We in Every Sense of the Word
Genesis 2:20b-25

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.” (Slide 1)

“For your love is better than wine.” (Slide 2)

Lyrics from a current pop song or Holy Scripture?

Believe it or not, these are the words of God as written by King Solomon in the book Song of Solomon. And while they might feel uncomfortable spoken out loud in a sanctuary on Sunday morning they are part of the Bible.

Our culture does not shy away from talking about sex, and honestly God doesn’t either. So why do we? If we aren’t willing to enter into this discussion than we are essentially giving it over to the enemy. And that isn’t something we want to do.

So, today we are talking about sex. Technically, we are talking about intimacy, as God created it, is about sex and so much more!

Before we get started, if you are someone who has a history of sexual abuse or trauma, I know this is an extremely difficult topic. Please know, I want to handle this with the outmost respect and delicacy - Colonial wants to be a safe harbor for you. If you are still experiencing pain from past abuse, trauma, or sexual addictions, I encourage you to seek out specific and professional help, if you need assistance finding that, please talk to me or any one of the pastors here and we can help you get the help you need.

1 Thess 5:23 reminds us, that we were created with body, soul, and spirit. In the beginning of creation, when God first made man and woman he created them to become one, not just physically, but spiritually and emotionally as well. Today, I want to unpack what intimacy, as God created, really is.

Please stand and read with me Genesis 2:20-25
The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
Let’s pray

I have 4 points for you today - since I’m already breaking the rules by talking about intimacy in church, I might as well break the three points rule too, right? We will start out this morning with…

I. Perfect Intimacy - or intimacy as God designed it to be. And then we are going to unpack each of the 3 primary intimacies

II. Emotional Intimacy

III. Spiritual Intimacy

IV. Physical Intimacy

I. Perfect Intimacy

Let’s start with the goal - perfect intimacy. Genesis 2 gives us our very first picture of marriage and in that particular moment in time, everything was still perfect - the fall had not yet happened. The only thing in the entire creation story that God determined was not good, was for man to be alone. So He created a helper for him - an ezer. And these two (man and woman) were to live perfect intimacy with each other, naked and unashamed - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They were to be WE in every sense of the word.

There is a literary device we see in Genesis 2:24 called Synecdoche (sin ect-da key)—this is where someone references a component or part of something when they really intend the whole thing. For example, when someone gets a new car and they say, “check out my new wheels!” They don’t just want you to look at the wheels, they want you to look at the whole car. That is synecdoche. So, in Genesis 2:24, when we read, “the two shall become one flesh,” the author is using synecdoche. He isn’t just talking about physical intimacy but complete, whole, perfect intimacy - physical and emotional and spiritual. We know this is synecdoche because just before this, Scripture says the man will leave his family of origin (his spiritual roots), he will hold fast to or cleave to his wife (she will become his emotional support and strength, his new spiritual partner). This isn’t just a physical union. They are to become intimate in every sense of the word.

Of course, immediately after Genesis 2, humanity encounters the fall. And from that point on, this seemingly easy, complete, perfect intimacy in Genesis 2, becomes something we have to strive for, fight for and work at in our marriages. It will never again be something that comes easily. And if even one of these areas of intimacy is missing from your marriage, it will very likely impact the other two, and there will be no chance for perfect intimacy.

Now, before you feel completely hopeless, this isn’t the last time in Scripture we see perfect intimacy. We do see perfect intimacy even after the fall. There is another marriage in Scripture that we are given a peak into. A marriage a lot more like yours and mine than what we read about in the Garden of Eden, a marriage where it takes effort
and hard work, and intentionality but perfect intimacy does exist. Turn with me in your Bibles to Song of Solomon or Song of Songs depending on your translation.

Why are there two different names for one book of the Bible?

The actual Hebrew title is “The Song of Songs which is Solomon’s,” The repetition Song of Songs, means best of, like King of kings or Lord of lords, it is the best of the songs which are Solomons. 1 Kings 4:32 says Solomon “spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.” Of the 1005 songs Solomon wrote, THIS was his best. This is the finest of the Songs which were Solomon’s. So either title is fine. For ease, I’m going to refer to this book as the Song.

