

Men: Your Marriage Matters...to God

Transform Your Marriage, Starting With You

Leader's Guide for 6 Week Small Group Workbook

By
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Leader's Tips: Thank you for taking this opportunity to invest in the lives of other men and their marriages. There may be no better gift you can give to a man than a new perspective on how God will use his marriage to make him more Christ-like and to draw him closer to God in the process. The blue-letter text in this workbook is specifically designed for small group leaders and provides coaching tips for effective facilitation of each session and the prerequisites for a successful 6-week study.

The need to help men in their marriages is real as there are far too many mediocre (and worse) marriages, even in our Christian circles. Based on our experience and testimonies from past participants, the principles in the workshop and corresponding book have proven to be both practically and biblically sound and are having a real impact for those who apply them. "Apply" is the key word – if this is approached by participants as a theoretical exercise, they will see little/no impact in their marriage and in their lives. It's only through application, and the grace of God, that transformation is likely!

This program is not simply about having a man read a book and hoping that something significant occurs. Instead, success relies far more on a relational, small-group model of workshop delivery. It's the combination of individual study, reflection, and then group discussion that have proven to be most impactful.

As a result, the facilitator of these study groups will be a key success factor in participants deriving value and impact. The following facilitator attributes are ideal as men consider being used by God in this way:

- Married for enough years to be credible to other married men
- Intentional in their faith walk and a sound, Bible-centered world view
- Has personally experienced marriage trials and tribulations – which fosters a healthy humility that allows his ministry to come from both personal experience and lessons learned
- Is currently in a strong, committed marriage that, while far from perfect, has benefited from these and other biblically-sound principles
- And yet, you don't have to have all of the answers! Just a desire to hear the struggles the men in your group are facing and a heart to walk with them as God reveals his strategic design for their marriage in their path to Christ-likeness. Your struggles, personal stories, and lessons learned may be the breakthrough that God will use to help the men in your group

These tools can be used in many environments but tend to be most impactful in an environment that participants view as transparent and "safe." Interestingly, we've even found that the less the men know each other (and the less their wives know each other) the more open and honest the discussion tends to be in these group settings.

Ideal Small Group Attendees:

- Christian men – without a strong commitment to your faith, many of the underlying principles (i.e., a Biblical perspective on marriage and our role in it) are less compelling.
- Men who are committed to investing their own time and energy to understand God's design for marriage, even if their wife is less interested in seeking to strengthen the marriage.
- Men who are willing to share their knowledge with others down the road – paying it forward.

Ground rules and guiding principles for the small group:

- Confidential – what happens in the group...stays in the group
- Christ-centered in all that we do
- Lean on the Bible for clarity
- This is practical learning, not theoretical: apply the concepts!
- Leverage other group members – experience and accountability

Each of the 6 sessions is designed to be 90 minutes in length. In order to be respectful of participant's time, we recommend that sessions start and end on time. We have provided more discussion questions each week than are needed to fill the allotted time. The group leader should determine which of the questions are most useful for your group and deserve focus each week. For larger groups with multiple tables, you may also determine that some questions can be discussed at each table before debriefing with the larger room of men – it's your discretion as the facilitator.

You are also encouraged to provide your own additional materials, links, videos, etc. that you think will help the group understand and embrace these principles based on your personal experiences.

The overall 6-week structure of the group is as follows:

- **Week 1**
 - Ground rules and guiding principles – set expectations and build enthusiasm (see above)
 - Introductions and short background from each member (2-3 min/each):
 - Professional and family/marriage background
 - The best and the hardest thing about my marriage today
 - One major goal for your marriage (and this study)
- **Week 2-6: Weekly reading assignments outlined in this study guide plus key assignments for preparation each week:**
 - Reflections from the previous week's discussion/to do's
 - Key "aha's" for each participant – written or typed with page references is always helpful
 - Key questions/discussion points for the group
 - Your action plan going forward
- **Final session (week 6):**
 - Reflection on progress over the last several weeks
 - How can we share our insights with others and multiply the impact?
 - Group/individual accountability on-going and additional resources/programs that may help each participant in your church/area

