

**Men Are From Earth And Women Are From Earth:
Part 1: So Deal With The Dangerous Foxes**

Song of Songs 2:15

Introduction:

- 1) John Gray became a household name and an overnight millionaire in the 1990's with his blockbuster *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. The book has sold more than 50 million copies, has been translated into at least 50 different languages, and spent 121 weeks on the bestseller list. Published in 1992, CNN said it was the highest rank work of non-fiction of the 1990's (3-3-99).
- 2) His book did so well because it struck a cord that we all see and understand: men and women are different. Indeed we are different by design! Genesis 1:27 is crystal clear, "So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female." And, Moses adds in Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good."
- 3) However, John Gray is not precisely correct in his analysis. Men are not from Mars and women are not from Venus. Men are from Earth and women are from Earth and we must learn to deal with it. Further, because of the invasion of sin into God's good creation (Gen 3), things no longer work as our Lord intended. Sin and its dangers are lurking about, dangers Solomon calls "little foxes that ruin the vineyard."

4) The word “catch” in verse 15 is an imperative, a word of command. God issues a strong word about this danger to our relationship. The little foxes are unwelcome intruders who sneak into a marriage and who can destroy the purity of our love and the pricelessness of our relationship. A healthy and happy marriage must be protected. We must be on guard and catch anything that could harm the tender and vulnerable union we have established. Now a question naturally presents itself: What do these little foxes look like? Let me highlight 7 of the more common species that have harmed and destroyed far too many marriages.

I. Beware of the Fox of role reversal or abuse

- 1) The Bible teaches us that God created us male and female (Gen 1:27). It teaches us that the Lord made a woman as a man’s helper and complement (Gen 2:18, 20-24). Further, the New Testament instructs us that a woman is to gladly submit to her husband and that a husband is to sacrificially love his wife (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7). This is the divinely ordained structure God has established for marriage. However, if these roles get reversed or abused, a marriage will get in trouble. So, let’s strive for clarity on this issue.
- 2) God made men to be men, husbands, and fathers. A man should never apologize for being a man, for being a masculine human being. God made

women to be women, wives, and mothers. No woman should ever apologize for being the feminine person our Lord designed her to be. You see no one is as good at being a man as a man, and no one is as good at being a woman as a woman. However, there is great confusion about gender roles today. Men, in particular, are suffering an identity crisis. In our day men struggle with their maleness. Being the provider and protection (1 Tim. 5:8) is challenged and even rejected by an increasingly feminized and gender confused culture. Let me provide just one example. In a book review for the book *Manliness* by Harvey C. Mansfield, a woman named Christina Sommers notes,

“One of the least visited memorials in Washington is a waterfront statue commemorating the men who died on the *Titanic*. Seventy-four percent of the women passengers survived the April 15, 1912, calamity, while 80 percent of the men perished. Why? Because the men followed the principle “women and children first.”

The monument, an 18-foot granite male figure with arms outstretched to the side, was erected by “the women of America” in 1931 to show their gratitude. The inscription reads: “To the brave men who perished in the wreck of the *Titanic*....They gave their lives that women and children might be saved.”

Today, almost no one remembers those men. Women no longer bring flowers to the statue on April 15 to honor their chivalry. The idea of male gallantry makes many women nervous, suggesting (as it does) that women require special protection. It implies the sexes are objectively different. It tells us that some things are best left to men. Gallantry is a virtue that dare not speak its name.

In *Manliness*, Harvey C. Mansfield seeks to persuade skeptical readers, especially educated women, to reconsider the merits of male protectiveness and assertiveness. It is in no way a defense of male privilege, but many will be offended by its old-fashioned claim that the virtues of men and women are different and complementary. Women would be foolish not to pay close attention to Mansfield's subtle and fascinating argument." (*The Weekly Standard*, online, 4-3-06).

- 3) Men and women must stand strong in the truths of Scripture concerning our identity and assignments. We must not be swept along by the floodtides of modernity that try to redefine, and even destroy, the image of God that men and women uniquely bear as gender distinctive individuals. God's creation of us as male and female is good. He did not make a mistake.