Now, this isn’t a typical book of the Bible. There is a lot of scholarly debate on the Song and why it is included in Scripture. Is it an allegory of God and Israel? Of Christ and the Church? We aren’t going to debate any of that today. But rather point out that in its purest form this book is a depiction of romantic, intimate love. This is biblical poetry. The Song is the story of the courtship, wedding, honeymoon and the marriage of King Solomon and his Shulammite bride. It follows them through the process of falling in love, to the inevitable fights and conflicts of marriage, to the steadfast love of years lived together. And in this book we see a couple in perfect intimacy. According to Dr. David Jeremiah, “The Song is a convincing witness that men and women were created physically, emotionally, and spiritually to love in love.”

So, here is a real quick outline of the book. Chapters 1 and 2 of the Song follows the couple’s courtship, midway through chapter 3 we arrive at their wedding and in chapter 4 we read about the wedding night. In chapter 5 they are married and have a disagreement - as we all do in marriage - and in chapter 6 we see them reconcile. By chapter 7, most commentators believe they have been married for some time, and at this point, they are getting older, they know things about each other no one else knows, but they are still pursuing each other. And finally, in chapter 8, we see perfect emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy that has been achieved through years of working and striving and failing and relearning and loving still.

So, what we can learn about emotional intimacy from Solomon and his bride? Men, I know, this is your favorite topic - feel free to take copious notes.

II Emotional Intimacy

Our first glimpse of emotional intimacy in Scripture is in Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. They shared full vulnerability with each other. They hid nothing and had no fear of rejection. This is emotional intimacy in its purest form, “To fully know and be fully known, without the fear of rejection.” Then came the fall. And now, we have to work really hard to find this kind of intimacy even with our own spouse.

I want Erik to think I hung the moon - I don’t want him to see or know the real me. The me that fails and sins and gets it wrong again and again and again. How could he ever
love the worst of me? The thing is...I need him to know the worst of me, the full, real
me, with all my quirks and sins and mistakes. Because as Tim Keller writes in the
Meaning of Marriage, “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be
known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a
lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from
pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life
can throw at us.”

That is emotional intimacy.

And we see it begin to emerge early in chapter 1 during the courtship of King Solomon
and his bride, Shulamith. Shulamith is the name many Bible commentators give
Solomon’s bride because she is identified in the Song as “the Shulamite.” So that’s how
we’ll reference her this morning. Shulamith isn’t just physically attracted to Solomon -
she IS physically attracted to him, this is often where it starts, but by verse 3 we already
see our first glimpse of emotional intimacy, “Your anointing iols are fragrant; your name
is poured out.” If you haven’t spent much time reading ancient middle eastern poetry,
the Songs can be confusing and weird, so here’s what she is saying, remember that this
was approximately 1000 years before Christ. They didn’t have the same hygiene habits
we do today, so she is simple saying, “Hey, you smell good. I LOVE your smell, you
take good care of yourself, when not everybody else does, and I admire that about you.
You have so much integrity, respect and wisdom that your very name is like a fragrant
oil to me and to the people around you. I respect you, and other people respect you too.
This is the beginning of emotional intimacy.

And Solomon feels the same way, in 1:15 he says to her, “Behold, you are beautiful, my
love; behold you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.” In ancient rabbinic tradition,
beautiful eyes meant a beautiful personality. The eyes were the windows to the soul,
and her eyes were soft and gentle and innocent, like a dove.

In English we have this one word “love” which means a lot of different things. I love
pizza, the chiefs, my kids, her shoes, Jesus, and Erik. Clearly, I don’t feel the same
about each of these things, even though I use the same word. But Hebrew isn’t like that.
We read the word “love” over and over again in our English translations of the Song but
in Hebrew there are actual several different words that we have translated as love; and
they all have different meanings.

In this verse. (1:15), Solomon uses the word rayah – friend, the object of love and
affection.
Most often in the Song, over 30 times in 8 chapters, Solomon uses the word dod –
romantic, physical, sexual love.
But he also uses, a handful of times, the word ahabah - deep, unwavering covenantal
love.

Emotional intimacy will usually start with rayah or friendship but as it grows, so do the
feelings; and eventually, when done right, emotional intimacy becomes ahabah. Deep
unwavering, steadfast love. We see this chapter 8 at the end of the Song. Solomon and his bride are no longer in courtship, they are husband and wife, and have been for some time they know each other fully and are fully known. They have worked on their marriage, they have persevered through fights, they have forgiven sins, and now as they reflect on their marriage, they have some wisdom to share.

Shulamith says to the maidens of the land, as she leans on the arm of her beloved, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken ahabah until it pleases.”