Preparation for a 6-week study:

- Invite and identify participants – we recommend an ideal group size between 5 and 20 men
- Secure a quiet, confidential meeting room for the 6 weeks that allows for open, honest, and confidential sharing and discussion

- **Confirm logistics and gain commitment to consistent attendance from participants two weeks prior to the start of the study group – we recommend you send an Outlook calendar invite to all participants for all upcoming sessions**
- **Secure books and study guides via Kindle and/or our website: www.menyourmarriagematters.com**
- **Send out final reminder and start and end times for the first session 2 days before the first meeting**

If I can support your efforts in any way, please contact me directly at pbourke@betterwaystrategies.com and I will be praying for your efforts and for your group.

Weekly Assignments

This study guide is designed to help you capture your notes in preparation for each session, to provide thought-provoking questions to ponder, and to make it easy to define key takeaways from our weekly discussions.

Be intentional during each week in your study. For your benefit, don't wait until the night before or the morning of the next session to start and "cram." Approach this intentionally and be open and willing to let the Holy Spirit lead you along the way. Explore both the subtle and the monumental paradigm shifts about your marriage and identify actions and next steps as you apply each week's written material along with the small group discussion.

Also, feel free to share prayer requests and your "lessons learned" from the past week with the group as you apply these concepts. Not only will you benefit but others will benefit from your experience and insights.

Additional Resources

Please visit our website at www.menyourmarriagematters.com for additional resources including:

- Free, PDF version of the book, *Men: Your Marriage Matters...to God*
- Leader's Guide PDF with helpful tips in facilitating men's small group studies using these materials
- 6-week men's small group Study Guide PDF (this booklet in electronic form)
- Videos designed both for leaders and to help kickoff weekly group meetings
- Links to additional videos and resources that may be helpful for readers and participants

Week 1 – Introductions and Orientation

Leader Tips: the goal is to foster an environment that feels safe for the men to share/discuss their marriage.

Opening prayer (Prayer, testimony and guiding principles – 20 minutes including questions)

Personal testimony of the facilitator: Why you've decided to lead this study-group: share your personal reasons for committing your time and investing in these men; and what you've seen God do in your marriage as you've applied these principles. The more transparent you are, the more comfortable participants will be in sharing openly during the introductions below.

Overview of the ground rules and guiding principles:

- Confidential – what happens in the group...stays in the group
- Christ-centered in all that we do
- Lean on the Bible for clarity
- This is practical learning, not theoretical: apply the concepts!
- Leverage other group members – experience and accountability

***Discussion starter: Have each participant share:**

Brief Personal Introduction by Participants (2-3 minutes each)

- Your Name
- Wife's Name, how long married, number of children, and their ages
- Current job or job/career pursuit
- Best thing about your marriage?
- The biggest challenge in your marriage?
- Your personal goal(s) for this 6-week study group

Leader Tips: Invite questions from the participants about the coming weeks and/or their expectations

The Big Ideas: (This is a useful way to close each session to highlight key points this week)

- Many men desire to draw closer to God but don't recognize that marriage itself is designed by Him to do so. God wants a relationship with us and ultimately wants us to have the heart of Christ.
- Marriage is God's way of holding up a mirror for us to see our progress in becoming Christ-like.

Review reading assignments for week 2 (see next page)

Closing prayer (recommend having a participant lead the closing prayer each week)

Week 2 – Pre-read the following sections:

Introduction (page VII)

The State of Marriage Today (page 1)

Why is Marriage so Hard? (page 3)

Related Assignment: Identify the 2-3 most frustrating and challenging elements of your marriage relationship (i.e. conflicts, lack of connection, intimacy, etc.) and consider a few questions for each: Has it become better or worse over time? Do you think it's unique to your marriage relationship? What do you see as the root cause of the issue?