II. Beware of the fox of intimacy stagnation

- 1) Proverbs 30:18-19 says, "Three things are beyond me; four I can't understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship at sea, and *the way of a man with a young woman*" (emphasis mine). There is something unique and special when a young couple falls in love. That initial sensual attraction is strong. It is almost irresistible. It is one of the reasons we marry! The apostle Paul reminds us when it comes to passion for intimacy, "it is better to marry than to burn with desire" (1 Cor. 7:9).
- 2) However, this youthful passion and sensual desire may be enough to get us started, but it is not enough to get us to the finish line together. What we

start with must grow wider and deeper if we are to enjoy and experience all that our God desires. That which begins physical and sensual must also be spiritual and personal.

- 3) I am convinced that the key to capturing the little fox of intimacy stagnation is growing to become one another's best friends. In this Song that is exactly what we see happening. Solomon calls his wife his darling, but he will also call her his "sister" (4:12; 5:2). Shulamite will call her husband her "love" (repeatedly!), but she will also refer to him as "my friend" (5:16). Living and sharing life together over the years of a long and lasting marriage opens the door to an intimacy you have no idea even exist when you first get started. There is no way you can know, except by growing in your knowledge, love and understanding of one another. And, this takes time.
- 4) When Charlotte and I married I was 21 and she was 19. I want you to know that I loved her. But today, several decades later, I want the whole world to know I really, really love her. I had no idea a love, friendship and intimacy like this was possible when we first began. And, I have no doubt it is one of the blessings of marriage the Lord desires for every marriage.

III. Beware of the fox of poor communication

- 1) Proverbs 15:1-2 reminds us that, "A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge

attractive, but the mouth of fools blurts out foolishness.” And for good measure Proverbs 15:4 adds, “The tongue that heals is a tree of life, but a devious (*NIV*, “perverse”) tongue breaks the spirit.”

2) We now know that for a marriage to be healthy and vibrant, five areas require consistent monitoring and attention: (1) communication, (2) finances, (3) sex, (4) children, and (5) in-law relationships. Aging parents is a 6th addition to this list for many. If any of the latter four or five get in trouble, mark it down; communication broke down. To walk together for a lifetime requires that we talk and listen well on a regular basis.

3) In his book, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, marriage and family researcher John Gottman identifies what he calls “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse That Can Destroy Your Marriage.” Interestingly, all 4 are related to communication. They are:

1) Criticism: When you criticize your partner you are basically implying that there is something wrong with them. Using the words: “You always” or “You never” are common ways to criticize. Your partner is most likely to feel under attack and to respond defensively. This is a dangerous pattern to get into because neither person feels heard and both may begin to feel bad or inadequate about themselves in the presence of

the other. The antidote to criticism is to make a direct and specific complaint that is not a global attack on your partner's person.

- 2) Defensiveness: When you attempt to defend yourself from a perceived attack with a counter complaint, you are being defensive. Another way people are defensive is to whine like an innocent victim. Unfortunately, defensiveness keeps partners from taking responsibility for problems and it usually escalates negative communication. Even if your partner is criticizing you, defensiveness is not the way to go. It will only fuel a bad exchange. The antidote to defensiveness is to try to hear your partner's complaint and to take some responsibility for the problem.
- 3) Contempt: Contempt is any statement or nonverbal behavior that puts yourself on a higher ground than your partner. Mocking your partner, calling them names, rolling your eyes and sneering in disgust are all examples of contempt. Of all the horsemen, contempt is the most dangerous and serious. Couples have to realize that these types of put downs will destroy the fondness and admiration they share. The antidote to contempt is to lower your tolerance for contemptuous statements and behaviors and to actively work on building a culture of appreciation in the relationship. Is it easy? No. Can it be done? Yes.

