SUPERNATURAL AND SPIRITUAL

The book of Genesis depicts the first union of two individuals becoming one flesh. What does this mean? On the obvious level, one flesh refers to the physical union of the two, also known as sexual intercourse. Within the sexual relationship as described by Scripture, there is the physical interaction of the male and female bodies, complementarily, biologically, and anatomically speaking.

But humanity is more than pieces that fit together anatomically. The union between a man and a woman is consummated in the relationship through the sexual act, but it also transcends into a spiritual one (cf. Mark 10:9; Eph. 5:32). The union occurs on an intellectual, emotional, and social level. Family structures are realigned; hormones and brain activities are recalibrated; thinking patterns are reset. Married couples are to leave father and mother, for the two enter a new social status. Living together as a married couple, they are a new social and economic unit.

The Bible emphasizes that a couple ought not be unequally yoked. This does not mean they have to agree on everything, for unity is not uniformity. Nor does it mean they “complete each other.” It is Christ who completes each of us (Col. 2:10) and we are not to lose our individuality in the other (Eccl. 4:9). Rather, God reigns and directs their individuality as well as their unity.

More than merely a physical act, marital sexuality becomes one of the spiritual glues that unite two selfish beings as husband and wife despite living in a sinful world. By itself, though, it is insufficient glue for a lasting marriage. The supernatural and spiritual unity is vital!
Write out Song of Solomon 7:1–8:7 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out Song of Solomon 8:6, 7. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
It is said that the early church forbade the reading of one book of the Bible: The Song of Solomon. Some traditions hold that individuals had to be at least 30 years old before being allowed to read it. Other communities maintained that the book could only be understood once the lower nature was overcome. Some have seen the book as an allegory between God and the church, imposing all sorts of interesting interpretations. Others see a saucy lover’s triangle with multiple parties.

It is recommended that one read the book of Song of Solomon in one sitting, preferably in a translation that has the identity of the speakers provided. Reading more like a play, these eight chapters are a dialog between a man and a woman interrupted with a few choruses from the Daughters of Jerusalem. Imagine the confusion if one were to read a Shakespeare play with the characters not identified. When read carefully from the beginning comparing contextual evidences, the Song depicts a biblical picture of sexuality between one man and one woman that ultimately points typologically to the intimate love of God for His people.

The male protagonist is none other than Solomon, whose name is mentioned seven times (1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12) in the book itself. There are many clues that point to this wise man, from his familiarity with horticulture and zoology to descriptions of his royal wedding in 1 Kings. Also, geography, details of Pharaoh’s horses, and tone of luxury and fame are consistent with the Solomonic narratives. Though Solomon was well known for his polygamy, this book seems to reference his monogamous years early in his reign rather than his political marriages later on. Using imagery and language of kingship as well as shepherding, the book portrays a man courting the female protagonist: the Shulamite in chapters 1–3:5. The narrative then continues with the marital union of the two from 3:6–5:1, and finally a life of marital bliss and sexual love in 5:2–8:14. This outline is consistent with the order of relationships that we are to pursue: courtship first without “stir[ring] up nor awaken[ing] love until it pleases” (2:7 and 3:5); marriage second, in a proper wedding ceremony; and third, the step where sexual reservations are removed.

What is most obtuse in this book for modern readers are the analogies used by the romantic couple. Necks and noses are likened to towers, teeth to sheep, and other more intimate parts of the body to animals. Our contemporary senses can interpret these passages as their literal expressions of love, which would mean that this ancient couple may have looked quite unusual. Or, more likely, ancient Hebrew poetry conveyed not the physical form, but the emotional state of the poet. Towers were expensive strategic buildings that evoked soldiers. Taking a hill and then seeing another tower to overcome would evoke amazement, wonder, and perhaps even a little fear. They were known for their intricate details and workmanship. The entire multifactorial and multisensorial experience was intended in the poetic line of “your neck is like an ivory tower” (Song 7:4) rather than a woman with a long, goose-like neckline.

