, they find each other and they're ready to kiss and make up ... and *boy, do they*: Honestly, I'm not even gonna read the rest of chapters 6 and 7. You can't make me. You'll have to read the rest on your own time. They basically fawn over each other for the next two chapters in **excruciating detail**—she's obsessed with his **eyes** and his **strong legs**; he's weirdly obsessed with her **teeth** (which is how we know she was from *NORTH* Carolina and not *South* Carolina).

But here's how you know their fight is over—in **7:10** she says, ¹⁰I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages ... ¹³The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

- Some of y'all are like, "What does that mean?" It means exactly what you think it means ... and more.
- **If any of you are sitting next to your parents today, I am so sorry.**

We've seen them fight WITH each other ... and I wanna end this entire relationship series by showing you six characteristics of:

How to Fight FOR Each Other

I get these six things from a pastor who has been married for 50 years.³ I'm not gonna spend long on each of them—each could be its own sermon—but I'm gonna give you all six and let the Holy Spirit decide where to apply it to your life.

1. Communication

This whole fight in Song of Solomon might've been avoided with some basic communication. Like I said earlier, it was likely ***unspoken expectations*** that led to their **unmet expectations**—just bad communication. So much conflict would be snuffed out before it ever catches fire with some basic communication.

And I know it's easy to rag the guys on this one, but I think both sides have experienced this:

- Some of you women feel like this: ***PIC_Men don't listen***
- Some of you men feel like this: ***GIF_Notebook***

In fact, wanna know what my wife would say the single most romantic thing I do is? MAKE A SCHEDULE. Communicate a plan for the day. (Then, let her change it as she pleases, of course.)

2. Compliment

In conflict, what we tend to do is to compare **our strengths** with **their weaknesses**. But what if you saw yourself as the CEO of your relationships: *Chief Encouragement Officer?*

- Find strengths and point them out ... that's what Jesus did:
 - James and John: *Sons of Thunder*
 - Peter: *Rock*

And you can't just say something once and move on. **I imagine most of you get paid on some type of schedule: 15 + 30.** In between those **deposits**, you're able to withstand the **debits** and **withdrawals** because you're living out of an **overflow of the deposits**, right?

³ Rick Warren, *6 Secrets of a Satisfying Marriage*

- In the same way, when it comes to relationships, compliments are deposits; criticisms are withdrawals. You have to make sure there's enough **relational equity** in the bank that when a **withdrawal** inevitably occurs, you've **deposited enough compliments into the account** so it doesn't go into the red.

When was the last time you looked at your spouse and just complimented them? No agenda. Not trying to get that to lead to anything. You just looked at them and said:

- *You are so beautiful to me. You are such an incredible mom. Our kids are so grateful to have you.*
- *Thank you for working so hard for our family. God has gifted you in your work and made you so good at _____.*
- *I see you. I appreciate you.*

3. Compromise

Compromise seems obvious, but it's hard to put into practice because compromising can feel like conceding, right? It can make you feel like you've "lost" in a fight.

- But it's better to "lose" an argument if it means you win the relationship.

1 Corinthians 13: **Love does not demand its own way ... it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.** In other words, love compromises.

Listen: **More marriages die from inflexibility than they do infidelity.**

4. Courtship

We've beat this horse to death over the last four weeks, but just as much as we **date to marry**, we should **marry to continue dating**.

There's three postures you can be in in your marriage: back to back; shoulder to shoulder; face to face.

- **Back to back** is when you're fighting. Not seeing things the same way.
- **Shoulder to shoulder** is normal life: work, tasks, kids, responsibilities.
- What we have to fight for is **face to face**. This is dating. Sitting down over a meal. Putting it on the calendar. Scheduling a sitter. Fight like crazy to get **face to face** with your spouse and date them.

I've heard it said **if there were more courting in marriage, there'd be fewer marriages in court.** Date. Your. Mate.

5. Commitment

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (to a couple he was marrying): "It is not your love that sustains the marriage covenant ... from now on, the marriage covenant sustains your love."

- Theologian John Frame says that "**love is choosing to stick with your choice.**"
- Church, if more people truly meant "til death do us part," we'd have far less parting that feels like death.

When I told my parents I was gonna ask Liz to marry me . . . DAD: *Marriage is like skydiving ...*

The last one is the most important characteristic of how we fight for each other in conflict:

6. Christ

The ultimate antidote to conflict is to love Christ more than you love anything or anyone else. You will only be able to love someone else **best** when you don't love them **first**.

- LIZ: *"I can't be #1 in your life ... Jesus has to be. Until you're ready to lead, don't bother calling."*
- As much as I love her, she recognized that she wasn't made to carry the weight of my soul ... only Jesus is.