A Marriage Quiz (page 5)

Our Marriage Journey (page 7)

Leader Tips:

Welcome and opening prayer

Invite the group to have an open discussion on reflections from previous week's discussion and "aha's" from this week's reading or application (10-15 minutes). As issues/topics are raised, don't feel compelled to provide "the answer." Instead, your role is to facilitate the discussion by asking others to react, inviting other perspectives and sometimes sharing your own insights. Effective facilitation is a balancing act between encouraging the men to share but not allowing any one (or a few) to dominate the discussion. It's the process of participants struggling with the challenging questions and principles in the book and study guide that God will use to open each man's heart to the truth in God's Word and His design for marriage.

- Reflections from the previous week's discussion/to-do's:
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- Key 'aha's' on this week's readings:
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- **Discussion starters: Key questions for discussion with the whole group or at smaller table groups: (60 minutes)**
 - i. How do you think God feels about the state of marriage in general today? (Page 1)
Your assessment?
 - ii. Why are so many marriages struggling today?
 - iii. Why is marriage hard from your perspective? (Page 3)
 - iv. Be prepared to discuss the "related assignment" from above - what makes your marriage challenging (share only as you feel comfortable with the group this week)

Leader Tip: you should be prepared to share an example or two from your marriage that models vulnerability and transparency and that will resonate with participants.

- v. How did you fare in the Marriage Quiz? (page 5)
 - Strengths?
 - Weaknesses?
- vi. If you are experiencing dissatisfaction in your marriage – is it logical to think your wife is as well? More or less dissatisfaction than you?
- vii. Does it surprise you that men and women rank their marriages so differently?
- viii. How different are marriage-related challenges for a Christian couple compared to those where one or both are not followers of Christ?
- ix. Too many men conclude that they have to accept a mediocre marriage (or end it) and not knowing how to solve the problems is what wears a man out. Do you agree?
- x. Can you relate to Peter and Devonie’s marriage journey? (Page 7) In what ways?
- Your thoughts/questions? **Discussion starter: solicit other questions/topics from participants**
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- What’s my action plan going forward? What do I want/need to keep top-of mind?
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Capture Small Group Discussion Notes Here:

Leader Tip: Reserve the last 15 minutes or so of each meeting to wrap up the previous discussion, share the “big ideas” each week (see below); and review the next week’s homework assignment (next page). This is also a great time to field any final questions/suggestions and finally, to close the meeting by inviting God in this journey with us.

The Big Ideas:

- Marriage is Hard! Why? Because marriage is so strategic in God’s masterful design
- Take an honest look at your marriage today – is there an opportunity, starting with you, and with God’s help, to make it more abundant?

Review reading assignments for week 3 (see next page)

Closing prayer (recommend having a participant lead the closing prayer each week)

Week 3 – Pre-read the following sections:

Homework Assignment: Write a prayer this week to God expressing your struggles and hopes in your marriage. In essence, cast a God-centered vision for your marriage. (Do this honestly and resolutely – there is no need to share with others in the group unless you feel led to do so)

What is an Abundant Marriage? (page 11)

God’s Design for Men and Marriage (page 15)

Six Guiding Principles (page 20)

Leader Tips: Welcome and opening prayer

Invite the group to have an open discussion on reflections from previous week’s discussion and “aha’s” from this week’s reading or application (10-15 minutes). As issues/topics are raised, don’t feel compelled to provide “the answer.” Instead, your role is to facilitate the discussion by asking others to react, inviting other perspectives and sometimes sharing your own insights. Effective facilitation is a balancing act between encouraging the men to share but not allowing any one (or a few) to dominate the discussion. It’s the process of participants struggling with the challenging questions and principles in the book and study guide that God will use to open each man’s heart to the truth in God’s Word and His design for marriage.

- Reflections from the previous week’s discussion/to-do’s:
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- Key “aha’s” on this week’s readings:
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- **Discussion starter: key questions for discussion with the whole group or at table groups: (60 minutes):**
 - i. Insights and perspectives on this week’s “homework assignment” (above)? **Leader Tip: You may choose to share your own prayer to God referenced in the homework assignment above to help group members to openly share their struggles and hopes.**
 - ii. Has your definition of a “good” marriage changed over time? (page 11)
 - iii. Which elements of an abundant marriage are most elusive and why?
 - Honest and transparent communications (page 12)
 - Love is a verb, not a noun or an emotion (page 12)
 - Affection and intimacy (page 13)
 - Children are nurtured and launched (page 13) **Leader Tip: Remind the men that the best gift we can give our children is a great marriage!**
 - Both spouses are growing in their relationship with God (page 13)
 - Others?
 - iv. What is your perspective on God’s design for men and marriage? (page 15)