Another example is Solomon describing his beloved’s waist as a “heap of wheat set about with lilies” (Song 7:2). Not to be taken literally as a potbellied woman with white birthmarks littering her midriff, the experience of harvest is to be understood as when wheat was finally threshed and placed in a heap. There was a sense of plentifulness, thanksgiving, finality, and security, along with the beauty, purity, and delicateness of the lilies.

The poetic imagery of courtship, marriage, and sexuality takes on all the senses and fits the yearning of sexual intimacy in the human experience. Rather than a book that should be eschewed, the Song of Solomon teaches humanity about the deepest expressions of nostalgia, beauty, desire, fulfillment, pleasure, and contentment.
Sexuality has been and is created by God as a good gift to humanity. It is composed of the principles of difference in heterosexuality, sameness in humanity, oneness in monogamy, twoness in intimacy and exclusivity, and being bathed in the gifts of permanence and goodness. Man and woman are human beings of equal value, created to experience a wholistic sexuality of mind, emotion, body, and spirit, not only for procreation but also for God’s gift of pleasure and love.

The apex of the Song of Solomon is found in chapter 8, where in verse 6 the love between the two is likened to a seal. This seal is connected to the heart and to the body. In accordance with the rest of the poetry of the Song of Solomon, there is a motif associated with the illustration. In this case, there are ideas of ownership, privacy, security, and protection associated with the seal. The fact that the seal is upon the heart and body denotes a permanent relationship with external and internal parts of the relationship.

The stanza concludes with, “For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave” (Song 8:6). Just as death and the grave are permanent, this type of love is also permanent that provokes a jealousy. Whereas jealousy over things that are not yours (also known as envy) is inappropriate, jealousy over things that are yours is proper in the context of love. Hence God is righteous in His jealousy over losing humanity, His beloved children (Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 2 Cor. 11:2). This physical love and union between husband and wife then becomes a template to reflect the spiritual love and union God has for and with His people (Eph. 5:30–32).

The next line in verse 6 mentions “a most vehement flame,” which can be translated as the flame of Yahweh. In other words, the most fervent love between a man and a woman, experienced in the body, mind, and heart, is likened to fire—an inferno of a fire, one that needs to be protected under the confines of matrimony. This fire is from God Himself, one that evidences His love and His presence, purifying, refining, protecting, and illuminating the hearts of humanity.

As precious and mysterious as this fire is, we also see the effects of rampant fire because of sexual irresponsibility. Many have burned or have been burned by one-night stands, sexual promiscuity, sexual abuse, pornography, rape, divorce, affairs, and a whole slew of never-ending sins. G. K. Chesterton said, “Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God.” It is not that sexuality is evil, but that sexuality reflects God’s heart—His love, gentleness, tender mercies, passion, and intimacy. It is not that we have sex, but we were created as sexual beings to understand and reflect these aspects of God. It is these connectional qualities that humanity strives for, yearns for, and even needs. But if left unexperienced, sexual understanding is poisoned and its abuse results in the hurt of many.

Given as one of two gifts in the Garden of Eden (the other being the seventh-day Sabbath), marital love has a high potency of holiness. As a result, the devil himself hates these two institutions, seeking to erode the power, veracity, and validity of the seventh-day Sabbath as well as the institution of marriage that shelters the gift of sexuality.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

1 Corinthians 6:15–20  
Genesis 1:26–28  
Genesis 2:23–25  
Matthew 19:5, 6  
Ephesians 5:28–33  
Hebrews 13:4

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with oneness?

Review your memorized verse from Song of Solomon 7:1–8:7.
THE LORD OF UNITY

When it comes to Bible study, there are blessings when one verse is carefully and slowly read, and there are blessings when one reads as much as they can in one sitting. Try to read the entire letter to the Ephesians right now. Don’t worry; it’s only six chapters long. Reading the entire book allows the capture of a macro-theme. If you haven’t caught it already, Paul refers to the motif of unity in each chapter.

