



# LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

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## FOUR-STEP METHOD

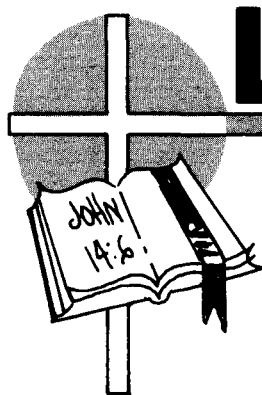
Living Way Bible Study suggests this four-step method:

1. PERSONAL - The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
2. SMALL GROUPS – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The Small Group Leader guides the group through the P.A. questions encouraging each to share their answers and add discussion.
3. THE MESSAGE – The lecture or message is given by a Pastor or lay person who has researched the material and presents the study giving personal experiences and complimenting, but not merely duplicating, the author's comments.
4. THE NARRATIVE – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the door as the student leaves the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the Small Groups review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has high-lighted as meaningful or important.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no PERSONAL APPLICATION questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting the Lecturer presents background information about the course using the INTRODUCTION lesson as a guide.

Each lesson should be stapled together using the number of the lesson in the right hand corner of the page. To keep the lessons in order check the Bible text listed at the top of each page. The PERSONAL APPLICATION questions are attached to the author's narrative and will be the home study for the next class session.

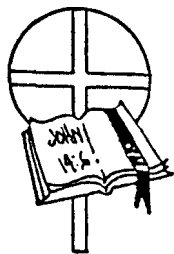
With this 4-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by this lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student a feeling of understanding and ownership for each section studied.



# LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY, INC.

**Rev. Erwin Kurth** - author of LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY courses on:

- THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW
- THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK
- THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
- THE BOOK OF EZRA
- THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH
- THE BOOK OF ESTHER
- THE BOOK OF JOB
- THE BOOK OF PROVERBS
- ECCLESIASTES
- THE SONG OF SOLOMON
  
- Graduated from Concordia Seminary - 1922
- Sixty-five years in the ministry with the LC-MS
- Areas of particular interest are: Christian Stewardship and Bible Study
- Conducted seminars and workshops in the U.S. and Canada on HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL EVERY-MEMBER CANVAS. The Kurth-Zehnder Plan is still available in book form.
- Attended Biblical Seminary in New York City, NY.
- Fostered intensive Bible Study and taught Bible study classes wherever he served as Pastor. These include LC-MS churches in Montana, Nebraska, Minnesota, Brooklyn, NY, Fort Wayne, IN, Detroit, MI and California
- Conferred the Doctor of Divinity Degree from Concordia Seminary - 1960
- Guest speaker on the International Lutheran Hour
- Served as part-time Bible Instructor at Christ College Irvine, in Irvine, CA
- Author of CATECHETICAL HELPS (Concordia Publishing House)
- His life companion, Esther Pfotenhauer Kurth, has supported his ministry typing much of his longhand script
  
- our beloved author, Dr. Kurth, was called home to be with the Lord on October 22, 1989 at the age of 91 years



The Song of Solomon - Introduction  
Lesson 1

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

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THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Erwin Kurth

The title "The Song of Solomon" is also termed "the Song of Songs " (1:1).

The literary device of singling out a subject or object as being outstanding, preeminent and the very best is used elsewhere in the Scriptures. Examples: Holy of Holies; servant of servants (Genesis 9:25); king of kings (Ezekiel 26:7); Lord of lords, and King of kings (Revelation 17:14). The title given this book in the Douay Bible is "Canticle of Canticles."

Solomon "spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five." (1 Kings 4:32). This Song is the best of the 1,005. It is the Song of Songs.

Everybody agrees that this prophetic poem is a literary masterpiece. It portrays the sublimation of passion in courtship and the consummation of tender affections in matrimony. No wonder large segments of it are found in anthologies of English literature.

The Pursuer and the Pursued

One of the loveliest periods in life is that of falling in love. Two individuals, out of possibly 57,000 compatible mates--one man and one woman--are irresistibly drawn to each other and feel they cannot happily go on with life unless they are united in marriage, and remain united, till death do them part.

The man normally does the courting. He might properly be designated the "Lover," as is done in the New International Version; she, the "Beloved." "Sweet nothings" are interminably exchanged between them. Tender words are spoken, fervid letters written, carefully chosen gifts presented, caresses and kisses exchanged. The Beloved says, in effect, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine " (1:2).

The engagement is announced; a diamond ring is given; the wedding day is set.

The honeymoon follows. Incidentally, it was Moses who prescribed the "honeymoon year," saying: "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken " (Deuteronomy 24:5).

### The Threefold Purpose of Marriage

Marriage has a threefold purpose:

1. The procreation of the human race. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth " (Genesis 1:28a).
2. Companionship. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him " (Genesis 2:18).
3. "To serve as a curb to licentiousness " (W.H.T. Dau). "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn " (1 Corinthians 7:9, GNB).