- 4) Stonewalling: Stonewalling happens when the listener withdraws from the conversation. The stonewaller might actually physically leave or they might just stop tracking with the conversation and appear to shut down. The Stonewaller may look like he doesn't care (80% are men) but that usually isn't the case. Typically they are overwhelmed and are trying to calm themselves. Unfortunately, this seldom works because the partner, especially if it is the woman, is likely to assume they don't care enough about the problem to talk about it. It can be a vicious circle with one person demanding to talk and the other looking for an escape. The antidote is to learn to identify the signs that you or your partner is starting to feel emotionally overwhelmed and to agree together to take a break. If the problem still needs to be discussed then pick it up when you are calmer and more rested.
- 4) Good communication is hard work. It is also worthwhile work. It is not something that comes easy. It requires us to express ourselves clearly and lovingly (Eph. 4:15). It also requires that we listen attentively and eagerly (James 1:19). It requires us to "be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves" (James 1:22). It demands that, "No foul language is to come from our mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29).

IV. Beware of the fox of time ill spent

- 1) Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk-not as unwise people but as wise-making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” A marriage will get into trouble when forces or persons outside the marriage encroach on the all-important time the two of you need alone to build and maintain a healthy relationship. Love is a beautiful four-letter word. Sometimes it is best spelled TIME. A marriage is headed for hard times if our best time is given to things that promise only a small return on our investment.
- 2) I’m not a hunter. But I have many friends who delight in such foolishness (I mean recreational activities!). To be honest, I don’t think their elevator reaches the penthouse, if you know what I mean. Now, let’s think about it for a minute. Here is a guy with two options. Option 1: He can, at 4:00 a.m., climb up into a tree in a contraption called a deer stand and freeze while waiting to shoot Bambi. Option 2: He can be back home in a nice warm bed holding his woman. This is a no-brainer as far as I can tell! Now let me be fair. I’m not against hunting, fishing, or many other good things men and women do like this. What I am against is our giving our best time and quantity time to things that really do not matter, that are not the most important. And, there are a couple of new and extremely dangerous foxes

in the woods who are doing some serious damage in this area. One is called the Internet. The other is called video games.

- 3) The Internet, with access to pornography on one hand, and cyber romances on the other, has become a major breeding ground for adultery and infidelity. It has also become an enslaving and cruel taskmaster for many males who do not grow into the men that God created them to be.

Interestingly, the average male video games player is now 35!

- 4) All of us must take control of our calendars and spend our time well and wisely. We must avoid the places of temptation. And, we must learn the art of saying “no” to even good things that we might say “yes” to the better and best things. James 4:17 says our life is “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” We do not want to get to the end of that mist and look back with regret for the time ill spent.

V. Beware of the fox outside interference

- 1) The Bible warns us about the deadly and destructive power of adultery.

Listen to the warning and wisdom of Proverbs 5:1-14, “My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen closely to my understanding so that you may maintain discretion and your lips safeguard knowledge. Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her words are smoother than oil, in the end she’s as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a double-edged sword.

Her feet go down to death; her steps head straight for Sheol. She doesn't consider the path of life; she doesn't know that her ways are unstable. So now, my son, listen to me, and don't turn away from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her. Don't go near the door of her house. Otherwise, you will give up your vitality to others and your years to someone cruel; strangers will drain your resources, and your earnings will end up in a foreigner's house. At the end of your life, you will lament when your physical body has been consumed, and you will say, "How I hated discipline, and how my heart despised correction. I didn't obey my teachers or listen closely to my mentors. I am on the verge of complete ruin before the entire community.""

- 2) What are the warning signs this dangerous and evil fox may be lurking near, hiding out in, your vineyard? Carefully consider these 10:
 - 1) Feeling of "going through the marriage motions."
 - 2) Inventing excuses to visit someone of the opposite sex.
 - 3) Increasing male/female contacts in normal environments (e.g.: work, choir, recreation).
 - 4) Being preoccupied with thoughts about another person.
 - 5) Exchanging of gifts with a "friend" of the opposite sex.
 - 6) Making daily/weekly contact with someone by phone.

