

TEACHING NOTES (underlined words indicate answers for the handout)

Keeping the Foxes from Spoiling the Vines

SCRIPTURE: I Cor. 10:1-13; Prov. 4:20-27; 8:8; 2:15

INTRODUCTION

1. I am sure all of us are aware that many marriages are in trouble and many are falling apart.

Usually they do not come for counseling until the marriage has started falling to pieces.

At a marriage enrichment seminar a few years ago there was a couple who wanted to meet with me. They had had the perfect marriage. There seemed to be no serious problems. Nothing out of the ordinary, until his wife found out that her husband was having an affair with a woman at work and at that time was supposed to be carrying his baby.

His wife was shocked, devastated. She could not believe what was happening. The baby was his and for the next 2 or 3 years their lives have experienced great difficulties.

I saw them just recently and their marriage is making some serious progress but it has not been very easy.

2. H. B. London, a cousin to James Dobson, who is vice-president of ministry outreach and pastoral ministries for Focus on the Family, spoke at The American Association of Christian Counselors world conference last fall and shared some shocking information from Focus' Care Line for pastors and Christian leaders.

On this Care Line 60% of the calls are from Pastors and 40% are from their wives. When he was leaving to attend this large conference he asked them what kind of calls they had been receiving.

Here is some of the information they gave him:

One pastor not able to go to accountability partner for guidance because he picked up a prostitute.

Two pastoral colleagues having affairs.

A pastor having homosexual feelings but had not acted out until now.

Pastor has romantic feelings for an administrative assistant.

Pastor has emotional relationship for secretary – previous pastor had affairs.

A pastor addicted to pornography after a pure life of 30 years.

Youth pastor has three sons but is emotionally involved with a woman at church.

A professional counselor whose pastor husband had multiple affairs.

Long time pastor now hooked on internet pornography.

How much should pastor tell wife about his affair with church secretary?

A pastor just discovered that the associate used the pastor's computer to go to pornographic sites.

Husband had an affair. They left the church but now 2 teenage daughters are struggling with their faith.

H. B. London went on to say, "Every day we lose a pastor at Focus on the Family because they just cannot control the urges that Satan creates in their own lives."

3. Why is a message like this important?

It is certainly not just for us pastors but also for all our lay people, men and women alike.

A message like this is important because marriages are wonderful and made by God for us to journey life together.

Another reason is because we are losing too many marriages to Satan.

I understand that most of the time the problems begin out of carelessness or not being able to read the indicators of an affair.

If we can understand the indicators and eliminate them, then we can better keep ourselves from becoming trapped in an affair and keep our family from suffering.

4. Our Christian homes are not exempt. As a matter of fact, the Christian home is losing credibility with the world because we are not taking a proper stand for Godly living and stable homes.

Too many of our homes are falling apart.

5. Somehow we are not taking affairs, infidelity, adultery, or divorce seriously.

I heard about one preacher who became so bold that he wanted to hurry and get his divorce over, on account of adultery, so he could get his ministry on tract.

6. Tonight, I want to share this practical simple message the best I can to help all of us affair proof our marriages.

We must do everything in our power to keep the foxes from spoiling our vies and to keep our homes a safe haven for our family relationships.

7. Too often we think an affair has to do with sexual involvement.

Our very own past President of the United States, Bill Clinton, tried to establish that when he said I did not have sex with that woman.

This of course raised many questions in our secular world as to what does constitute marital infidelity.

But listen to how Jesus defined it in Matthew 5:27,28, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

I believe the Bible is clearly speaking to the issue of emotional affairs. According to God's Word emotional adultery is as serious as sexual immorality.

Let me give you a definition of an affair:

One definition of an affair is any relationship, sexual or otherwise, that takes positive energy away from your marriage. (Maxwell)

I realize that sounds like a dogmatic, legalistic, narrow definition of an affair, but listen to this:

Dr. Linda S. Mintle tells the story about a bright fellow named Tom who came to her for therapy. He had found himself restless and bored at his job.

