



The Little Foxes
1st Corinthians 13:4-7

The Little Foxes

- After planting grapevines, it can take several years before they bear fruit
 - The vines require a lot of patience, care, watering, pruning, and protection
 - Foxes—even though small—can cause major damage by destroying the roots, eating the grapes, or chewing the stalk
 - They are most damaging when the vines are in bloom
 - Catch the image in your mind

The Little Foxes

- Song of **Soloman 2:15 NIV**, “Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.”
 - **TLB**, “The little foxes are ruining the vineyards. Catch them, for the grapes are all in blossom.”
 - **MSG**, “Then you must protect me from the foxes, foxes on the prowl, Foxes who would like nothing better than to get into our flowering garden.
 - **AMP**, “Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that spoil and ruin the vineyards [of love], While our vineyards are in blossom.”

The Little Foxes

- Soloman knew there were seemingly small problems or behaviors that could threaten their relationship if left unchecked and unaddressed
 - Watch for them, identify them quickly, eradicate them before greater damage is done
- This is also true for every one of our marriages or relationships today
 - But also, for the relationships here at our church

The Little Foxes

- **2nd Corinthians 11:14 NIV**, “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”
 - His purpose is to destroy the works of God
 - Just look at his work in the Garden of Eden
 - Or Joseph’s life, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good”

The Little Foxes

- The Apostle Paul has been enticing us with the Love of God
 - We have found the Love of God is “long suffering seeking repentance” shown through His “loving kindness”
 - But Paul also knew there are little foxes out there seeking to hinder if not destroy the relationships we have
- Why do marriages fall apart?
 - Why do family relationships fracture?
 - Why do church congregations fail and lose their effectiveness?

The Little Foxes

- There are events you might point to, but what was the real reason behind it?
 - What were the little foxes that were allowed to remain in the vineyards?
- The Apostle Paul has told us what real love is that is governed by kindness
 - Today he identifies some little foxes to keep a look out for
 - To identify the signs of early under the direction of His Holy Spirit
 - And with God's grace and strength, to stand against in our life

Scripture

- **1st Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV**, 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

Scripture

- **1st Corinthians 13:4-8 TLB**, 4 Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, 5 never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. 6 It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out.
 - 7 If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him (*Always in and through truth*). 8 All the special gifts and powers from God will someday come to an end, but love goes on forever.

Scripture

- This was a list of “little foxes” Paul identified in the lives of people in church at Corinth
- This is not an exhaustive list, but a very good list to lay alongside our love for others

Paul begins his list with envy that compares and competes

- Who is Envy? What does Envy do? How do we define Envy?
 - Tim Challies, “Envy makes you feel resentment or anger or sadness because another person has something or another person is something that you want for yourself. Envy makes you aware that another person has some advantage, some good thing, that you want for yourself and, while he’s at it, he makes you want that other person not to have it.”
 - What was behind Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery?
 - What did King Saul hate David so much?
 - Why did the religious leaders hate Jesus so much?

Paul begins his list with envy that compares and competes

- There are at least three evil components to Envy:
 - The deep discontent that comes when you see that another person has what you want or think you deserve
 - Leading to a desire to have it for yourself
 - At times, Leading to the desire for it to be taken from him

Paul begins his list with envy that compares and competes

- Envy takes root when our Pride is wounded
 - A commenter said it well: “In my wretched experience pride has always been envy’s father.”
 - Pride says, “This is what I deserve” or “Let me boast about all I have” or “I am better than you in all of these ways.”
 - Have you ever thought about the fact that pride always compares?

Paul begins his list with envy that compares and competes

- When you are envious and proud you compare yourself with another person and there are only two possible outcomes:
 - If you believe you come out on top, you feel even more pride
 - If you believe you come out on the bottom, you feel envy
 - C.S. Lewis says, “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others.”

Paul begins his list with envy that compares and competes

- Envy then convinces me that I am competing with another person, and when I lose that competition, I feel worthless
 - Rich Mullin in his Song “You’re My One Thing”, “Everyone I know says they need is one thing. What they really mean is they need just one thing more.”
- Envy is included in the “Works of the flesh list” in **Galatians 5:19-21**
 - **Proverbs 14:30 NIV**, 30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.
 - **James 3:16 NIV**, 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Envy is very good at concealing or hiding itself behind other little foxes that can hinder relationships
- Love is not - Prideful boasting
 - Bragging without a true foundation
 - Exalting yourself over others as if our accomplishments were based on merit and ability
 - **Daniel 4:28-30 NIV**, 29 As the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love is not - Haughty
 - Haughty - blatantly and disdainfully proud indicating an attitude of superiority, where someone thinks they are better, smarter, or more important than others
 - Which leads to selfishness or rudeness or dishonoring
 - Dishonoring - It means to act improperly, indecently, unbecomingly, or to behave in a shameful/rude manner
 - Check your social media posts

