

For Better or Worse - The In Between

2 WEEKS AGO: We began a series on marriage. We are looking at the ups and downs and the in between moments in marriage. But we said this is more than a marriage series!! These up, down, and in between moments also transfer to our relationship with God. We have said that God in his Word uses marriage as a picture of Jesus & the church.

WE PUT THIS GRAPHIC UP AS A PICTURE OF A GOOD MARRIAGE:

$$\frac{\text{LOVE + RESPECT}}{\text{JESUS}} = \text{MUTUAL SUBMISSION}$$

LAST WEEK: WE SAID WE MUST CHOOSE TO LIVE BY THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control

THIS WEEK: WE WILL TALK ABOUT THE IN BETWEEN TIMES AND HOW TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

ILLUSTRATION: MY PASTOR FRIEND CALLED ME

- FINANCES, COMMUNICATION, GOALS

- THESE THREE WORK THEMSELVES OUT IN ALL KINDS OF BIG WAYS

- WE ARE TALKING ABOUT WHAT WE WILL SEE CALLED “**LITTLE FOXES**” IN SONG OF SONGS

TRANSITION: THE FIRST POINT IS WHERE WE FINISHED LAST WEEK.

1) STAY VIGILANT

READ SONG OF SONGS 2:10-15

¹⁰ My beloved spoke and said to me, “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me. ¹¹ See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. ¹² Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. ¹³ The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me.” ¹⁴ My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. ¹⁵ Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.

- Vigilant Defined: keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties
- If I am going to keep a careful watch I need to be in close contact or relationship with my spouse
- CAN YOU NAME THE LITTLE FOXES THAT COME INTO YOUR RELATIONSHIP?
 - small things that can ruin your relationship over time
 - are you open & share about those things
- ARE YOU ANGRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS?

Ephesians 4:26-27: ²⁶“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

TRANSITION: SECONDLY WE NEED TO:

2) FIGHT APATHY

- Apathy Defined: lack of feeling, emotion, interest, or concern

READ PROVERBS 24:30-34

³⁰ I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; ³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. ³² I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— ³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

- THORNS & WEEDS CHOKING OUT THE FRUIT OF THE VINE
- BROKEN WALLS - FAIL TO KEEP THE ANIMALS OR PEOPLE OUT
- LAZINESS IN MARRIAGE IS EASY - WE GET FAMILIAR

ILLUSTRATION: MY FLOWER BEDS

- OVERGROWN BOXWOOD PLANTS
- I DON'T LIKE TO WORK IN FLOWER BEDS
- I ALSO DON'T LIKE THE WAY THEY LOOK

TRANSITION: THIRD & FINALLY WE MUST:

3) ENCOURAGE GROWTH

- THIS IS AN OFFENSIVE MOVE
- HOW DO WE DO THIS? PRUNING

READ JOHN 15:1-4

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

ILLUSTRATION: I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE THIS ILLUSTRATION

- VARIEGATED... & JAPANESE SPINDLE TREE
- SUCKERS, BASAL SHOOTS, ADVENTITIOUS SHOOTS
- ADVENTITIOUS: happening or carried on according to chance rather than design or inherent nature

ARE YOU STAYING VIGILANT, FIGHTING APATHY, ENCOURAGING GROWTH IN

- your relationship with your spouse?
- your relationship with others?
- your relationship with Jesus?

PRAY