

"For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: 'It might have been!'" — Maud Muller (1856).

Lesson for every disciple here is that we need to learn how to deal with problems when they are small. Applies to life, ministry and marriage - none of these things begin excellent or the best they could ever be - they take time to grow, mature and become great. Problem: our text says little foxes spoil the vines / what are the the little foxes of life that do damage if not judged and dealt with.

Song of Solomon 2:15 *Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes.*

I. Vineyard of life: Background of our text - Song of Solomon - Love book

A. Vineyard's in our text is a picture of: **Life**

1. Vineyards produce something that brings joy - Marriage

a) *Recently celebrated 15 years of marriage / truth is I am happier today than the day my wife and I got married - why? Because I've grown up / learned (through pain) how to be a good husband - still learning - more joy to come*

2. Vineyards represent growth and enlargement - Relationship with God

a) As a man of God - you are not meant to stay the same - Gods desire is that you would grow

John 15:5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

3. Vineyards represent spiritual fruitfulness - Ministry

a) Your life and ministry is meant to bless other people - impact other people / not just effect you

B. God has placed in our care something of great value: picture of **POTENTIAL**

1. God designed into every mans life the reality of potential Good - if we can see it.

a) IOW - vineyards all have the same potential but only ones that are cared for are the ones that are most fruitful

b) Also this text shows that these words are between two people / context is relationship - not just about you - but other people are impacted by what your life produces

C. Our text shows us another truth about Vineyards: Vineyards are: **VULNERABLE**

1. There are things in each mans life that must be protected

a) Areas of our lives where the enemy seeks to gain entry and destroy

2. We are responsible for the state of our vineyard

Proverbs 24:30–34—30 *I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; 31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; 34 So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.*

a) According to our text here - the state of a man life (vineyard) is the result of the mans decisions

(1) Potential doesn't really matter if a man cannot make practical decisions to protect and value what he has in his vineyard

II. Little Foxes: What damages a mans life is not just big problems/events - but little foxes

A. Foxes of Compromise (Little foxes)

1. Small sins, Secret habits, Unchecked attitudes

a) Compromise is simply slow weakening over time / morals - convictions - integrity.

Judges 2:2–3 *And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? 3 Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'*

b) Never happens over night but its gradual over time - small compromises lead to big ones

B. Foxes of Neglect / Passivity

1. Not seeing the potential danger of allowing small damaging things into our lives

a) Marriage: Unresolved conflict - refusal or inability to have hard conversations - ignoring/ shifting blame

2. Failure to protect fragile things from potential harm

1 Peter 3:7 *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

a) Bible calls our wives the weaker vessel - something that can be hurt easily - wives can be hurt physically, emotionally and spiritually / husbands job is to protect guard and honor

- b) As a man you have to identify potential harm or danger: what voices is she listening to/ who is trying to gain a sympathetic ear/ Who's influencing her? What voices speak into her life? What situations could harm her heart?
- 3. Possible we can want a good marriage but because of neglect there are little foxes that do damage
- C. Foxes of Pride: Every man will have to deal with the foxes of pride
 - 1. Pride blinds men to their true condition

Obadiah 3 *The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'*

- a) Little Foxes of pride lead to far greater problems down the road
 - (1) In marriage: "I don't need to say sorry."
 - (2) In ministry: "I don't need input; I know what I'm doing."
 - (3) In discipleship: "That doesn't apply to me."

- 2. Pride destroys everything around it

Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

- a) I've seen more men decline spiritually over pride than any other sin - but it always leads to more sin
- 3. Pride puts distance between us and God

James 4:6 *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

- a) Pride doesn't just block human relationship but it sets men against God himself

III. Catching the Foxes

- A. Must recognize the Problem
 - 1. Repentance requires us first to see the problem
 - a) Our text begins with a command - Catch us the foxes / identify / see / examine / be aware of
 - 2. See areas where there is no fruit in your life
 - a) Can you identify places in your life and ministry that have stopped growing - missing joy - seeing no progress?
- B. Must deal with issues when they are small
 - 1. Deal with the foxes now when they are small and few in number
 - a) Problems in men can wait until the vineyard is ruined before they act / respond
 - b) Have the hard conversation/ repent and apologies / ask for help and put in the work today / confront compromise and sin early
 - c) What harmful influences are at work in your marriage today that needs to be addressed or judged?
 - d) Have areas of personal compromise opened the door to other influences to gain entry?
 - 2. Judge the faces

15 *Catch us the foxes - what do you do when you catch these things - KILL THEM*

- a) Don't sympathize with the foxes - judge them don't allow them to exist

Matthew 5:29–30—29 *If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

Colossians 3:5—5 *So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.*

- C. Protect your potential fruitfulness
 - 1. The vineyard represents what your life, marriage, and ministry can become
 - a) *Judging foxes will bring blessing and fruitfulness*
 - 2. God's will is that your vineyard be **full of grapes, not spoiled by foxes**

Romans 8:13—13 *For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.*

- 3. When the vineyard is **protected** and foxes are **judged** blessing will follow
 - a) Your life will experience the supernatural blessing God has designed specifically for you