

**Men Are From Earth And Women Are From Earth:
Part 2: So Deal With The Different Foxes**

Song of Songs 2:15

Introduction: 1) I believe that God wants us to make much of Jesus Christ in our marriage and family. I believe He wants us to show a confused and hurting world the greatness of Christ in the most challenging and intimate of all relationships. I believe our God wants to show those enslaved to sin that Jesus Christ makes a difference, a real difference, today (!), as well as forever.

2) A Christ-centered, God focused marriage will aggressively be on guard against what Solomon calls the “little foxes.” He commands us to be on the lookout for these marital varmints that can, by stealth, sneak in to our home and inflict major damage.

3) Unlike so much popular culture in the western world, the Bible does not pit man against woman in a “battle of the sexes.” God’s intention from the beginning is that the two would “become one flesh” (Gen. 2:25). God’s design is one of harmonious union with each one loving and serving the other in a complementary relationship. The little foxes are determined to see that this does not happen. Fueled by the evil one and our fallen, sinful and selfish desires, they will, in particular, attack our God-given differences and turn them into differences that damage and destroy. Therefore, it is good for us to look more closely at some of

the ways that God made men and women different. Being aware of and sensitive to these realities is good preventative medicine that will go a long way in fighting off the little foxes from infesting the beautiful vineyard God has given us.

I. Men and women communicate differently

1) Good communication is important in building healthy relationships in life.

It is absolutely essential in building a healthy relationship in marriage.

James warns us that a tongue out of control “is a fire...a world of

unrighteousness... It pollutes the whole body...and is set on fire by hell”

(James 3:6). The apostle Paul challenges us, “Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person” (Col. 4:6).

2) Communicating well can be a real challenge in marriage because men and women do this thing differently. Men are often intimidated when it comes to communication because we are not nearly as good at it as women are.

Listening well for an extended period of time is hard work for a man.

However, it nurtures intimacy and brings happiness to a woman. They find it nourishing to their heart and soul.

3) Men tend to be factoids, “just the facts please!” Women, in stark contrast, want to share their feelings. They also like to provide a big context bringing in lots of details that can seem unnecessary to a man.

4) Men feel compelled to offer solutions when asked a question, but often a woman simply wants affirmation and reassurance that you are listening and that you care. Unfortunately, men are not good at picking up on hints.

Women, however, are often subtle and coded in their conversation. The tone of her voice, the look in her eyes, or her body language may be speaking the message her husband should be listening for.

5) Yes, communication is a challenging assignment for a husband and wife, but working hard at it brings massive blessings and rewards. It is worth the effort for as Proverbs 16:24 says, “Pleasant words are a honeycomb: sweet to the taste and health to the body.”

II. Men and women see romance differently

1) Genesis 2:25 tells us in the garden of Eden, before the fall, “Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.” Later the author of Hebrews would add, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled” (Heb. 13:4, NKJV). So sex is clearly a good gift from a great God to be enjoyed within covenantal marriage between a man and a woman. However, and this is something many men don’t get, the context for sex is romance. It is an environment of romance that fosters an active and meaningful sex life. Herein lies a significant challenge.

2) Romance for a man is often a 3-letter word: SEX. Indeed to consider romance apart from sex is virtually impossible for any red-blooded normal male. In contrast romance for a woman can mean lots of things, and sex may or may not be included! The fact is, and this is so important, women find some of the most interesting (and surprising to men) things romantic—praying with her, helping her with the dishes, cleaning out the garage, or running a warm bubble bath and lighting a candle. All of these things are strange to a male, but they speak deeply to the heart of a woman.

The simple fact is men and women are wired differently when it comes to the area of romance. For men, romance is highly visual; it is what they see. For women, romance is extremely relational and personal; it is what they feel. Men indeed are creatures of sight; they are moved by what they see. Women on the other hand are creatures of the ear and the heart; they are moved by what they hear and by what they feel.

This point is so crucial it might be worth our digressing for just a moment.

