

## Getting Rid of Little Foxes That Spoil Dating/Marriage Relationships

Message 2 of 4 in the series: "Pulling Weeds"

### A. If we want our dating/marriage relationships to be fruitful, we need to remove potential threats that are often overlooked.

"But the Holy Spirit produces **this kind of fruit** in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

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

#### 1. Not dealing with conflicts in a timely manner

"And 'don't sin by letting anger control you.' **Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry**, for anger gives a foothold to the devil." Ephesians 4:26-27(NLT)

"Watch out that no **poisonous root of bitterness** grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."  
Hebrews 12:15b (NLT)

#### 2. Thinking we can fix/change each other

"Better to live in a desert than with a **quarrelsome and nagging wife**." Proverbs 21:19 (NIV)

"So **encourage each other** and build each other up, just as you are already doing."  
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)

*Note:* It is important for us to realize God is using our dating/marriage relationships to make us more like Jesus. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Romans 8:29 (NIV)

#### 3. Not admitting our part of the problems in the relationship

"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! **First get rid of the log in your own eye**; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye." Matthew 7:3-5 (NLT)

#### 4. Not "letting go" of past offenses

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and **it keeps no record of being wronged**." 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NLT)

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. **Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others**."  
Colossians 3:12-13 (NLT)

#### 5. Not staying away from filthy content online/on TV

"Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. **Such sins have no place among God's people**. Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God." Ephesians 5:3-4 (NLT)

"Do not be misled: '**Bad company corrupts good character**.'" 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)

"**Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world**, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NLT)

#### 6. Not praying together/reading the Bible together/getting involved in a church

"There is a way which **seems right** to a person, But its end is the way of death." Proverbs 14:12 (NASB)

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **not giving up meeting together**, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

#### 7. Not talking about finances

"Can two people walk together **without agreeing on the direction?**" Amos 3:3 (NLT)

“Be sure you **know the condition of your flocks**, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.” Proverbs 27:23-24 (NIV)

8. Not being intentional about fun/romance

“He escorts me to the banquet hall; **it’s obvious how much he loves me.**” Song of Solomon 2:4 (NLT)

“Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth... **May you always be captivated by her love.**” Proverbs 5:18-19 (NLT)

“You have captured my heart, my treasure, my bride. You hold it hostage with one glance of your eyes, with a single jewel of your necklace. **Your love delights me**, my treasure, my bride. Your love is better than wine, your perfume more fragrant than spices.” Song of Solomon 4:9-10 (NLT)

**B. The vows of Christian marriage are designed to give us security that our spouses won’t leave us when little foxes come.**

“But ‘God made them male and female’ from the beginning of creation. ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.” Mark 10:6-9 (NLT)

**C. If we can’t catch the little foxes on our own, we should seek help/advice from other believers.**

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. **When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.**” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NLT)

JOHN & DEBBIE SCHMIDT • 02-11-2024 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

**Connect Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Read Galatians 5:22-23 & Song of Solomon 2:15. How are problems in our dating/marriage relationships like “little foxes” that spoil grapevines and keep us from experiencing fruitful lives?
2. Discuss the following list of “little foxes” that spoil dating/marriage relationships:
  - Not dealing with conflicts in a timely manner (Ephesians 4:26-27, Hebrews 12:15)
  - Thinking we can fix/change each other (Proverbs 21:19 vs. 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
  - Not admitting our part of the problems in the relationship (Matthew 7:3-5)
  - Not “letting go” of past offenses (1 Corinthians 13:4-5, Colossians 3:12-13)
  - Not staying away from filthy content online/on TV (Ephesians 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Romans 12:2)
  - Not praying together/reading the Bible together/getting involved in a church (Proverbs 14:12, Hebrews 10:24-25)
  - Not talking about finances (Amos 3:3, Proverbs 27:23-24)
  - Not being intentional about fun/romance (Song of Solomon 2:4 & 4:9-10, Proverbs 5:18-19)

Which of these “little foxes” have you experienced? How did you deal with it?

3. How does God use dating/marriage relationships to make us more like Jesus? (Romans 8:28-29)
4. “I, Groom, take you Bride, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death separates us. With God’s help, I pledge you my faith.”

Since Christian wedding vows such as these are designed to give couples security when dealing with marital problems, why do you think so many people prefer to live together without making any vows?

5. How important is it for Christian couples to seek help/advice from other believers? (Galatians 6:1-2, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

6. Quotations to Consider:

“Men, you'll never be a good groom to your wife unless you're first a good bride to Jesus.” Tim Keller

“Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave.”

Martin Luther

“Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half shut afterwards.” Unknown

“If you treat your wife like a thoroughbred, you'll never end up with a nag.” Zig Ziglar