

Communication And Marriage

By Paul Jetter, Pastor of Upper Valley Community Church, Piqua, Ohio
<http://www.uvcc.info>



One of the most unusual books of the Bible is called "Song of Solomon" or "Song of Songs". (Years ago, the former name was more popular, but newer translations of the Bible usually prefer the latter one because of growing evidence that the book was written by someone other than King Solomon. Nowhere in the book is the author identified.)

The "Song of Songs" is the courtship dialogue between two young lovers, along with a few comments from their friends. In the middle of their love songs, the lover makes an unusual plea to his beloved. *"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom."* (Song of Songs 2:15)

What the lover means is that they need to be on their guard against little things that attack and destroy love. He realizes that it is usually not the big things that cause love to be lost, but rather little things that are allowed to fester until the whole relationship is poisoned.

Coming home late without calling may seem like a little thing, but when it becomes a habit trust is eroded, the other person feels belittled, and love can be lost. Forgetting her special days may seem like no big deal to him, yet she feels neglected, embarrassed, and love begins to die.

Failing to "fix up" when going with him to meet some of his friends may seem trivial to her – after all, she may never see them again – yet to him it seems that she has purposely cut his self-worth, failed to value his feelings, and love begins to cool.

Reading the paper or watching TV when she needs to talk may seem like a little thing to him. He knows there will be other times to converse, that it can't be that important, and that he has the situation all under control. She, on the other hand, is dying inside to be listened to, to be esteemed, to be cherished.

When she tells him that it the grass has grown and someone really needs to cut it she means well. But he sees it as being nagged and wishes she would just ask, "Would you please shovel the walk?" and then accept his "Yes" or "No" without giving him a lecture.

Communication seems like a little thing in marriage, and yet it is the most common reason for marital breakdowns. A love relationship cannot grow without healthy interaction – the kind that says, "I value you, I cherish you, and I am your greatest encourager and fan."

A few years ago a study was made to try to find a common factor in marriages that last and those that fall apart. One of the few common factors the researches found was a pattern of speech during the courting years. If the dating couple had often used cutting or critical language, their marriage was likely to have ended in divorce. But if the couple had seldom or never cut or criticized one another during the dating years, they were likely to still be married.

Many cutting or critical remarks are passed off as jokes or teasing. Unfortunately, spouses who laughingly cut and criticize their mates often end up crying in the divorce courts.

* * * * *