- 7) Putting yourself in situations where a “friend or employee” might become more.
 - 8) Having to touch, embrace or glance at a person of the opposite sex.
 - 9) Spending time alone with anyone of the opposite sex.
 - 10) Inordinate time on the internet.
- 3) These are just a few of the foxes that open the door to an affair, to adultery. It comes about slowly, over time, almost without notice. It is a deadly and devastating fox that will take you where you don't want to go and cost you so much more than you want to pay. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:18, “Run from sexual immorality.” Wiser words have never been written.

VI. Beware of the fox of fatigue

- 1) Marriages get in trouble when the wedding vows are considered conditional. They get in trouble when marriage is no longer considered a sacred covenant before God. They get in trouble when divorce begins to be considered as a possible solution to an unhappy situation.
- 2) Let me be both a prophet and a pastor at this point. First, the prophet. God hates divorce, and He is not ambivalent about it. In Malachi 2:16 the Bible says, “For I hate divorce, says the Lord.” And in Matthew 19:6 Jesus says, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” God designed marriage to be permanent. He planned for it to last until “death do

us part.” We must not surrender this ideal. We must not lower the standard.

- 3) However, and now I will be the pastor, we live in a fallen and broken world where sinful things happen, including divorce. Rocks should never be thrown at those who have suffered the pain and sorrow of divorce. Instead, we extend marvelous grace and redeeming love. We claim the promise of 1 John 1:9 that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We acknowledge that we cannot change our past. But, by God’s grace, for His glory, and for our good, we can do something about our present and our future. Daily we should recommit ourselves to a lasting and lifelong marriage that reflects the beautiful covenant relationship of Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:21-33). Divorce simply will not be an option. We will, with God’s help, find our way through any and every problem because we are in this thing called marriage together and to the end. We are as committed to one another as our God is committed to us, as Christ is committed to His Church.

VII. Beware of the fox of misunderstanding

- 1) We have repeatedly emphasized that God made men and women different, that he did so by divine design (Gen 1-2). I think it is sometimes helpful to

consider this truth playfully. After all, being serious all the time is not conducive to good marital health!

- 2) I have often said that men are like dogs and women are like cats. I have good evidence for this conviction. Think about it. A man is like a dog. If you feed him, praise him, and play with him on a regular basis, you will have a happy man. On the other hand a woman is far more complex and mysterious, much like a cat. A cat can walk into a room, and you look at it and it looks at you. It walks over to you and begins to purr and rub up against your leg in a sweet and gentle fashion. The cat then quickly turns around and walks out of the room, and you say, "That was a really sweet cat." However, a few minutes later that same cat walks into the room; you look at it, and it looks at you. Suddenly without provocation or warning, the cat leaps for your face and tries to claw out your eyeballs! Now that was the same cat that came in so sweet and gently a few moments ago. But something happened while that cat was out of the room. You have no idea what it was, but it certainly changed the disposition of that cat in a matter of seconds. There are some significant similarities between a cat and a woman!

A friend of mine heard me draw this analogy some years ago, and he sent me something that reinforced and added additional supporting evidence to

my thesis that men are dogs and women are cats. I suspect you will enjoy this!

Is it a cat? Is it a woman? Maybe it's both! Why?

- 1) They do what they want.
- 2) They rarely listen to you.
- 3) They're totally unpredictable.
- 4) They whine when they are not happy.
- 5) When you want to play, they want to be alone.
- 6) When you want to be alone, they want to play.
- 7) They expect you to cater to their every whim.
- 8) They're moody.
- 9) They can drive you nuts and cost you an arm and a leg.
- 10) They leave their hair everywhere.

Is it a dog? Is it a man? Maybe it's both! Why?

- 1) They lie around all day, sprawled out on the most comfortable piece of furniture in the house.
- 2) They can hear a package of food opening half a block away, but they can't hear you even when you're in the same room.
- 3) They leave their toys everywhere.
- 4) They growl when they are not happy.

