

Biblical Soul Care Sunday School
Marriage: Part 3

Song of Solomon 2:15 **“Catch all the foxes, those little foxes, before they ruin the vineyard of love, for the grapevines are blossoming!”**

Every marriage has little “Foxes” lurking inside it! We all have idols and selfish appetites—and, like the foxes in Solomon’s vineyard, they can cause untold destruction and heartache. In fact, how seriously a couple takes their own foxes will influence whether their marriage blooms and glorifies God, or is a shallow and pale imitation of the real thing. From “Catching Foxes” John Henderson

Series objective: Remove the foxes that are destroying the vineyard (the marriage relationship) and replace with Scriptural and practical principles that will bring about a blossoming marriage that glorifies God.

4. Unbiblical understanding of the reason for and purpose of marriage.

Many of us, though certainly not all, dream of marriage not as a way to sacrifice our desires and wants, but as a way to fulfill them. Many enter marriage believing that their marriage exist to be a delivery vehicle for their appetites, dreams, and personal needs. Instead of being most passionate about pursuing the fear, love and worship of God, couples can most cherish praise, honor, esteem, sex, pleasure, money, and a spouse who will deliver these goods.

Question: Can you remember your most prominent desires and expectations as you prepared to get married? Do you remember if glorifying God was preeminent?

Many of our hopes and desires are good things but must be subordinate to and take second place to this truth; **We exist first and primarily to glorify and enjoy God!** That includes the marriage covenant!

1 Corinthians 10:31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Colossians 1:16: For through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

Romans 11:36: For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Philippians 1:9-11: I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Psalms 19:1: The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.

Ephesians 5:22-33 God's Divine plan for Marriage

Question: Who are you seeking most passionately? Do you seek God, your spouse, yourself, or someone else?

Question: What do you seek most passionately? Do you seek earthly treasures or eternal treasures---Christ's kingdom or your own?

(John 4 discussion)

If you are not seeking God above all else, then marriage will bring frustration, bitterness and disappointment. Your mate is not God---cannot be God. If you try to worship him or her rather than God, pain will result. None of us enter into marriage with pure motives and desires. What is important is that you become increasingly aware of God's intention for your marriage and the many ways your ambitions collide with His and ask Him to constantly reform who you worship, redirect what you seek, and reshape the desires of your heart for marriage. From John Henderson "Catching Foxes"

Conclusion: "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him." 1 Corinthians 8:6. Learn to seek God above all else. Learn to be satisfied in Jesus Christ. Learn to appreciate the infinite riches you have been granted in Him so that marriage assumes the proper place in your heart and life.

5. Love of the world: lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and the pride of life.

Question: What specific worldly lust are particularly damaging to the marriage covenant?

Question: What “put on” will cure sinful desires and fleshly living?

Whom are we not loving if we love the world and its pleasures?

Since we love the Father, what will we not love?

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything that belongs to the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God’s will remains forever. **1 John 2:15-17**

³⁶ “Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?”

³⁷ He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the greatest and most important command. ³⁹ The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” **Matthew 22:36-40**

6. A marriage covenant sustained by law (performance/works) instead of Grace!

Law cannot nurture a marriage, but it can suffocate a marriage. Living under law in our marriage means we will judge the quality of our marriages by the quality of our performance. Under the law, we will judge ourselves constantly against the standards of law that we find most important. We will judge our spouses. We will be highly sensitive to how well or how poorly we have been treated. We will enjoy our spouses based on

their performance. If they treat us the way we want to be treated, then we will be pleased and content. If they give us the “right amount” and “right kind” of sexual intimacy, then we will be glad. If they don’t, we will be disappointed and angry. Resentment will build over time. If our mates give us the attention, approval, honor, respect, and cooperation that we desire and “deserve”, then we will be pleased with marriage and happy with our mates---for a few minutes at least. If they fail, then we will be frustrated and will start finding ways to train our spouses how to serve our needs more effectively---or will start looking for a new spouse altogether. Of all the foxes that can get loose in your marriage vineyard, this one can wreck the whole thing in very little time. Living under law and viewing our mates through the law offers one of the best ways for us to make our marriage truly miserable. It makes it impossible to freely enjoy and love our spouses. It brings bitterness anger, and despair long before it brings love, joy, and peace. “Catching Foxes” by John Henderson

A growing understanding of how God keeps covenant with us will help us to keep covenant with others. Since our marriage will be full of sinfulness, they must also be full of genuine repentance and genuine forgiveness. Only GRACE can accomplish such a feat. Only the wellspring of God’s unmerited mercy can provide enough reason and strength for us to repent, forgive, and love in our marriages. If we want to keep our marriage covenants, then we absolutely, positively must learn and grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Catching Foxes” by John Henderson

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. **Colossians 3:12-13**

Other Scriptures on grace filled living:

When we comprehend the kindness of our Lord toward us, then kindness toward others becomes more instinctive and unavoidable.

God deals with us gently, so we can deal with others gently. Jesus Christ shows continual patience towards us, at a great cost to Himself, so we can bear patiently with others at great cost to ourselves. The more we grasp God’s forgiveness of us, the more motivated we become to forgive others out of reverence and gratitude for Christ.

References: “Catching Foxes” by John Henderson

