

Teaching Through The Song of Solomon

The Christian Marriage Life (5)

REFRESH ...

- A. Why are we doing this "Master Degree" in marriage?
- B. What three tools to increase intimacy have we considered?
1. the character issue: Song 1:2-3
 2. the praise ministry: Song 1:5-17; 4:1ff
 3. the 'leaving-home' journey: Song 4:8
 - *past before we knew* each other is major
 - yet sometimes the *past as we got to know each other* also needs to be 'left well' (1 Thess. 4:1-8)

IV. "Chasing the foxes" to nurture deeper intimacy

A. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SONG OF SOLOMON CHAPTER TWO

1. vs. 1-2 ... *bride answered by the bridegroom!*
2. vs. 3-7 ... *bride's praises and caution*
3. vs. 8-14 ... *description of ebb and flow of the relationship*
 - a. vs. 8-9 ... *bride's joy in seeing her husband*
 - b. vs. 10-13 ... *bridegroom invitation to closeness*
 - c. vs. 14 ... *an unexpected response*

d. vs. 15 ... *a call to hunt the 'foxes' that spoil closeness*

e. vs. 16-17... *the bride's plea based on their commitment*

B. THE FOXES THAT EASILY DESTROY TENDER RELATIONSHIPS

1. Forgetting that there is more to communication than 'words'

a. Words are a mere 7% of communication

b. Only when *words, tone of voice and non-verbal messages* agree, is the communication effective

c. What are some of the *non-verbal communications* which turn loose 'foxes' into a marriage relationship?

- angry tone of voice
- sarcasm or mockery or put down
- mannerism

2. Forgetting that words are daggers that leave deep wounds

a. good words can heal but bad words can destroy a person's spirit (Prov. 15:1, 4)

3. Forgetting that you may speak a 'foreign' language

a. foxes are often *unintentionally* released into our marriage by *poor or ineffective communication*

- easy to *define* an undefined statement wrongly

4. Failure to listen is a way to shut a mouth speaking

a. To listen attentively and patiently is hard work

- b. Realize what hinders us from listening well
 - defensiveness
 - pre-judging
 - personal filters

- b. If ignored, resentment, distance, anger and bitterness grows within
 - good indicator of these realities is the *physical distance* when you discuss issues

- 5. The Unspoken and Unresolved issues
 - a. Often 'love' takes the *indulgent* approach: avoid hard topics because you don't want to hurt the other

 - b. Hiding or avoidance of such issues is like the little hole in the dike of relationships

- 6. Choosing the wrong time to ask for attention: Prov. 15:23, 28; 25:11-12

C. THE 'HUNTING' STRATEGIES TO CATCH THE FOXES.

- 1. Re-visit what made your relationship strong before (Rev. 2:1-5)
- 2. Try something totally different – a new approach
- 3. Focus on your strengths (Rev. 2:1-5)
 - a. The Lord re-called the positive characteristics in Ephesus

 - b. What is/are your relationship strength(s)?
 - build with the building blocks you have already

4. Set clear goals: *what are your goals for marriage?*

a. define where you want to come/be in your relationship

b. write them down

5. Identify the measurable actions to be done to reach the goal

a. the advantage of spelling out details is that it *sets clear expectations and adds fuel to the relationship when done*

6. Celebrate the smallest improvements and positive actions

7. Be creative in keeping the fire of love alive

FOLLOW UP ...

Small, neglected, or even unnoticed "little things" that are negative can turn into larger problems, if not recognized, talked about, dealt with promptly. Daily (!!) maintenance of the details in your relationship prevents deterioration.

1. Make list of your actions that you know have been like little foxes in your relationship before. Are there any of those now running loose in your marriage? (Remember, this an exercise on yourself!)

2. Now share what 'foxes' you think you have released into your marriage with your spouse and ask her to verify them. Make sure to follow this up with confession and seeking forgiveness before rebuilding is started.

3. Select one of the problem areas within your relationship and make a plan with a goal and definable and agreed upon actions. Remember that doing

creates feelings and yet feelings are not to be the motive for the doing. God's commands is 'to do the first work' regardless of your feelings.

4. Review if you ever wrote down the goals or vision for your marriage. If you never defined what your Biblical goals are in your marriage relationship, then it is not too late to begin.

Goals must be Biblical, reasonable, realistic, attainable and have a definite time limit. Goals are vital for unless you have in mind what you are working for, and share that goal, you may never get very far.

- a. List as least 5 long-term goals for your marriage. If you can't come up with 5, then at least have 1! Maybe your spouse will add another four.
- b. Add then a goal which you like to reach within a year.
- c. Add two goals you would like your spouse to achieve within that time frame.
- d. Then share and discuss your goals or vision.

5. The Conference Table method