He starts out from the broadest of perspectives in writing about God the Father (1:3–6), then God the Son (1:7–12), and finally God the Spirit (1:13–14), and of how each Person played a part in the redemption of the church. This unity of the Godhead is reflected in the unity of God’s people in the church (1:15–23). In other words, the essence of oneness of the Trinity should be seen in the oneness in the body of believers.

Paul then speaks of how Jesus united and reconciled humanity with God (2:1–10). Through Jesus’ ministry, sinners were made whole, saved, and restored by the grace of God. This power and oneness then become the motif for Paul to exhort reconciliation between the Jewish and Gentile believers (2:11–22). He writes against racism, tribalism, and any other form of prejudice within the church body.

Chapter 3 speaks of Paul’s own role within the community. He should have been on the outside, but through this unifying mystery, God uses even people like Paul (3:1–19). Notice Paul starts broadly in the beginning and narrows down to his own ministry.

Chapter 4 starts with the Spirit and the purpose of His gifts: unity within the church (4:1–16). This, in turn, should affect every follower of Christ and his or her behavior, ethics, thinking, externals, and internals (4:17–5:21). It is here that Paul zooms in on each interpersonal relationship. The author isn’t just babbling about whatever comes into his mind. He is saying that since Christ can unify heaven and earth, the divine and human, God and sinner, Jew and Gentile, and persecutor and persecuted, God can also unify our homes, our marriages, and our families (5:22–6:9).

From this framework, Paul exhorts us to realize that we are in spiritual warfare against powers that seek to disunite us from heaven; hence, he writes about the armor of God (6:10–24). In light of the power, Word, and Spirit of Christ, no relationship is too strained that it cannot be united by God. Since Christ traversed the most distant divide to unite humanity with heaven, saying that a human relationship cannot be united misapprehends the death of Jesus. Of course, every wound needs its time to heal, but in Christ, we have hope of healing and perfect unity.
**HEAVENWARD UNITY**

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honorable’ (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 46.)

“There is in itself no sin in eating and drinking, or in marrying and giving in marriage. It was lawful to marry in the time of Noah, and it is lawful to marry now, if that which is lawful is properly treated, and not carried to sinful excess.” (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 121.)

“God wants the home to be the happiest place on earth, the very symbol of the home in heaven. Bearing the marriage responsibilities in the home, linking their interests with Jesus Christ, leaning upon His arm and His assurance, husband and wife may share a happiness in this union that angels of God commend.” (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 102.)

“Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church.” (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:46.)

“In the youthful mind marriage is clothed with romance, and it is difficult to divest it of this feature, with which imagination covers it, and to impress the mind with a sense of the weighty responsibilities involved in the marriage vow. This vow links the destinies of the two individuals with bonds which naught but the hand of death should sever.

“Every marriage engagement should be carefully considered, for marriage is a step taken for life. Both the man and the woman should carefully consider whether they can cleave to each other through the vicissitudes of life as long as they both shall live.” (White, *The Adventist Home*, 340.)

“Examine carefully to see if your married life would be happy or inharmonious and wretched. Let the questions be raised, Will this union help me heavenward? Will it increase my love for God? And will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in this life? If these reflections present no drawback, then in the fear of God move forward.” (Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 45.)

“One about to marry a wife should stop to consider candidly why he takes this step. Is his wife to be his helper, his companion, his equal, or will he pursue toward her such a course that she cannot have an eye single to the glory of God? Will he venture to give loose rein to his passions and see how much care and taxation he can subject his wife to without extinguishing life, or will he study the meaning of the words, ‘Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus’?” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior*, 15.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Why are the biblical standards of sexuality challenged by the world?

Why do holiness and sexuality seem like they are from two different worlds?

What has been your experience with the Song of Solomon?

Where are areas that you have learned about biblical sexuality?

How does sexual intimacy reveal the search for God?

Why is oneness so important to sexuality?

Why is oneness so important to salvation?

What are examples of the negative repercussions of not following biblical counsel regarding sexuality?