### Various Interpretations of the Song

1. It is a description of heterosexual persons who find joy in courtship and fulfillment in marriage.
2. There are those who regard the Song as an incoherent collection of love ballads and wedding songs, maybe 30 all told.
3. A third interpretation is that of Franz Delitzsch, espoused by a number of subsequent scholars. The interpretation, pieced together, goes something like this: A comely shepherdess fell head-over-heels in love with a shepherd lad; then she was spotted by scouts of Solomon on the lookout for beautiful women to augment the king's harem and was forcibly taken to him; however, the rustic maiden rejected the leisurely and luxurious life in the king's palace, remained virginally true to her first love, and was finally permitted to rejoin him.
4. The argument of others is that, if the poem were nothing more than a love story--perhaps somewhat akin to the love affairs of Abelard and Heloise, Dante and Beatrice, Napoleon and Josephine--it should not, and would not, have been included in the Canon of the Old Testament. Surely it must carry a higher meaning, a spiritual, allegorical meaning, like the relationship, in the Old Testament, between Jehovah and His Chosen People, Israel; and later, in the New Testament, the relationship between Christ and His Church. This is the key, they say, to the understanding of the Song of Songs.

### Old Testament Texts

"For thy Maker is thine husband; The Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel " (Isaiah 54:5).

" As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee " (Isaiah 62:5b).

"Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown " (Jeremiah 2:2).

To backsliding Judah and Israel the Lord said, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord " (Jeremiah 3:1b).

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you " (Jeremiah 3:14a).

"And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord " (Hosea 2:19, 20).

In Ezekiel 16 and 23, the relationship of God as Bridegroom and Israel as bride is plainly set forth.

Psalm 45 is quite Messianic in import and sheds light on the Canticle of Canticles.

#### New Testament Texts

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church " (Ephesians 5:31, 32).

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son " (Matthew 22:2).

In Matthew 25 is the parable of the ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. The foolish virgins did not have enough oil for their lamps. "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh " (Matthew 25:10-13).

" For the marriage of the Lamb is come . . . . And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb " (Revelation 19:7, 9).

Moreover, Christ is repeatedly portrayed as the Bridegroom. Here is one example: "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" (Matthew 9:15).

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband " (Revelation 21:2).

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it " (Ephesians 5:25).

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ " (2 Corinthians 11:2).

#### Spiritual Thrust

Certain texts in the "Best of Songs" are made applicable to the mutual love of Christ and His Church: Christ is "the chiefest among ten thousand " (5:10) "He is altogether lovely." (5:16).

And so, thinking of Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us, we are happy to say in words taken from the Song of Solomon: "My beloved is mine, and I am his . . . " (2:16). This is the heart verse, according to the allegorical method.



The Song of Solomon 1:1-2:7  
Lesson 1

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

PERSONAL APPLICATION

O Lord Jesus Christ, who loves Your holy bride, the Church, with an everlasting love, through Your Word and Spirit make our home and our hearts Your dwelling place, so that we may forever dwell with You in the Father's mansions above. We ask this in the name of the Lover of our souls. Amen.

When answering the questions it may be more meaningful to you to give two answers. First, whenever possible, answer from the words of the text, and second answer from the allegorical meaning which portrays the relationship between Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His Bride.

The Song of Solomon 1:1-17

1. What other name is given the book called The Song of Solomon? (1:1)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many songs altogether did Solomon compose? (1 Kings 4:32)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The Song of Solomon begins with a request by a maiden for an expression of tender affection from her absent lover. What request does she make? (1:2a) \_\_\_\_\_
4. How did the sinful woman, appearing in the home of Simon the Pharisee, express her appreciation of Christ's forgiving love? (Luke 7:38, 45)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In what manner are we bidden to seek the forgiving love of Jesus, God's dear Son? (Psalms 2:12) \_\_\_\_\_
6. The Beloved wishes to be evermore close to her lover and never to be separated from him. (1:4) How does St. Paul express the inseparability of Christ and the believer? (Romans 8:38-39) \_\_\_\_\_
7. The maiden was deeply tanned, yet very attractive. Why didn't she stay out of the sun and attend more to her personal appearance? (1:5, 6) \_\_\_\_\_
8. The Beloved wished to locate the shepherd whom she loved. She did not wish to search for him boldly. (1:7) What directions were given her? (1:8) \_\_\_\_\_



9. The sweethearts exchange compliments. Of course, their Oriental imagination was more vivid than ours of the Occident. Some of the imagery they use may startle us; we need to get acquainted with it. What compliments do they pay each other? (The Concordia Self-Study Bible may help). The Lover tells her (1:9-11): \_\_\_\_\_

