

Song of Solomon is a book that you'll rarely hear quoted from a pulpit. It's a part of the Old Testament that celebrates eroticism and sexual love, though it's often read metaphorically by more conservative religious scholars. But when a friend sent the passages to Guy Bickel, a Florida sound engineer who'd recently found God, he saw their potential to help monogamous religious couples get intimate in the bedroom. Inspired, he put together an album entitled *The Original Love Song*, a stirring musical montage that combines the text from Song of Solomon with ethereal ambient music.

Bickel hopes that pious couples looking to ignite a sexual spark will play the album as background in the bedroom. "Everybody needs love, affection and romance," he says. "If you have no godly source to quench those needs, you end up having no choice but to hit up triple-x-dot-com. Let's give the people what they really want and need in a godly and spiritual manner." Bickel himself provides the voice of "Lover" in the songs, reciting the scriptures over the music like a biblical-era Marvin Gaye.

Nerve spoke to Bickel about his album, his faith and the need for sensuality between Christian couples. You can hear music from *The Original Love Song*, distributed by Bickel's independent record label, Book 22, by clicking the icons on [this page](#)

**Why**

**did you decide to produce this album?**

I was going through a spiritual discovery. I had been married for fifteen years, and I wanted to do something romantic for my wife as a special anniversary gift. A friend of mine sent me a piece of the Song of Solomon. I read it and said, "Wow, what is this from?" She said, "It's in the Bible." So I went to it and read it, and I thought, this is fantastic, there's got to be some sort of film or music about it. That would be the perfect anniversary gift for my wife. I went on the internet and searched everywhere, and there was just nothing.

Being from a music and entertainment background, I thought, "Goodness, this is right up my alley." It's spiritual, thoughtful, romantic — I just had to put it out there for the world. I saw the need for something in this vein from a spiritual place, because there really was nothing available that wasn't sordid, in my opinion. This was something for my wife and I to enjoy.

**Give us a quick rundown of what the Song of Solomon is all about.**

It's a tiny, secret book of the Bible. It teaches in lesson form about virtue, romance and love. It's eight chapters about King Solomon and a Shulamite woman — this is the general consensus if you're looking at it from a romantic perspective. If you're looking at it from an allegorical sense, that means it's between the children of Israel and God. So there's two totally different interpretations, but we chose to view it as romantic.

**It's interesting that Solomon had so many wives and concubines (seven hundred of the first, three hundred of the latter), and yet this song is about one person, and you intend for it to be used by monogamous married couples.**

Yes, it is interesting. Everyone has a slightly different take on it, but I think the book is meant as a lesson and a guide for romance — not necessarily for the way Solomon led his life, because he ended up becoming a pretty nasty person, and he really didn't follow any spiritual path. He had all kinds of other bad attributes too. But in my opinion, this book is the lesson on how to relate to your true love.

**And that's what you hope married couples get from the album?**

Absolutely. I hope *every* couple gets that from it. You know, we all want to believe — or at least, everyone in my church wants to believe — that it's for married couples only, but I think it's for every couple in the world. It's the general rules of sexual etiquette. It's not Jesus and salvation stuff.

**Were you nervous that you might upset some people by selling a Biblical passage as a marital aide, as something sexy?**

Yeah, we've had quite a few controversial reactions, but more positive ones. We did a call-in radio show in Detroit a few months back, and people in the area called in, and it was so positive. Only one caller didn't agree with us making the album. When the host asked, "Well ma'am, what if this helped your daughter's marriage in the privacy of her own home?" she still said she wouldn't accept it. But that was it — everyone else was just blown away because the CD is so good.

**Though there are a few churches that don't recognize the Song of Solomon as authoritative, they're in the minority. Most religious scholars do believe the song is holy, if only allegorically. How is it holy? How is intimacy about God?**

Me, I'm a newbie in the religious world. This was kind of my way into the Bible. I was a sound engineer for Frank Zappa for friggin' years, you know? I came from the other end of the universe. So I can't really interpret this for somebody else. I'm looking at it strictly as a romantic lesson from God. There was really nothing deeper than that, except for the tremendous need for it. I look at all the people in church, all of the people around me, and there's all kinds of divorces and hassles and bad relationships — all of these things are going wrong, and it all revolves around this.

**The Lover and the Beloved are described as having "breasts like two fawns" or "legs like pillars of marble." These people sound really attractive. What if my partner isn't so attractive? Should we stick to music without narration?**

Well, you know, it's taken word-for-word from one of six translations in the Bible. I presume the woman that was written about was shapely to some extent, but I really didn't think about that at all. I don't think you have to listen to the soundtrack without the narration to not hurt their feelings.

**The music on the album isn't what you'd call modern. What do you think about Christian messages set to rock music?**

Wow, now you've hit a nerve. I'm the soundman at our church, and we mix all of the bands. We do concerts there too, so I hear a lot of it. I'm not particularly fond of a lot of the new stuff, but I'm not young anymore, so maybe it just doesn't appeal to me because of that. But I've always loved spiritual messages in music — I think that's what it's all about. When I was growing up, there was Yes and Pink Floyd, Genesis, The Moody Blues — extremely great composition, great messages that music just doesn't seem to have these days. As far as Christian acts and bands are concerned, I've just gotten into it, so I don't know anything from beyond a couple of years ago.

**On the CD case, the album is described as "exquisitely tasteful." How important is tastefulness in reaching religious couples?**

Very, very important. All we were trying to say was that there was nothing distasteful about it. There were a lot of people who were concerned about it being tasteful.

**Do you think some Christians are embarrassed by sensuality?**

Absolutely. My first slogan for this whole project was, "It's okay to be sensuous . . . even if you're a Christian." Remember, I'm from the outside, and I was thrust into a new religious world (where I really wanted to be) and I just saw how it was all happening. Wonderful people, but just like everybody, they need a little spiritual guidance.

**Would you consider putting other scriptures to music as well?**

I've thought about it. Proverbs is just chock full of good stuff. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, all supposedly Solomon's works.

**So Solomon: not such a great guy, but he knew how to write for music.**

[Laughs] There are a whole lot of theories about him. If you go over to other religions, there is some question as to whether Solomon existed. A lot of people think he's Menatop III from Egypt.

**It's that whole Shakespeare/Christopher Marlowe thing.**

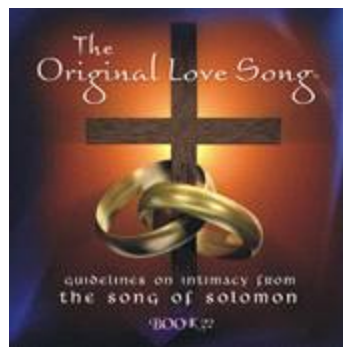
But there's all of these writings and books from *some* place! And I think it's just wonderful. It says things like, "Your hair is like a flock of goats coming down the mountain of Gilead." Imagine that! I thought some of the lines were stupid until I really pictured it. You're out in the plains in the Middle East, and you're looking at Mt. Gilead, and coming down the mountain is a flock of sheep. If you squint your eyes a bit, it might look like it's waving.

**Is there anything else you want people to know about your CD?**

Well, I think it's transecular — that's my new word. It's for all religions, for everybody in the world who has a relationship.

**What if I'm not spiritual at all?**

I have many friends in the secular music world who have found the CD enticing. At first, they were amazed that anything like this was in the Bible, and they ran and dusted off their old Book and found it. And maybe they thought, hey, if this is in there, then maybe there's something here for me. Ding! We win! n°



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