What do men say romance is to them? The following list of fifteen suggestions from Gary Chapman's excellent book *Toward a Growing Marriage*¹ is not exhaustive, but it is helpful as a women tries to understand where a man is coming from in this area of romance.

¹ Gary Chapman. *Toward a Growing Marriage*. Moody Publishers, 1985.

1. Be attractive at bedtime—nothing in the hair or strange on the face. Wear something besides granny gowns and pajamas.
2. Do not be ashamed to show you enjoy being with me.
3. Dress more appealingly when I am at home (no housecoats, slippers, etc.).
4. Do things to catch my attention: remember that a man is easily excited by *sight*.
5. Communicate more openly about sex.
6. Do not make me feel guilty at night for my inconsistencies during the day (such as not being affectionate enough).
7. Be more aware of my needs and desires as a man.
8. Show more desire and understand that caressing and foreplay are as important to me as they are to you.
9. Do not allow yourself to remain upset over everyday events that go wrong.
10. Do not try to fake enjoyment. Be authentic in your response to me.
11. Do not try to punish me by denying me sex or by giving it grudgingly.
12. Treat me like your lover.
13. Listen to my suggestions on what you can do to improve our sexual relationship.
14. Forgive me when I fall short of what I should be.
15. Tell me what I can do to be the sexual partner you desire.

On the other hand, what suggestions have wives made to their husbands as to how they can make romance and sexual relations more meaningful?

Again, this list is to help us get the idea.

1. Show more affection; give me attention throughout the day; come in after work and kiss me on my neck and ask me about my day (and stay around to listen!).
2. Be more sympathetic when I am really sick.
3. Accept me as I am; accept me even when you see the worst side of me.
4. Tell me that you love me at times other than when we are in bed; phone sometimes just to say, "I love you!" Do not be ashamed to tell me, "I love you" in front of others.
5. While I am bathing or showering, find soft music on the radio or dim the lights and light a candle.
6. Honor Christ as the head of our home.
7. Talk to me after our lovemaking; make caresses after our lovemaking and hold me.
8. Be sweet and loving (at least one hour) before initiating sex.
9. Show an interest in what I have to say in the morning.
10. Help me wash dinner dishes and clean the kitchen.

11. Pay romantic attention to me (hold hands, kiss) even during relatively unromantic activities (television watching, car riding, walking in the mall, etc.).
12. Help me feel that I am sexually and romantically attractive by complimenting me more often.
13. Pray with me about the problems and victories you are having; let me express my own needs to you.
14. Do not approach lovemaking as a ritualistic activity, make each time a new experience.
15. Think of something nice to say about me and do it in front of others often.

III. Men and women are wired differently

1) Genesis 1:27 teaches us that God created us “male and female.” From the inside out our Creator hardwired us differently emotionally, psychologically, and physically. These innate differences can be observed in a number of interesting ways.

2) A woman wants to feel valued by her man, that she is important to him. She wants to be nourished and cherished by him (Eph. 5:29). A man, on the other hand, needs to feel successful. He is motivated to achieve the goals he has set for himself. He fears few things more than failure, especially in

providing for his family. This should not surprise us. First Timothy 5:8 says if a man “does not provide for his own, that is his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

3) A woman also loves to be listened to, especially at the heart level. In contrast a man, like his canine companion, responds to praise. It addresses his God-given need for respect and admiration (Eph. 5:33). Some years ago I came across a short article in the monthly *Focus on the Family* magazine that playfully (and insightfully!) highlighted the point I am trying to make. It addresses both what is really important to a man and woman, as well as what they really mean by what they say, Now, there are always exceptions to what follows, but there is a world of truth here as well!

A. Remember what’s important to a woman

- Make sure you have time to listen. She can tell when you are really interested and when you are merely humoring her.
- A woman needs to know that a man is genuinely listening....listening with his heart and not trying to figure out how to “fix” her problem.
- She needs to feel free to share her opinion and to help her husband understand without him getting frustrated or angry.

- A woman needs to feel valued by her husband beyond all of his human relationships.
- A woman values relational moments far more than occupational achievements.
- A woman is deeply affirmed when a man makes a noticeable effort to hear her heart.