- 5) When you want to play, they want to play.
- 6) When you want to be left alone, they still want to play.
- 7) They are great at begging.
- 8) They will love you forever if you feed them and rub their tummies.
- 9) They do disgusting things with their mouths and then try to give you a kiss.
- 10) They can look dumb and lovable all at the same time.

Yes, men and women really are different, and they are different in some significant ways. You would almost think someone designed it that way!

Practical Applications From Song of Songs 2:15

A number of years ago Harry Chapin wrote a song entitled, “We Grew Up a Little Bit.” He did not have many answers, but he sure knew how to raise the right questions. The words of this song are powerful. See if they don’t challenge your heart and your commitment to each other, to grow at least a little bit every single day in this precious relationship we call marriage.

We Grew Up a Little Bit

We got married early and just a little bit late.
 Baby came too early, but some things just can’t wait.
 We were just beginning but it was very clear
 We grew up a little bit that year.

I caught on as a meter man. You were caught at home.

When I started night school you ended up alone.
 But you had another baby while I had my career.
 And we grew up a little bit. We grew up a little bit.
 We grew up a little bit that year.

They put me in an office job, the young man on the move.
 We bought a house in Shaker Heights. You supervised the move.
 We were cashing checks. You were changing children while I played engineer.
 And we were growing ever faster every year.

Bit I got bored of kilowatts and you were tired of kids.
 I started staying out at night, and soon that's what you did.
 At parties we'd go separately. You'd wiggle and I'd leer.
 And we were growing faster. We were growing ever faster.
 We were growing ever faster every year.

Well you learned to live in silence. I learned to live in lies.
 And we both ignored the empty spaces growing in our eyes.
 Your breath became a gin and tonic while mine became a beer.
 And we grew up a little more last year.

Today at work they passed me by and promoted John instead.
 I came home to find you'd wrecked the car. I guess I lost my head.
 Well, I can't believe I hit you but the rage came on so strong.
 Ah, where did we go wrong?

As you sit there crying I wonder who you are?
 The partner-stranger-friend and foe who's come with me this far.
 We stand here in the ashes and I guess it is quite clear.
 We did not really grow too much each year.

So, you say we're going nowhere. Well, I know that's where we've been.
 But I still can't help wondering can we begin again?
 I feel so full of questions, curiosity and fear.
 But could we grow a little bit...Could we grow a little bit...
 Can we grow a little bit this year?

Where is Christ in these verses? My Shepherd-King has dealt with the little foxes.

1) The gospel of Jesus Christ transforms us into “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

We see things with new eyes. Our hearts are transformed with new affections. Let’s make specific application to men in this study. A husband is now able to live with his wife with “understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7). To use the imagery of our Song, a husband becomes more sensitive to “the little foxes that ruin the vineyards.” He, as a gospel transformed man, is no longer corrupted by deceitful desires. Rather, he is daily renewed in the spirit of his mind in righteousness and purity of the truth. He doesn’t speak lies to his wife, he tells her the truth. He will not go to bed angry with her, but will take whatever time and energy to work through their conflicts and disagreements. With a Christ-confidence and conviction he determines not to give the Devil an opportunity (Eph. 4:22-27). “None of these little foxes will invade my vineyard”, he says!

2) Further, he spots the little foxes that love to corrupt our conversations. With the aid of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), he strives mightily to kick from the vineyard the foxes of bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting, slander and malice (Eph. 4:31). Finally, after dispensing with these little foxes, he replaces them with the blossoms, flowers and fragrances of kindness, compassion and forgiveness. Indeed, he chooses, as an act of his will, to forgive his wife of any and all

offences “just as God also forgave [him] in Christ” (Eph. 4:32). Thus we see that even the little foxes that can harm our marriage, have been dealt with at Calvary. They have been nailed to the cross. Christ has already put to death the little foxes that ruin the vineyard. The victory for our marriages is already accomplished. It is ours for the taking!