The Beloved tells him (1:12-14): \_\_\_\_\_

The Lover tells her (1:15): \_\_\_\_\_

The Beloved tells him (1:16, 17): \_\_\_\_\_

The Song of Solomon 2:1-7

10. The dialogue of mutual praise continues. What do they say?

The Beloved says of herself, fully confident of her self-worth, in spite of her dark complexion (2:1): \_\_\_\_\_

The Lover adds a floral tribute of his own (2:2): \_\_\_\_\_

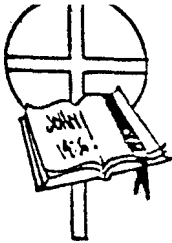
11. She tries to go him one better. To what does she liken him? (2:3)

\_\_\_\_\_

12. She grows rhapsodical. She fancies that being with him is like dining in a gorgeous banquet hall with a king for a companion. She feels perfectly relaxed and safe, as if surrounded and protected by an army with banners. (2:4; 6:4) Yet a spell of weakness comes over her. To what is that attributable? (2:5b) \_\_\_\_\_

13. She had given her lover, she felt, a plenitude of love; that is why she was exhausted. How was the betrothed to replenish the supply? (2:5a) \_\_\_\_\_

Concluding verse of the First Song, addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Don't think you can decide when to love and whom to love. Love awakens when it pleases. You have no conscious control over it. It springs into being by itself, spontaneously." (2:7)



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THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Erwin Kurth

What Does the Text Say?

Note: The designations "Lover" and "Beloved" are used in the New International Version; "The Man" and "The Woman" are used in the Good News Bible.

"The Woman," called "The Girl" in the Living Bible or "The Shulamite" in The New King James Version, makes a quick opening request: "Let him kiss me"--not on the cheeks as is customarily done today, but on the mouth, i.e., the lips, an erogenous zone. "Your kisses are sweeter and more exhilarating than wine." (1:2).

The Beloved continues to compliment her Lover as in the following paraphrases:

"There is an attractive fragrance about you like incense. The very mention of your name conjures up memories of your pleasing scent. Little wonder women are drawn to you." (1:3).

"To possess you completely for myself, where no one can find us, would be like living in a palace and having a king for my companion. All who know you respect, admire and love you." (1:4).

"I am dark of complexion but also beautiful in form and features. 'Dark you are,' I am frequently told; 'in fact, you remind us of the black, goat-haired tents of Kedar. And yet,' they are quick to add, 'you are as exquisite as the draperies in Solomon's palace.'" (1:5).

"Don't think harshly of me, I pray you. Don't reproach me because I am dark. You see, my brothers compelled me to work in the blazing sun out in the vineyards. I didn't have time to give attention to my personal appearance. 'Mine own vineyard have I not kept.'" (1:6).

Dialogue Between the Lover and the Beloved

Beloved: "Tell me, my Lover, where you shepherd your flock, and I'll hasten to join you. Why should I waste time looking for you here, there, and elsewhere?" (1:7).

The Lover responds: "You should have no trouble locating me, my fair one; just follow the hoofprints of my flock. Bring your sheep and goats with you. The little goats can graze near the shepherds' tents." (1:8).

"I think of you as a stately filly harnessed to Pharaoh's chariot. Your hair falls in waves about your cheeks. Your necklaces enhance your

beauty. Yes, jewelry is becoming to you. Therefore, we shall increase your collection with ornaments of gold and silver " (1:9-11).

Beloved: "While the king lay on his divan at mealtime, the scent of my perfume was wafted toward him. My Lover, however, sends his fragrance to me all through the quiet of the night because of the pad of perfumed powder I have placed between my breasts. Its scent constantly reminds me of him. My Lover is like wild flowers that grow in the vineyards of Engedi [a city in Judah] " (1:12-14).

Lover: "You are inexpressibly beautiful, my love. Your eyes are trusting and tender as if they were the eyes of a dove " (1:15).

Beloved: "You, too, are worthy of praise, my darling. You are as handsome as handsome can be. How you thrill me! When we get married, we will disport ourselves in a clearing of the wood. The green grass will be our love couch. The cedars, we shall pretend, are the beams of our house, and the fir trees our rafters " (1:16-17).

The Lover and the Beloved Continue Their Dialogue - 2:1-7

Beloved: "I know I am dark of complexion. That's because I had to work long hours in the vineyards." (1:6).

"The sun tanned me deeply. Nevertheless, I think myself unusually attractive, unique and colorful. 'I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys '" (2:1).

The Lover agrees: "You are in a class by yourself, my pretty one. You are like a lily among thorns " (2:2).

The Beloved returns the compliment: "You, too, are outstanding. You are like an apple tree set among non-fruit-bearing trees. Other men are ordinary in my sight; you, however, are exceptional. That's why I like to be near you; you refresh me and make me tingle with delight ." (2:3).