And if Christ is at the center of your life and relationships, then you will pull **Christlike** and **heavenly** things *into* that relationship: forgiveness, grace, patience, kindness. Because in conflict, you demonstrate what you believe about the gospel.

- The degree to which other people's grievances against you really bother you shows how much you truly believe the gospel.

When you refuse to forgive your spouse or his or her sins, you are in effect saying that their sin against you is worse than your sin against God.

Would you really wanna say that?

The **core of Christianity is being overwhelmed** by the forgiveness of the gospel ... realizing that you have sinned against God way more than anyone else has ever sinned against you, yet **God demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!**

- **God's forgiveness is supposed** to seem like such an **incredible treasure that every other infraction** in your life seems trivial compared to it: **The reason some of you can't forgive is because the cross is so small in your life.**
- **For many of us, the one thing we most need for healthy conflict is for the cross to become bigger** in our lives.
- When you've experienced the **forgiveness God has given you**, you'll be **overwhelmingly compelled** to **gladly** and **easily** forgive others.

Now, I know, sometimes you don't want to forgive because you feel like forgiving somehow **minimizes** their sin, or you are doing a **disservice to your feelings or betraying your own heart.** I have good news for you: Psalm 56:8 says that God holds every one of our tears in his very capable hands. *Forgiving someone is not doing a disservice to yourself or to the accused. It is only magnifying God's grace.*⁴

Conclusion

During conflict, it will be impossible to **extend grace to others** if you have **not first received grace yourself**. See, the covenant of marriage was always designed to point us to the greater covenant that God desires with his people.

But instead of a ring to seal his vows, Jesus sealed them on the cross with his life.

Marriage was always designed to point us beyond itself to the gospel: **the good news that Jesus extends forgiveness and HOPE for everyone who would receive it.** The reality that **anyone** who **confesses with their mouth** and **believes in their heart** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who rose from the dead **can and will be saved** ... because Jesus' sacrifice created the means for you to be united with God, find eternal love, and become part of his family for eternity.

But just like any gift, the gospel has to be personally received. Today could be the day of your salvation—you just have to receive the gift of eternal life Christ purchased on the cross.

All Call Baptism

For those of you who have received the gift of salvation, **the very first act of obedience should be baptism**. As our campus pastors said earlier, we want to give everyone an opportunity to profess Jesus through baptism this weekend ...

- So if you would say Jesus is your Savior, **but you have never been baptized**, today is the day. You might've not known that ... but God did.

⁴ "Sinful Things to Say in Conflict." LORE FERGUSON WILBERT | APR 3, 2019

- Baptism says, “I have submitted myself to Jesus and I now identify with Jesus.” I’m on his team.

And I know when we do this, there’s a handful of things you’re thinking:

I don’t need to be baptized to love Jesus and follow him.

- I also don’t *need* to wear a ring to be married.
- But to say you love Jesus but not follow his command of baptism is either to live in **unbelief** or **disobedience**. Not a great way to start off your relationship with Jesus.
- Today’s the day ... come be baptized.

I was baptized as a kid. // I don’t want to shame my parents.

- We hear this one a lot. When they baptized you as a kid, it was them saying, “*I hope this child grows up to follow Christ.*” Today, you’d actually be **ratifying what they desired** all those years ago!
- Today’s the day ... come be baptized.

I’ve never been baptized by immersion ... why do I have to go all the way under anyways?

- This isn’t a **Baptist** thing; this is a **Bible** thing. **Romans 6** talks about how when we **go under the water**, we’re identifying with Jesus’ **death and burial** ... and when we **come up out of the water**, we’re identifying with his **resurrection** and power for a **new life**.
- **It’s also literally what the word “baptism” means**—to dip, dunk, submerge, or immerse.
- You’re like, “*Alright Pastor, well, how long will you hold me under?*” We ask your wife ... jk.

I don’t want to become a Baptist.

- Understandable. Good news: We baptize **in the name of Jesus**, not in the name of **Baptist**.

I don’t have any clothes.

- We have clothes for you: **shirts, shorts, bras, drawers, hair products, blow dryers** ... you name it, I promise we’ve got it. This ain’t our first rodeo.
- Today’s the day ... come be baptized.

I rode with people.

- Spoiler alert: **This is why they brought you ... they were hoping for this!**
- Today's the day ... come be baptized.

I'm not 100 percent sure I'm ready.

- Lemme be clear: When you walk forward today, what's going to happen is that **you're going to chat with a counselor who will help determine if you're ready.**
- Stepping out doesn't mean you have all your questions answered ... but it means you're ready to have the conversation... and there are people at every campus ready to help you make that determination.
- Today's the day ... come have the conversation.

Call Counselors

1. Want to enter into covenant with God
2. Need to ratify that covenant through baptism
3. Series has been hard (separated, divorced, lonely); come and pray