B. Remember what is important to a man

- When men become uncaring or distant toward you, it is usually because they are afraid of something.
- Men tend to “report” more than converse. Just listen to a man on the phone. Usually, his comments are brief, utilitarian and to the point. “Okay...got it...be there at 8...see ya soon.”
- Men are more motivated to achieve goals than to absorb moments.
- Men fear nothing more than failure.
- Men are motivated by feeling significant.
- Men want to manage their own problems and be “Mr. Fix-It”!
- Men want to “get to the bottom line.”

C.

When she says	She really means
“We need.”	“I want.”
“Do what you want.”	“You’ll pay for this later!”
“Sure...go ahead.”	“I don’t want you to do that!”
“The kitchen is so inconvenient.”	“I want a new house.”
“The trash is full.”	“Take it out!”
“Nothing is wrong.”	“Everything is wrong.”
“I don’t want to talk about it.”	“Go away. I’m still building up steam.”
“Am I fat?”	“Tell me I’m beautiful.”
“You have to learn to communicate.”	“Just agree with me.”
“Are you listening?”	“Too late. You’re dead.”

D.

When he says	He really means
“Boy, am I hungry!”	“Make me something and serve it to me on the couch.”
“It’s too expensive.”	“You could get a neat computer for that!”
“It’s a beautiful day.”	“It’s too hot for yard work!”
“I have a surprise.”	“I bought something stupid.”
“Why don’t you get a job?”	“You bought something really stupid.”
“You can’t mow the lawn when the grass is wet.”	“There’s a game on the tube.”

Adapted from *Now We’re Talking* by Robert C. Crosby and Pamela Crosby

IV. Men and women see self-worth differently

1) In a world drowning in the idolatries of the self, radical autonomy and self-esteem, we need a healthy dose of biblical realism and balance. Men and women equally bear the image of God. Men and women are also equally depraved and sinful, in desperate need of radical grace. In Christ, we obtain a “self-worth” that is a bone-fide reality that we should affirm and rejoice in (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a theologically authentic sense in which I should see my value and worth both by creation and redemption. This will breed both humility and a genuine sense of significance because this is how I am seen by my Creator and Redeemer. Now, how men and women understand their self-worth, how they experience self-worth in the living of life, is usually quite different.

2) Women tend to be far more relational. My friend Barbara O’Chester says women “love to make a memory” and that they do so primarily in relationships, especially with their family and friends. Men gage their value in what they do. How they make a living is a good example.

3) To ground this again in the biblical revelation, a husband should cultivate his sense of self-worth as he loves well his wife (Eph. 5:25-33) and grows in his understanding of her (1 Peter 3:7). This draws the smile of God and is a cause for rejoicing. A wife can see her value and self-worth as she

graciously submits to her husband and honors him with her respect (Eph. 5:22-24, 33). The pattern for church life laid out so beautifully in Titus 2:1-8 provides assignments for men and women that involve not only church life, but also that of the family. Identity in Christ and activity for His glory are the right avenues for how we see ourselves. In our Savior, we can truly say, "I am somebody!"

V. Men and women view time differently.

1) Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." This is great wisdom for a husband/father and a wife/mother. A man, in particular, needs to heed this sage advice. You see men do not think much about time. Women, however, value both quantity and quality time. Baby boomers, my generation, bought into a great lie. We told ourselves that though we did not give our children quantity time because of the busyness of our schedules, we more than made up for it with quality time. However, we now know that for a child, and for that matter a spouse, quality time is quantity time. Both a spouse and children want you when they want you; and if you're not there, they don't get you. Men in this context too often simply go with the flow. Before they realize it the sand in the hourglass has almost run out. Looking back over the years now gone,

their hearts are filled with regret for the time now gone with their mate and children, with no possibility of getting it back.

Reba McEntire, a country singer, recorded a song many years ago written by Richard Leigh and Layng Martine, Jr. It could tragically be the theme song of many a little boy or little girl as they reflect on this issue of time as it relates to their daddy.