He began flirting with a co-worker. The two started having lunch together and met after work for a drink. Eventually they became very physically involved but never had a sexual relation.

Fearing he might step over his self-imposed line, Tom came to therapy. His first question was have I really been unfaithful to my wife? He said, "We've done a lot of kissing and fondling, but does that really count?"

I haven't had intercourse and we haven't been together fully undressed.

Her response was, "If you told your wife what you just told me, what would she say?" If you ask your companion I think they will give you the accurate answer.

Dr. Mintle goes on to say that infidelity is a breach of trust, a breaking of the covenant, a betrayal of the relationship. It goes beyond sexual relations to include the physical, emotional and thought life of a person.

We must understand that in God's sight emotional affairs are just as sinful as sexual affairs.

8. How can I protect my marriage from falling into a marital affair?

9. Turn with me to Proverbs 4:20-27 and see what the Scriptures say.

Son, be faithful in your marriage!!

Turn to I Corinthians 10:1-13

You are in trouble if you think you could not fall.

But if your trust is in Christ, then He, and He alone can keep you from falling.

This afternoon in this last session I want to share with you some very practical realistic steps we can take to keep Satan from destroying our marriages through the avenue of affairs.

The Scripture has warned us – now here is what we should do.

Steps to Take to Keep Wrong Affairs Out of Your Marriage.

I. We must know and understand the prime times when we can be vulnerable to affairs.

Let me share some of these with you quickly:

1. When you first get married and you begin to pour your energy into building your careers. Both are working.

2. When a baby is born and the wife pours her energy into the baby.

3. When we begin to transition age wise.

Women 30-40 years. They think they are becoming unattractive.

Men 40 - 50 years. Mid-life crisis time. Who am I? Why am I here?

4. When you move to a new location and everything seems to be in an upheaval.

5. When you find yourself searching for intimacy.

Remember, everybody goes through the same changes. Don't be mistaken in thinking your new pick won't.

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

II. We Must Not Compare Our Marriages With Others.

No two marriages are alike.

I heard about these two guys fishing. The one guy said if everyone was like me they would all want to be married to my wife.

The other guy said, "If everyone was like me, nobody would want to be married to your wife."

We are all different. What attracts one does not attract the other. **DON'T PUT YOUR MARRIAGE IN BONDAGE.**

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

III. We Must Not Set Our Own Traps.

There are times when we do things ourselves that grease the rails to our downward slide.

1. Choose your friends carefully.

There are some people you do not need to be friends with.

Two couples splitting up to go get a video while their partners stayed home with the children.

2. Friends need to have same family values.

3. Be careful not to become too intimate with friends.

ILL – Wife caught her husband in bed with one of her best friends.

4. Be alert to family problems.

5. Look out for marital dissatisfaction.

6. Physical separation can be very destructive.

7. Be careful what you read, see, and hear.

8. Be careful about relationships at work. Don't become too light, frivolous, or flirtatious.

9. Be aware if there is a spiritual decline concerning our intimate relationship with God.

This may be last but not least – actually this is most important of all.

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

IV. We Must See Through The Eyes of Our Mates.

1. We must be sensitive to each others needs. This takes time but it can really happen.

2. We must communicate regularly.

I heard about a statistic that said husbands and wives that have been married for ten years on the average only communicate 37 minutes a week.

That is a little over 5 minutes a day.

3. We must understand that our wives need heart to heart talks.

One of the main reasons wives become involved in extra marital affairs is because they simply want someone to talk to.

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

V. We Must be the Host of Our Relationship and Not the Guest.

Isn't it fun being the guest at someone's house for lunch? They welcome you in, seat you, take your coat, serve you coffee. They pamper you and entertain you. They encourage you to make yourself comfortable while they are getting dinner ready. They SERVE YOU.

You didn't have to go out and buy it or clean it or prepare it.