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love is not self-seeking
 - **ESV**, “It does not insist on its own way”
 - **TLB**, “Love does not demand its own way.”
 - **NASB**, “it does not seek its own benefit”
 - Literally, “does not seek the things of itself”
 - Full of self-importance and arrogance
 - Demand its own way or own way of thinking

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love is not self-seeking
 - **Philippians 2:3-4 NIV**, 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love is not easily angered
 - Love is not being Irritable or touchy
 - **TLB**, “It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.”
 - Easily provoked or having a "short fuse" or an argumentative spirit
 - Anger is not simply an emotion that's on autopilot

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love is not easily angered
 - We choose anger as our response to people and circumstances that fall short of our expectations
 - And when we do, we first have to silence our conscience in order to justify that punitive response
 - The love of Christ is greater than our irritability

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love keeps no record of wrongs
 - It doesn't keep a long strong list of those who have wronged them
 - They don't keep a meticulous records of offenses
 - True love is forgiving, non-resentful, and not dwelling on past offenses
 - It means letting go of grudges and not keeping a "scorecard" of faults, reflecting God's grace rather than seeking revenge or holding onto bitterness

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love keeps no record of wrongs
 - Instead of bringing up past mistakes, this type of love chooses forgiveness, allowing for the hope of reconciliation and preventing the buildup of resentment
 - **Hebrews 8:12 NIV**, 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
 - **Psalms 103:10 NIV**, 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth
 - It rejects wrongdoing, gossip, and injustice
 - It finds joy in righteousness, honesty, and alignment with God's will, rather than celebrating the failures or misfortune of others
 - True love does not find pleasure in sin, deceit, injustice, or the suffering of others
 - It opposes harmful actions rather than laughing at or condoning them
 - It celebrates when people live in accordance with God's word and when justice is served

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth
 - **1st Corinthians 13:7-8a NIV**, 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- A person was delivering his first sermon filling the pulpit while the pastor was absent
 - He wanted to play it safe, so he chose **1st Corinthians 13** as his text avoiding controversial subjects and made only the broadest applications
 - After the sermon, a delegation approached him in anger
 - “Do you mean that we have to let our white daughters date black men?”
 - He never said anything of the sort like this in his sermon

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- A person was delivering his first sermon filling the pulpit while the pastor was absent
 - When he reminded them of the nature of love, they saw in their hearts some specific ways they failed to love their Christian brothers
 - They Holy Spirit had pricked their hearts

Envy exposes itself through its actions

- Do we cling to actions and attitudes that are unloving?
 - The Apostle Paul was not solely interested in the way we act toward one another
 - He wanted the Corinthians to truly care for one another and their actions to flow from true love

The Little Foxes

- **Proverbs 14:30 NIV**, “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”
- How can we push the little foxes out of our blessings?
 - Liz Curtis Higgs
 - Confess - Healing begins when we acknowledge that envy is a sin: "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth" (*James 3:14, NIV*). Humble admission is the single best antidote for prideful ambition.

The Little Foxes

- Liz Curtis Higgs
 - Avoid comparison - Consider the words of Jesus, when Peter fretted over John's place in Jesus' ministry, and asked, "'Lord, what about him?' Jesus answered, ' ... what is that to you? You must follow me'" (*John 21:21b, 22b, NIV*).
 - Rejoice - Feeling overlooked? Look up and celebrate with others. Send an email or text on the spot and chase away those negative feelings. "Rejoice with those who rejoice" (*Romans 12:15a, NIV*).

The Little Foxes

- Liz Curtis Higgs
 - Be patient - Many a career or ministry has collapsed under too much, too soon. Embrace the tasks you've been given, rather than longing for something bigger, better or faster. Success isn't money or fame - it's love for one another. By definition, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud" (*1 Corinthians 13:4, NIV*).

The Little Foxes

- Liz Curtis Higgs
 - Befriend your rival - As one of our sisters explained, "A woman was brought in on a fast track executive management program at my corporation. At our first meeting, I thought, 'Well, here's my rival.' Then I heard God say, 'She is smart, energetic and sharp - just like you. You could become best buddies.'" And, they did.

The Little Foxes

- Liz Curtis Higgs
 - Count the cost. Behind every successful woman is a host of sacrifices we never see.
 - The truth? We're seldom jealous of all the work a person does - just the outcome. Whether building a tower or building a career, the Bible cautions us, " ... Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money" ? or time or energy ? "to complete it" (*Luke 14:28b, NIV*).

The Little Foxes

- Liz Curtis Higgs
 - Lean on the Lord - He stands ready, willing and able to overcome our weaknesses through the power of His Spirit. "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always" *(1 Chronicles 16:11, NIV)*.



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1st Corinthians 13:4-7