The Greatest Man

The greatest man I never knew
Lived just down the hall.
And everyday we said hello
But never touched at all.
He was in his paper.
I was in my room.
How was I to know, he thought I hung the moon?

The greatest man I never knew
Came home late every night.
He never had too much to say,
Too much was on his mind.
I never really knew him,
And now it seems so sad.
Everything he gave to us took all he had.

Then the days turned into years,
And the memories to black and white.
He grew cold like an old winter wind
Blowing across my life.

The greatest words I never heard

I guess I'll never hear.
 The man I thought could never die
 Been dead almost a year.
 He was good at business,
 But there was business left to do.
 He never said he loved me, guess he thought I knew.

VI. Men and women parent differently

1) God designed children with a need both for a dad and a mom (Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21). They need both because their parents bring different things into the dynamics of family life. God designed mothers to nurture and provide the emotional support that is necessary for the healthy development of a child. Fathers provide strength and a child's sense of self-worth and security. Amazingly, even the simple presence of the man in the home can make a tremendous impact on the life of a child. That's why the death of a father is so hurtful. But, the loss of a father by divorce is utterly tragic. One of my favorite theologians is Erma Bombeck! In her book *Family—the Ties That Bind...and Gag!* she illustrates beautifully the importance that the presence of a father can make in the life of a child.

One morning my father didn't get up and go to work. He went to the hospital and died the next day. I hadn't thought that much about him before. He was just someone who left and came home and seemed glad to see everyone at night. He opened the jar of pickles when no one else could. He was the only one in the house who wasn't afraid to go into the basement by himself. He cut himself shaving, but no one kissed it or got excited about it. It was understood when it rained, he

got the car and brought it around to the door. When anyone was sick, he went to get the prescription filled. He took lots of pictures...but he was never in them. Whenever I played house, the Mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the Daddy doll, I had him say, "I'm going off to work now" and threw him under the bed. The funeral was in our living room and a lot of people came and brought all kinds of good food and cakes. We had never had so much company before. I went to my room and felt under the bed for the Daddy doll. When I found him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed. He never did anything. I didn't know his leaving would hurt so much.²

A friend of mine said, "A child loves his or her mother, but they live for their father." Proverbs 17:6 reminds us, "the glory of children is their fathers" (ESV).

Yes, daddies are important to the well-being of their children, but so are their mothers. We live in a day when motherhood is not held in the high esteem that it once was. Unfortunately, many women have mistakenly sacrificed the gift of motherhood and the joy of childbearing for career and other enticements that in the long run will never deliver the joy and blessings that rearing children provides.

Several years ago someone sent me an article where one woman is speaking to another. I doubt I have ever read anything that seemed to capture in such a powerful fashion the greatness and importance of

² Bombeck, Erma. *Family—The Ties That Bind and Gag!* Fawcett, 1988.

motherhood. I think every woman who reads these words will probably need a tissue at the end of the story.

It Will Change Your Life

Time is running out for my friend. While we are sitting at lunch, she casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of “starting a family.” What she means is that her biological clock has begun its countdown, and she is being forced to consider the prospect of motherhood.

“We’re taking a survey,” she says half joking. “Do you think I should have a baby?”

“It will change your life,” I say carefully, keeping my tone neutral.

“I know,” she says. “No more spontaneous vacations...”

But that is not what I mean at all, and I try to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes: that the physical wounds of childbearing heal, but that becoming a mother will leave an emotional wound so raw that she will be forever vulnerable. I consider warning her that she will never read a newspaper again without asking “What if that had been my child?” That every plane

crash, every fire will haunt her. That when she sees pictures of starving children, she will wonder if anything could be worse than watching your child die.

I look at her manicured nails and stylish suit and think that no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a bear protecting her cub. That an urgent call of “MOM!” will cause her to drop her best crystal without a moment’s hesitation.

I feel I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. Oh, she might arrange for childcare, but one day she will be going into an important business meeting, and she will think about her baby’s sweet smell. She will have to use every ounce of discipline to keep from running home, just to make sure her child is all right. I want my friend to know that every day decisions will no longer be routine. That a 5-year-old boy’s desire to go to the men’s restroom rather than the women’s at a restaurant will become a major dilemma. That issues of independence and gender identity will be weighed against the prospect that a child molester may be

lurking in that men's restroom. However decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother.