- v. How would you define our role as ‘spiritual leaders’ of our marriage/family?
- vi. Do you ever feel your prayers are unanswered (as though God doesn’t hear them) if you don’t *live with our wives in an understanding way* (1 Peter 3:7) (page 16)? **Leader Tip: this is a key verse that highlights the importance God places on our marriages**
- vii. Do you agree that “God has purposed your marriage as a primary vehicle to draw us closer to Him by enabling us to become more Christ-like?” (page 17)
- viii. Did the common objections of men sound familiar? (page 17) Which do you feel personally?
- ix. Why is it so uncommon for married couples to invest in their marriages or get help?
- x. Is it possible, in your mind, that a husband can transform his marriage, starting with himself only? (page 19) Why or why not?
- xi. Be prepared to discuss each of the following “Guiding Principles” (What is difficult about each? Do you agree with the principle?) **Leader Tip: These principles are fundamental to this study – review these in enough depth to ensure a deep understanding for participants. These principles are summarized in a one-page handout available on www.menyourmarriagematters.com resources tab.**
 - **Husbands (and all men) are called to be Christ-like** (page 20)
 - **God designed marriage to help show us how we’re doing on the journey to Christ-likeness** (page 21)
 - **A Christian man has the ability to transform his marriage even if his wife is less interested** (page 22)
 - **God designed your wife to profoundly respond to your progress** (page 22)
 - **You, as the husband, are responsible for the health of your marriage (doesn’t mean you are to blame though)** (page 23)
 - **When we draw closer to God we will also draw closer to our wife in the process** (page 23) **Leader Tip: See the 3 Box illustration of this dynamic on page 23 of the book**
- Your thoughts/questions?
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- What’s my action plan going forward? What do I want/need to keep top-of mind?
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 - **Discussion starter: this is a great way to end each week’s discussion by asking a few men to share the 1 or 2 things they are committed to apply in their marriage following this week’s study and today’s discussion**

Capture Small Group Discussion Notes Here:

Leader Tip: Reserve the last 15 minutes or so of each meeting to wrap up the previous discussion, share the “big ideas” each week (see below); and review the next week’s homework assignment (next page). This is also a great time to field any final questions/suggestions and finally, to close the meeting by inviting God in this journey with us.

The Big Ideas:

- God has a strategic, abundant design for your marriage – and there is hope in that vision
- The Six Guiding Principles in God’s design for marriage and our role as husbands in this design

Review reading assignments for week 4 (see next page)

Closing prayer (recommend having a participant lead the closing prayer each week)

Week 4 – Pre-read the following sections:

The Husband's Nature (page 25)

God Designed Your Wife to Respond to Your Christ-likeness (page 27)

Purpose and Priorities (page 29)

It's Not Just About Trying Harder: The Power of the Holy Spirit (page 34)

The first 2 strategies from "22 Practical Strategies": (page 37)

1. You'll make no progress without intentionality (page 38)
2. When pride comes, then comes disgrace (page 39)

Leader Tips: Welcome and opening prayer

Invite the group to have an open discussion on reflections from previous week's discussion and "aha's" from this week's reading or application (10-15 minutes). As issues/topics are raised, don't feel compelled to provide "the answer." Instead, your role is to facilitate the discussion by asking others to react, inviting other perspectives and sometimes sharing your own insights. Effective facilitation is a balancing act between encouraging the men to share but not allowing any one (or a few) to dominate the discussion. It's the process of participants struggling with the challenging questions and principles in the book and study guide that God will use to open each man's heart to the truth in God's Word and His design for marriage