You are the guest and they are the servants. Isn't it wonderful to be the guest?

A marriage is properly made when we become the host and serve our companion.

Jesus taught us to be servants of others, why not in our own marriage.

What are some of the things a host does?

1. They initiate the relationship.
2. They plan the evening activities.
3. They seek to fulfill the needs of the guest.
4. They make sure the temperature is comfortable.

Remember in dating what questions we asked:

In dating we ask the question, "What can I do for you?"

In marriage too often we ask the question, "What can you do for me?"

When we begin to change the questions then that is the moment our marriage begins to get into trouble.

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

VI. We Must be Willing to Share Everything in Our Relationship.

1. According to God's word we are one in marriage.
2. Share the authority, don't lord it over each other.
3. Sharing power and control and responsibility with each other will bring great intimacy in the marriage.
4. But if one is dominant over the other then intimacy is literally destroyed.
5. To really be close there must be a sharing of goals and ideas together.
6. It must be a life of holding hands together, not some tag along game.

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

VII. We Must be Willing to Ask Ourselves Some Very Hard Questions at Times.

These questions are very important to ask because affairs begin by simply drifting apart or wandering eyes and then the process begins.

1. Do I make continual excuses to visit someone of the opposite sex?

2. In a working or social relationship how am I handling daily contact with that person?

3. Do I find myself preoccupied with the thoughts of another person?

4. Do I exchange a card or gift with a person of the opposite sex and why since this type of contact might indicate a growing intimacy?

5. Do I use the telephone as an important medium in my relationship to someone outside of my marriage?

6. Do I allow myself to be in situations that could allow me to meet someone that could become more than a friend?

7. What does my body language communicate to other people?

There was a secular counselor from UCLA that said, "People who are not looking for affairs are not sending off messages and therefore they are not hustled. It is as simple as that."

If we want to keep affairs out of our marriages:

VIII. We Must Concentrate on Protecting Our Vines at Home.

How can we do that? Start an affair at home with your own mate!!

We must provide at our home what an affair offers so that our mate would never ever want to leave our home for anyone.

What is it that makes an affair attractive?

Listen to what Dr. McGuinness, a psychologist, has to say. He speaks to this whole issue of affairs outside of the home.

"Married people," he said, "seek out or succumb to affairs when they feel devalued and less than fully alive. They are bored, overburdened. It amounts to being very lonely and it can happen in a household full of kids and babbling spouse in which there is a back breaking schedule of fun things to do."

"People who have affairs have the child's deep longing to be touched, caressed, held, hugged, and kissed, whether they want to admit it or not. They want happy surprises. That might mean a sentimental, unexpected gift every once in a while. More important it is that dependable gift of time, caring, the presence of shared ideas, experiences, stories, nonsense, and games, (including sexual games). They want the world to butt out."

“They want a loving friend, a pal who isn’t judgmental. They want someone to convince them they’re still loved, loveable, and very special. For a little while now and then they want out from under the grown up responsibilities that have become predictable, dreary, and difficult.”

What he is saying is simply this:

1. You must value your mate.
2. You must add spice to your marriage. Quit being boring.
3. You must touch a lot. Hugging and kissing.
4. You must do the unexpected.
5. You must give time to your mate. Look forward to getting together.
6. You must share experiences.
7. You must be best friends.
8. You must be a fun loving kid again.

Our mate needs to know that he/she is the MOST IMPORTANT person in our life and world.

Maybe you are saying, I understand with my head but something inside of my heart is struggling or fighting but I really want to remain true to God and my companion.

I really want to have a pure relationship with my mate but I find myself struggling with the temptation. What can I do? The list is good and if I can get a copy I will surely get it out and read it, but what do I do in the meantime?

CONCLUSION

In closing would you turn with me to Colossians 3:5.

I Corinthians 6:18-20 – we must flee all things that can lead to or cause sexual temptation.

If you do counseling, you should never do it with the opposite sex alone. This can cause what is called the “Syndrome of the Soft Shoulder” that can develop emotional traps.