What she is saying is, “Ahabah isn’t easy. Don’t enter into it lightly. Don’t rush ahabah.” For those of you not married yet this is wise counsel. Be careful when you become friends with someone of the opposite sex. Rayah can easily lead into dod - that is pretty easy, and really common - you know what I’m talking about, right? Remember dod? Physical love. But ahabah - that isn’t as easy. It’s hard. It is 100% worth it, but it’s hard.

Now, for those of you who are married, the ahabah that comes from emotional intimacy in marriage is still hard. It can be terrifying to let your spouse in, to let them see your innermost thoughts/ideas/fear and failures/hope and dreams. But the reward of that, the ahabah that can come from that, as Keller said, is life giving.

The truth is you have already been completely found out. God already knows all your thoughts/ideas/fear and failures/hope and dreams, and He still loves and accepts you. Christ died for you, knowing that you were a broken and flawed sinner. We are to love our spouse as Christ loved us; AND we are to allow our spouse to love us as Christ has loved us. That means we need to let them in, we need to build emotional intimacy.

Now, here is the thing about emotional intimacy, just because you had it one time, does not mean you will always have it. Emotional intimacy, like all intimacies needs continual nurturing, continual effort and intention. We all have seasons in our marriage when we spend too much time in front of the TV, too much time focusing on the kids, too much time letting work distract us. Emotional intimacy takes time with your spouse one on one talking, sharing, learning, discovering, having new conversations, discussing new ideas, sharing new dreams, talking through new hurts. Emotional intimacy isn’t easy but it is the foundation of ahabah and 100% necessary for perfect intimacy.

Which also needs spiritual intimacy.

III. Spiritual Intimacy

Dr. David Jeremiah writes, “The greatest goal for your marriage is one of spiritual intimacy - simply getting on the same page in your pursuit of God…the most intimate
place any couple can be is a state of unity in Christ - entwined in His love, which empowers their own affection. This is the highest goal of marriage."
Say it with me, couples that pray together...stay together.

Corny I know, but also really, really true! Studies have shown that less than 1% of couples that pray together daily end of up in divorce. There is serious power in prayer. The number one thing you can do to grow in spiritual intimacy with your spouse is to pray together.

Romans 8:29 tells us, “For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” This is God's desire for us- to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, and one of our greatest tools to accomplishing this is our spouse. ESPECIALLY when we allow them to fully know us.

The reality is your spouse already knows you are a sinner. They do. If you thought you had managed to pull that wool over their eyes, let me just tell you - they're on to you. This puts them in a unique position to help you grow spiritually and when this is done by both parties, when both parties are willing to let iron sharpen iron, there is beautiful spiritual intimacy.

The second best thing you can do in marriage to grow in spiritual intimacy is to hold each other accountable to the Word of God and to growing in the likeness of Christ. We see Solomon and Shulamith do this in chapter 2. Their attraction is growing. They're getting closer. And their rayah, friendship love is moving toward dod love - you know what I mean right? But before it gets too far - they hold each other accountable to God’s way of doing things. In chapter 2:7 in the midst of a heated moment, with lots of dod - Shulamith says, do not awaken love. It's not time yet. This isn't what God wants from us. This isn't his plan for us. She holds Solomon accountable to the Word of God and they grow in spiritual intimacy.

For those of you who are single, or in a dating relationship, hold each other accountable to the Word of God. Now, I want to say this too, to the singles out there - regardless of your age or stage of life, these words aren’t just for young people, but anyone who is not married. Be careful with this intimacy. Of course, the goal is to date a Christian, and to grow spiritually with them, BUT don't rush this. Spiritual intimacy IS an intimacy. And when one intimacy is growing, the other intimacies tend to grow as well. So when you start growing in emotional intimacy AND you are growing in spiritual intimacy, it is very likely you will want to grow in physical intimacy as well. But it's not time for that yet. So just be very, very careful with these first two intimacies.

The final aspect of spiritual intimacy I want to mention is Forgiveness. Growing in spiritual intimacy means we Forgive like God forgave us.

In chapter 5 of the Song, Solomon and his bride have a fight. He comes to her room later than anticipated, she's mad because he's late, and when he knocks on the door she refuses to answer - she’s already in bed - he’s late. This of course hurts his
feelings, he rattles the doorknob one more time, and when she doesn’t answer, he leaves. Shulamith almost instantly regrets her choice, and runs to the door, but she’s too late. He’s gone. The rest of chapter 5 is Shulamith dealing with the guilt she feels over this division in their marriage and in chapter 6 she goes out searching for her husband. When she finds him, he is in the garden, where she is met not with more anger, but with forgiveness. Solomon welcomes her with words of love. “You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem…Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me…Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young.”