- Reflections from the previous week's discussion/to-do's:
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- Key "aha's" on this week's readings:
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- **Discussion starter: Key questions/topics for discussion with the whole group or at small table groups: (60 minutes)**
 - i. Do you agree with Ken Nair's outline of the 4 common prejudices men tend to carry? (page 25)
 - ii. Being dismissive might be the most common manifestation of these prejudices – can you think of things you do that could be considered by your wife to be dismissive? **Leader Tip: This is a key opportunity to share your own examples: i.e. not responding to her; withdrawing; not including her in decisions; etc.**
 - iii. Why do you think so many 25+ year marriages tend to fail? **Leader Tip: A marriage with fractures developed over many years will expose chasms during the empty nest stage of marriage – there are fewer distractions to mask the tension/conflict in the marriage.**
 - iv. Have you ever thought that your wife is the source of the trouble in your marriage (honestly)? Did it make it easier to disregard her complaints?

- v. “She’s not perfect either! Why is it fair that I have this responsibility and not my wife?” “It sounds like husbands could get all the blame!” Can you relate to these objections?
- vi. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart (Prov 21:2)- can we use our marriage circumstances to discern God’s ways vs. our own?
- vii. There is a built-in desire in a wife that causes her to be dramatically affected by acceptance or rejection from her husband (page 27). Have you experienced this?
- viii. Many women would rather not tell the truth than face rejection from their husband- Agree?
- ix. How does the thought of encouraging your wife to evaluate your character affect you? Do you think there’s much difference between your wife’s opinion and yours?
- x. What would your wife say is typically your attitude toward her counsel - do you seek it?
- xi. What would it take to train you to hear questions from your wife as questions, not challenges? (page 28)
- xii. A Christ-like husband – does it lead to a perfect wife? Likely not. On the other hand – If you have an imperfect wife, would Jesus have loved her any less? Be prepared to discuss.
- xiii. Do you have clarity on your purpose in life? What is it? (page 29)
- xiv. What’s your view of the purpose of marriage – utilitarian or sacred? (page 30) God’s view?
- xv. How does your view of the purpose of marriage translate to your personal priorities? What are your most prominent priorities? Does your calendar align with these?
- xvi. If you were to ask your wife what priority she plays in your life, what would she say?
- xvii. Becoming Christ-like requires that we let the Holy Spirit help to change us (page 33) – do you agree or not? Why is this concept elusive to most? Read Gal 2:20 and be prepared to discuss how it applies to your role as a husband (page 34)
- xviii. **Strategy #1** - How intentional have you and your wife been about improving your marriage? What has prevented this from being a priority? (page 38)
- xix. **Strategy # 2** - How can pride get in the way of a husband being Christ-like? (page 39)
Leader Tip: this is another topic that is a key stumbling block for many men – take the time to share your own examples of falling down in this area and allow the group to discuss and confess that pride and self-centeredness is the root cause of many of our conflicts in marriage.
- xx. Which of these scripture verses related to pride (page 38-39) most strongly convict/inspire you?
 - *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom (Prov 11:2).*
 - *Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor (Prov 18:12).*
 - *Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life (Prov 22:4).*
 - *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him... (Prov 26:12).*
 - *For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:12).*

- *Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35).*
- xxi. What's the hardest part of "dying to self" in marriage?
- Your thoughts? **Discussion starter: encourage additional questions/topics the group may have that are not captured above**
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- What's my action plan going forward? What do I want/need to keep top-of mind?
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Capture Small Group Discussion Notes Here:

Leader Tip: Reserve the last 15 minutes or so of each meeting to wrap up the previous discussion, share the "big ideas" each week (see below); and review the next week's homework assignment (next page). This is also a great time to field any final questions/suggestions and finally, to close the meeting by inviting God in this journey with us.