85% of pastors that fall do so as a result of counseling women alone.

II Timothy 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart."

James 4:7,8, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts you doubleminded."

In other words, build a hedge of protection around you.

Put restraints in your life.

Don't become a casualty by being so busy doing religious things that you lose your intimacy with God and you wrap up in your profession only.

Charles Swindoll tells in one of his devotionals entitled "Lust is Lurking" about a man he had met several years ago who was a fine itinerant Bible teacher who had been keeping a confidential list of men who were once outstanding expositors of the Scriptures. Capable and respected men of God who have shipwrecked their faith on the shoals of moral defilement.

Chuck said a chill ran down my spine when he told me that story. No one is immune. He said he had been keeping a record and now it had climbed to 42 of these men.

He said no one is immune. You're not. I'm not. Lust is no respecter of persons. It is a luring voice and can infiltrate the most intelligent mind and cause its victims to believe in lies and respond to its appeal. And be aware. It never give up. It never runs out of ideas.

Bolt your front door and it will rattle the bedroom windows. It will crawl into the living room through the TV screen or work out of a magazine in the den or through the computer. Lust is persistent. If it has knocked on your door once it will knock again and again. **YOU ARE ONLY SAFE AS LONG AS YOU DRAW UPON THE SAVIOR'S STRENGTH.**

If you try to handle it yourself you will lose every time. **FLEE FROM SATAN AND DRAW NEAR TO GOD.**

This is why we are warned again and again in the New Testament to flee temptations.

Remember lust is committed to wage war against your soul in life and death struggle, in hand to hand combat. Don't stand before the mortal enemy and argue or fight in your own strength. Run for cover.

If you get yourself into a situation that leaves you defenseless and weak. If you door is left even slightly ajar, you might be sure that this ancient enemy will knock it open with six guns blazing.

So don't leave it open. Don't give lust a foothold, even a toehold. It can be at this time with just a toehold that we can be hooked for all time.

Who or what is chasing us? Look behind you.

Dr. Howard Hendricks said, "Satan will lie in the weeds for 40 years to entrap one of God's servants. He is patient. He will wait and he will watch for just the right moment. A moment that will do greater damage to the kingdom of God."

WHAT IS OUR DEFENSE?

1. Intimacy with God.
2. Right relationships with our companions.
3. Proper physical rest and care for our bodies.
4. Proper accountability with someone.
5. A meaningful purpose in life. Know why you are here and where you are going.
6. Possessing a true attitude of joy and thanksgiving in serving God.
7. A watchful spirit – remember what Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior did for us when he was hanging there on that cross shedding His precious blood for all mankind. He had your name inscribed on His heart.

Then when I think of that sacrifice He paid for me and that unconditional love He shows to me, when He says flee to me, I WANT TO RUN AS FAST AS I CAN AWAY FROM THE EVIL ONE BACK INTO HIS ARMS.

For that is where my safety lies.

KEEP LOOKING OVER YOUR SHOULDERS . . . GET READY TO RUN!!

Vows

No one is going to be embarrassed because you are going to stand right where you are and block out everything and everyone in the room.

I want you to turn toward your companion, holding both hands, and look into their eyes as you recommit yourself to each other and to God. This is for married couples only. This is not a wedding.

Repeat after me, but fill in the name of your companion.

We will start with the man:

I, _____, continue to take you, _____,
as the love of my life.
I will remain committed to you for the rest of my life,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
'til death do us part,
according to God's holy covenant for marriage,
and thereto I pledge to you my solemn vow.

Now for the wife:

I, _____, continue to take you, _____,
as the love of my life.
I will remain committed to you for the rest of my life,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
'til death do us part,
according to God's holy covenant for marriage,
and thereto I pledge to you my solemn vow.

Listen to what God says in Matthew 19:6: "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

May God add His richest blessings upon you.

You may now kiss the bride!

[Close with prayer.]