

Biblical Soul Care Sunday School
Marriage: Part 7
One more fox to catch and some marriage imperatives

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.

10. Leaving and cleaving

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. ²²Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. **Genesis 2:18-24 NLT**

Question: Who or what might you need to “Leave” (give up altogether or reduce) in order to properly “Cleave” to your spouse?

God created marriage to provide a Priority ("Leave") and Permanent ("Cleave") Companionship. Leaving means a shift in priority/loyalty and cleaving or joining is the uniting of two into one and a “cementing” of the new family unit.

Leave (2641) (kataleipo from kata = intensifies meaning + leipo = leave behind) means to leave behind and here speaks of the shift of the husband's loyalty and devotion from his parents to his spouse.

Joined (4347) (proskollao from prós = to, toward, in compounds prós implies motion, direction + kollao = to glue) literally means to glue one thing to another so that it cleaves or adheres. To unite. To cleave. To be united with. To join oneself too closely. To stick to. It is used metaphorically in this verse to describe the marriage bond. To adhere to closely, be faithfully devoted to.

Couples need to biblically diagnose and realign competing loyalties that can erode marital closeness over time.

Leaving and cleaving needs to be revisited as new seasons of life come: first year of marriage, first child, spouse begins a new job, new close friendships begin, new major interest, social groups or hobbies begin. Others could include first or last child leaves home, elderly parents need care, retirement begins, etc.

Other seasons that leaving and cleaving needs to be revisited?

Question: How do you know you need to give it up or adjust in order to leave and cleave?

Behavior level: I am allowing this person or thing to clearly interfere with time with my spouse- I am more devoted to this than him or her. There is very little time left for my spouse- I spend more of my “free” time with this person or thing than I do with my spouse.

Heart level: My heart wants to talk or think about this person or activity more than my spouse- I am more excited about being with this person or thing than my spouse.

Take home resource: “Five levels of Intimacy” Inventory

We have covered 10 foxes that can spoil the vineyard of marriage? Is there one that seemed to most resonate with you? Why?

Imperatives for Husbands and Wives

Question: What are the New Testament commands directed to wives?

Question: What are the New Testament commands directed to Husbands?

Which of the commands do you find most enjoyable to obey? Which one is hardest?

Scripture references

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **Colossians 3:18 NASB 95**

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. **1 Peter 3:1-2 NASB 95**

In this way they will train the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children. **Titus 2:4 NET**

So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. **Ephesians 5:33 NLT**

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. **Ephesians 5:25 LSB**

In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered. **1 Peter 3:7 NLT**

Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. **Colossians. 3:19 NASB 95**

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. **Colossians 3:19 NIV**

²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church. **Ephesians 5:28-29 NASB 95**

A final Word: Your marriage and the Whole Armor of God from Ephesians 6:10-18