Looking at my attractive friend, I want to assure her that eventually she will shed the pounds of pregnancy, but she will never feel the same about herself. That her life now, so important, will be of less value to her once she has a child. That she would give it up in a moment to save her offspring, but will also hope for more years – not to accomplish her own dreams, but to watch her child accomplish his.

My friend's relationship with her husband will change, but not in the ways she things. I wish she could understand how much more you can love a man who is always careful to powder the baby or who never hesitates to play with his son or daughter. I think she should know that she will fall in love with her husband all over again, but for reasons she would now find very unromantic. I want to describe to my friend the exhilaration of seeing your child learn to hit a baseball. I want to capture for her the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the

soft fur of a dog for the first time. I want her to taste the joy that is so real it hurts.

My friend's quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. "You'll never regret it," I finally say. Then squeezing my friend's hand, I offer a prayer for her and me and all the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this holiest of callings.

Practical Applications From Song of Songs 2:15

Let's draw our attention to one area where men and women are different, the area of sex. Repeatedly we need to do some good, hard thinking about this good gift from our great God.

If only because one of them is a man and the other a woman, married couples usually have quite different attitudes and approaches to sex. Furthermore, many people may come to marriage with varying beliefs and expectations. Below is a tool³ designed to open up discussion about these differences. Take it with your partner and see what you can learn about each other.

Agree Disagree Uncertain

Sex is one of the most beautiful aspects of life.

In the act of sex, it is more enjoyable to give

³ (Adapted from *Sexual Fulfillment in Marriage: A Multimedia Learning Kit* by Clifford and Joyce Penner, Family Concern, Inc., 1977).

than to receive. _____

Bodily pleasure is fleshly and not spiritual and therefore wrong. _____

Sexual intercourse is primarily for physical release. _____

Our religious beliefs have significant influence on our attitudes toward sexual behavior. _____

Men and women have equal rights to sexual pleasure. _____

There are sexual activities that I would consider wrong for a married couple to practice. If you agree, list these: _____

To be truly satisfying, intercourse must lead to simultaneous orgasm. _____

Sexual fantasies are normal. _____

Masturbation (self-stimulation) is an acceptable means for sexual pleasure and release. _____

The male always should be the aggressor in sexual activity. _____

In general, women don't enjoy sex as much as men. _____

Men should be allowed more freedom in sexual behavior than women. _____

The quality of a sexual relationship is more than just physical pleasure. _____

How Does This Text Point Us to Christ? My Shepherd-King Builds and Cultivates Beautiful Vineyards.

1) Men and women, husbands and wives, as we have seen over and over, are different by design. There is complementarity. There are also challenges. Sin puts stress on our relationship. Sometimes the “battle of the sexes” erupts.

Women, in particular, are susceptible to emotional swings and outbursts. The life changing power of the gospel, as they are being conformed to the image of Christ, is essential for their protection against the little foxes (Rom. 8:29). A confidence that nothing can separate a wife from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35-39) is essential as she wages war against these little varmints that only desire to do her and her marriage harm.

2) This confidence in the love of her Shepherd-King frees her to be a “woman of the Spirit.” The fruit one finds in her vineyard is not immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, or selfish ambitions (Gal. 5:19-20). No, the fruit we find in this “Eden regained and more” is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). These holy repellants send the little foxes scurrying. They flee the vineyard because they cannot abide by the fragrance of these gospel fruits.

3) Little foxes, little sins, are no match for the power of the gospel lived out by two partners transformed by the grace of God. The love it gives is so great, “mighty

waters cannot extinguish it” (Song of Songs 8:7), and little foxes cannot destroy it. The Christ-characteristics of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 provide a protection that is other worldly! These are wonderful verses to bring this study to a close: “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends...” This is the vineyard cultivated by my Shepherd-King-Bridegroom!