Let me interpret that for you, “Baby, you are beautiful, your eyes overwhelm and you’ve got all your teeth!”

Men - here’s a tip, when you are trying to make up from a disagreement with your wife, and you want to give her a compliment, don’t compliment the number of teeth she has. In general quoting poetry might be a good idea, but don’t quote THIS poetry. And while on that note, don’t call her belly a mound or a heap like Solomon does in chapter 7. Don’t use those words together when talking about your wife. It may have sounded good 3000 years ago, but I just don’t think your wife is going to fully appreciate that compliment. Just some free advice from me to you!

If, however, this does come out of your mouth for some reason, you will likely get to practice forgiveness a little more!

When we forgive our spouses for the hurt they have caused us, when we humbly ask our spouse to forgive us because we have hurt them, spiritual intimacy grows.

And as our spiritual and emotional intimacy grow, so will our physical intimacy.

IV. Physical Intimacy

I saved this intimacy for last, because it is the one our culture gets the most wrong. This is the intimacy that is most talked about AND the most mis-understood.

Our culture tends to believe this IS intimacy, in and of itself. It stands alone as the end all be all of intimacy. And while it is a very important part of marriage, I want to make sure we put it in its proper place.

First off, the proper place for physical intimacy is marriage. Physical intimacy is a good gift from our Father who loves us. But it is ONLY intended to be between a man and his wife. This is very clear throughout Scripture and three times in the Song, we read the words, “Do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.” Do not enter into physical intimacy until you are married. Wait for the right person and then, wait for the right time - your wedding night.
I know that isn’t what the world is telling you right now, but that is the consistent message throughout Scripture. Now, if you have missed this mark, remember the mercy and grace that is promised on the cross. Remember that Jesus is there to fill the gap between God’s ideal and our reality. Forgiveness is there for each of us who call on the name of Jesus.

Second, I want to encourage you not to make physical intimacy too big or too little a deal in your marriage. In every list I checked, on what husbands and wives fight about - sex was mentioned. Those who tend to minimize sex might struggle with viewing it as something that is wrong or uncomfortable or a hassle. It’s possible they carry guilt from past sexual sin from themselves or others. For whatever reason, they undervalue the importance of physical intimacy in marriage, and may even use it as a bargaining chip or to manipulate or control their spouse. This is not how God intended physical intimacy to be. It should always and only be used in the context of drawing a husband and wife into each other to strengthen and deepen their relationship.

Those who overemphasize sex, go beyond a healthy sex drive to obsessing about sex. They tend to think physical intimacy is the solution to any marital problems and if this intimacy is improved, everything else would fall into place. Physical intimacy is an important part of marriage but equally important are emotional and spiritual intimacy.

All three intimacies are tied together, if you or your spouse struggle in one particular area, encouraging the other two intimacies will help the third intimacy grow.

Chapter 4 of the Song is all about \textit{dod} or physical intimacy. This is the wedding night, and I just want to point out, this is pinnacle of \textit{dod}. This isn’t \textit{dod} after three kids and a 40-hour work week. Not every marital connection is going to be like this, so just make sure you and your spouse understand that and set reasonable expectations for your marriage, that BOTH of you agree to.

Chapter 7 of the Song is another more detailed look at \textit{dod}, this time, after they had been married for a while. But they are still pursuing each other physically and emotionally.

The last thing I am going to say about physical intimacy is this isn’t just for newlyweds. We see Solomon and his bride still pursuing each other physically long into their marriage.

There is of course so much more we could say on this topic. But I think we have probably said enough for today. Maybe, once Pastor Jim is done with the Gospel of John, he can walk us through the Song verse by verse? That could be fun! The amazing thing about our God, is that even though we completely messed up his perfect creation and the perfect intimacy he designed, He loves us so much, He set in place a path of redemption. Even though we broke the perfect relationship he created between man and woman and between humanity and God, He made a way for both of those relationships to be fully redeemed through the blood of His Son. We may not be
able to return to the Garden of Eden where these intimacies come easily, but we can redeem and restore not only our intimacy with each other, but also our intimacy with God when we accept the forgiveness that Jesus Christ offers through his life, death and resurrection. When we stop trying to do it all on our own and admit that we have fallen short of the glory of God, and we allow the selfless love of Christ to wash away our sin through faith in Him. Only then are we restored in our relationship with God. And then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, given to us by our faith in Jesus Christ, we are able to pursue and achieve perfect intimacy with our spouse.

Let’s pray.