

September 26, 2006

Encouragement for Today

Principle 2

“Beating the Beetles”

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Key Verse:

Song of Solomon 2:15, “Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.” (NIV)

Devotion:

Monday I stood in awe of God’s majesty. While we were on vacation, He took exquisite care of my little border garden. The roses were thick with fragrance; coneflowers, phlox, and tall spires of purple loosestrife bloomed in colorful profusion. The diversity of His imagination always amazes me. I smiled at the thought of Him designing each flower on the third day of creation. Instead of producing thousands of identical blooms, he created a plethora of color, shape, and fragrance for us to enjoy.

Tuesday, less than 24 hours later, I peeked at the garden for a mid-day smile. My joy turned to ashes. Japanese beetles had infested my loosestrife and roses destroying every bloom! I’m sure my neighbors laughed out loud as I stormed out the back door attacking now bare stems with a tennis racquet while a swarm of disturbed beetles buzzed my head. I called my husband and insisted that he stop at the hardware store on the way home for a trap with torture-like properties.

He of course came through with an effective trap (no torture...) and he put it up immediately. We watched together as confused beetles flew toward its bait while we mourned the loss of the garden’s glory.

This morning I looked out the window amazed. Not only were the beetles gone, gentle purple blossoms had returned to the loosestrife. I was reminded that God’s mercies are new each day. Yesterday’s crisis was visible only when I looked at the bag on the yellow beetle trap that swelled with its catch.

It occurred to me that this situation was a metaphor for our marriage. One day everything looks and feels wonderful. We go out of our way to do special things for each other for the sole purpose of seeing the other one smile. Then the beetles, or as Solomon says ‘the little foxes,’ take over our lives and eat away the joyful moments. The children whine, the dog throws up, the washer breaks, and supper burns. When he gets home, I ‘greet’ my hardworking husband with a scowl and jump right in to tell him how horrible everything is. All he can see is the shadow of the joyful wife he left in the morning.

I hate when I focus on the negatives and forget that I am here to support and provide tangible love to my spouse and family. Thankfully God provides a fresh start each morning. I can ask for forgiveness for yesterday's failings (from both God and my husband), and I can focus on the blossoms of today's joy. Yes, things will go wrong, but I can manage my attitude so the day isn't ruined. I want to shoo away the negative attitudes so that my husband comes home to the peaceful place and loving wife that he deserves.

My Prayer for Today:

Lord, I thank You for Your amazing creation – yes, even the Japanese beetles. Continue to remind me that our troubles are only temporary, and that Your love is eternal. Help me to focus on Your blessings and to keep the world's little hassles in proper priority. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Today when something goes wrong, look for a blessing. If it is something that you will laugh about in the future, be forward thinking and laugh today. If it's too hard to smile, at least recognize your efforts to effectively deal with the situation.

Prepare to meet your spouse at the end of the day. Comb your hair; find a reason to smile, and think about the type of greeting you want to give. Don't talk about anything that went wrong in your day for at least 15 minutes.

Do something special for your spouse today in secret.

Reflection Points:

Would you like to come home to yourself at the end of the day? What can you do to make this stressful time more peaceful for both you and your spouse?

What are the 'little foxes' in your marriage? How can you actively work to minimize their impact on your attitude?

What have you done lately to show your husband that you love him?

Power Verses:

2 Corinthians 4:17, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (NIV)

Proverbs 31:25, "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come." (NIV)

Philippians 2:14-15, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe." (NIV)

Additional Resources:

"Marriage 101" ETC CORNER

<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/etcFeb04.htm>

Capture His Heart by Lysa TerKeurst

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_captureHis.htm

Love Notes on His Pillow by Shannon Ethridge

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_hisPillow.htm