I will tell you that a couple of years ago our small group here at the church spent about ten weeks studying Song of Solomon, and I can attest that few of us wanted to miss those studies. Of course, it may have helped that it was a VIDEO series. A lecture video—come on now—where are your minds going? Okay, at least we got things loosened up a little now.

Christians, on the whole, are decidedly uptight about sex. I have no empirical evidence to support that claim, but I would gladly welcome any challenge to it.

Former Pastor Joe Beam has started a ministry called Family Dynamics and he is going all across America teaching seminars at churches. His basic message is that Christian husbands and wives ought to have better, hotter, steamier sex. Now can someone turn up the air conditioning please! Not surprisingly, Joe has met with some strong opposition from conservative Christians. I saw Joe’s interview on the Today show a few weeks ago, and I was really impressed with what he had to say. I encourage you to go on to MSNBC and watch the video of his interview and tell me what you think. I especially encourage you to read some of the viewer responses, one of which goes like this: “I agree with what he is telling his couples, but I am resistant to the fact that..."
I know that far too many of you out there today are in marriages where a trip to the grocery store is both more common and, sadly, more exciting than a trip to the bedroom.

Those of you who are parents with young kids, let me tell you that it’s really hard to be good parents if you cannot be good lovers.

he’s telling them so openly. I don’t know why. It just seems so vulgar to a conservative Christian. But I don’t know who else should be telling these couples to have fun in their marriage if not their pastor.”

So, as your pastor, I’m standing here this morning encouraging husbands and wives to steam things up. Of course, that sounds like something a guy would say! I can’t help the fact that I am a male. But verse 14 this morning says, “Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices.” Friends, this is not her asking him to make a trip to the grocery store! I know that far too many of you out there today are in marriages where a trip to the grocery store is both more common and, sadly, more exciting than a trip to the bedroom.

Guys, many of you are sexually starved, and you’re using your computer and other inappropriate resources to find an answer that cannot satisfy your desires. Ladies you long for someone to truly connect with you and love you in the way you want to be loved, and you’re filling your closets and calendars with substitutes for that intimate connection you need to have with your husband. Excuse me for getting personal and messy this morning, but I can’t do it any other way. I have heard a library full of excuses as to why couples are not experiencing the intimacy they want. And rarely have I heard any that held water. If there is a barrier that’s inhibiting your sex life—and I don’t care if that barrier is fatigue, boredom, emotional distance, pornography or just plain inhibition, then I personally challenge you to get rid of that barrier before this series ends in two weeks.

I know that some of you are parents with young kids, and you don’t have any family in the area. You need time to yourself, and you need a trustworthy adult to keep the kids. Lynne and I have been blessed with wonderful surrogate grandparents here. I would love to challenge one of our older adults to start recruiting surrogate grandparents who can develop loving relationships with our young families. Maybe some of our older folks might not be getting as much out of this five-week sermon series, but here’s a HUGE way you can help our young families. Those of you who are parents with young kids, let me tell you that it’s really hard to be good parents if you cannot be good lovers. The BEST thing you can do for your kids is to have a strong and vibrant marriage.

But enough on sex for now. Let’s switch gears for a moment and look at “love” – which, ideally, is the precursor to sex. In our world today, far too many people use sex to search for love—and far too often that search leaves one disappointed. Verses 6 and 7 are an eloquent expression of love. “Love is as strong as death…flashes of fire…many waters cannot quench love….” I don’t need to tell you that our culture has a pretty anemic and simplistic view of love. We look at love as the rhyme of poetry on a Hallmark card when, in reality,
Real love is NOT an emotion. REAL love is an act of will—a commitment of the MIND more than a tug of the heart.

"The person who truly loves does so because of a decision to love.”
- Scott Peck

...
When we give of ourselves freely, when we open up our bodies to each other, we are exhibiting incredible vulnerability. And the only way that we can be fully open and vulnerable is when we feel SAFE in the commitment of the relationship.

Just being “in love” is not enough! You can fall in and out of love faster than the ‘Skins can lose a game. Love is an act of the WILL. And when we know that our lover is choosing to love us then, AND ONLY THEN, can we open ourselves fully and freely to them.

Let us pray…

Lord we are grateful that you design us to be in relationship with others. Some of us here today are deeply DESIRIOUS of a healthy and loving relationship where we can be fully open and intimate with each other. Lord, break down those barriers that challenge our love. Remind us continually that love is an act of the will and not an easily quenched emotion. In the name of Jesus who loved us enough to offer himself for us. Amen.