"When I listen to your honeyed words, I feel I am in a banquet hall, partaking of a rich meal. I also feel relaxed, safe and secure in the shade of your presence, as if surrounded and protected by a terrifying army with banners " (2:4; 6:4).

"I know that at times I feel awfully weak. That's because my love has poured itself out to you in such vast quantity. 'I am sick of love '" (2:5).

"Replenish my strength with a large portion of your own love and I will revive. Put your left hand under my head and embrace me with your right hand, and I shall be restored whole again." (2:5, 6).

"You daughters of Jerusalem, don't fancy you can decide when to love and whom to love. Love awakens when it pleases. You have no conscious

control over it. It springs into being by itself, spontaneously " (2:7).

#### What Does the Text Mean for Me?

The text depicts a man and a woman engaging in dialogues of mutual rapture--an activity in which couples have engaged since the world began and, certainly, will continue till time is no more.

Courtship is the prelude to marriage--which, be it noted, has a prerogative all its own.

Marriage "was instituted by God for the welfare and happiness of mankind, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and likened by Saint Paul to the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His church, and is to be held in honor among all men." Accordingly, the subject of betrothal and marriage has a rightful place in Holy Writ and may serve, as in the case of The Song of Solomon, as an allegory, portraying the relationship between Jehovah Lord and His Chosen People in the Old Testament and between Christ as Bridegroom and the Church as bride in the New Testament.

#### Old Testament Texts

"For thy Maker is thine husband; The Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel " (Isaiah 54:5).

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee " (Isaiah 62:5b).

To backsliding Judah and Israel the Lord said, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord " (Jeremiah 3:1b).

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you " (Jeremiah 3:14a).

#### New Testament Texts

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church " (Ephesians 5:31, 32).

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son " (Matthew 22:2).

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25).

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2).

And so, thinking of Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us, we are happy to say in words taken from The Song of Solomon: "My beloved is mine, and I am his " (2:16). This is the heart verse, according to the allegorical method.



LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY

PERSONAL APPLICATION

We give thanks, O Holy Spirit, for the portrayal of steadfast love in The Song of Solomon and ask you to bring to our remembrance the surpassing love of the Father, who so loved that He gave His dearest treasure, His only begotten Son, to be the Savior of the world. In His blessed and adorable name we offer our heartfelt thanks. Amen.

The Song of Solomon 2:8-17 (Give two answers when applicable - i.e. #3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,)

1. In her daydreaming, the Shulamite maiden fancied hearing the voice of her Lover calling to her and announcing his coming. What Great Invitation does our Heavenly Bridegroom extend to us? (Matthew 11:28)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Certain texts in the Bible have been designated Great Texts, such as the one stated above: the Great Invitation, Matthew 11:28. Write out and memorize, if possible, the following:
  - a. The Great Confession (Matthew 16:16) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. The Great Question (Acts 16:30) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. The Great Answer (Acts 16:31) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. The Great Commendation (Romans 5:8) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. The Great News (John 3:16) Underline the letters of the word GOSPEL, in proper sequence, as you find them there. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - f. The Great Substitute (Isaiah 53:4, 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - g. The Great Relationship (Song of Solomon 2:16a) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Besides proclaiming his coming (2:8a), what other activities does the Beloved observe her Lover engage in? (2:8b, 9) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What request does the Lover make of his Beloved? (2:10b) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. He feels their love is as exuberant as the springtime. List the ways in which he describes the advent of spring.  
2:11: \_\_\_\_\_  
2:12 (turtle in the KJV means turtledove): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2:13: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What invitation, stated earlier in 2:10b, does the Lover repeat to his sweetheart? (2:13b) \_\_\_\_\_
7. It seems she is hesitant in her response, as if playing "hard to get." He bids her to not be like a certain bird in the palisades. What bird does he single out? (2:14a) \_\_\_\_\_
8. What compliments does he pay her in order to persuade her to come out of hiding? (2:14b) \_\_\_\_\_
9. The Song of Solomon is a poetic description of an ideal union between a man and a woman. When married folk today are rocked in marriage by grave happenings and adverse circumstances, more likely than not they will be drawn closer together and will stand by each other in personal, familial or economic adversities. But it is "the little foxes that spoil the vines" (2:15)--little everyday annoyances, remarks, attitudes and behaviors. List some of the ones in your memory. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. In thinking of Christ as the Lover of our souls, what joyous proclamation can we make concerning our relationship? (2:16, 17)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Song of Solomon 3:1-5

11. We desire to feel close to our Savior and Lord. How did the Shulamite maiden seek to be close to her Lover? (3:1-4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. When at long last they were together in her mother's house, what instructions did she give the daughters of Jerusalem (the chorus in the drama)? (3:5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_