The Big Ideas:

- We are innately self-oriented, prideful, and imperfect – it's in our nature and at the heart of the gospel
- It's not about trying harder...it's the power of the Holy Spirit living in and through us!
- You won't make progress without being intentional
- Humility and selflessness is our call; even as strong, capable men/husbands

Leader Tip: Remember to send out the blog written by Benj and Erica Miller on Sex and intimacy this week in advance of next week's meeting – it is posted here under "resources":

www.menyourmarriagematters.com

Review reading assignments for week 5 (see next page)

Closing prayer (recommend having a participant lead the closing prayer each week)

Week 5: Pre-read the following sections:

Strategies #3 through #8 from “22 Practical Strategies”: (starts on page 41)

3. Your wife can make the first move...but it almost never works (page 41)
4. Forgiveness and repentance (page 42)
5. Communications (page 44)
 - Assume the best of intentions, not the worst (page 46)
 - Women confront to connect (page 47)
 - The 5 love languages (page 47)
 - Transparency and vulnerability (page 48)
 - Learn to fight fair (page 49)
 - Marriage staff meetings (page 51)
6. Sex and intimacy (page 52)
7. Staying married is about burning the ships (page 54)
8. Joy is found when you stop expecting your spouse to make you happy (page 55)

Homework Assignment: Prepare for these checkpoint questions on your progress-to-date:

- What has changed, if anything, since we started this journey?
- What are your ‘lessons learned’ so far?
- Your commitments going forward to improve the health of your marriage:
 - Attitudes?
 - Time allocation and priorities?
 - Other?

Leader Tips: Welcome and opening prayer

Invite the group to have an open discussion on reflections from previous week’s discussion and “aha’s” from this week’s reading or application (10-15 minutes). As issues/topics are raised, don’t feel compelled to provide “the answer.” Instead, your role is to facilitate the discussion by asking others to react, inviting other perspectives and sometimes sharing your own insights. Effective facilitation is a balancing act between encouraging the men to share but not allowing any one (or a few) to dominate the discussion. It’s the process of participants struggling with the challenging questions and principles in the book and study guide that God will use to open each man’s heart to the truth in God’s Word and His design for marriage.

- Reflections from the previous week’s discussion/to-do’s:
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- Key “aha’s” on this week’s readings:
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- **Discussion starter: Key questions/topics for discussion with the whole group or small table groups: (60 minutes):**
 - i. Checkpoint Questions on our progress to date: see homework assignment above **Leader Tip: It's important that all participants not just ponder these principles but genuinely begin to apply them. This is a great checkpoint to discuss, as a group, the progress (or lack thereof) the men are making in applying these concepts.**
 - ii. **Strategy #3** Your wife can make the first move...but it almost never works. Why?
 - iii. **Strategy #4** - Forgiveness and repentance – is there one (or even a few) unconfessed sins in your marriage that are worth praying about confessing and repenting? **Leader Tip: Share an example in your marriage when confession and forgiveness had a profound impact in your relationship with your wife and emphasize the verses on pages 42-43 in the book to reinforce the Biblical relevance of these principles.**
 - iv. What makes this confession and repentance process so difficult? Do you agree this has the potential to profoundly change your relationship for the better?
 - v. **Strategy #5** - Which of the “Communications” topics were most useful and why?
 - Assume the best of intentions, not the worst
 - Women confront to connect
 - The 5 Love Languages
 - Transparency and vulnerability
 - Learn to fight fair
 - Marriage staff meetings
 - vi. Men’s unwillingness to give their wives the freedom to say exactly how they feel is at the heart of relationship disagreements. Do you agree, or not? Why?
 - vii. Can you imagine the closeness we could experience if we accept our wives totally into our confidence?
 - viii. **Strategy #6** - Sex and Intimacy - Have you experienced the difficulties that arise based on the difference between men and women and our sexual drive/motivation? Why would God design us this way? **Discussion starter: Solicit feedback on the Sexual intimacy Blog written by Benj and Erica Miller (see homework at the end of Week 4 in this leader’s guide) – was it helpful? Did it help put into words what you and many husbands struggle to articulate related to sexual intimacy?**
 - ix. In your view, how important is sex in a marriage relationship?
 - x. Note: From Gary Thomas in his book, *Sacred Marriage* – the strong sex drive in a husband is one of God’s designs to keep a man focused and interested in the relationship as he should be. Agree or not? How masterful was God’s design?
 - xi. **Strategy #7** – Is staying married really about ‘burning the ships’? How absolute is this in your marriage?
 - xii. **Strategy #8** - Joy is found when you stop expecting your wife to make you happy – do you agree? What’s the source of your joy? What part of this resonated with you?
 - xiii. What expectations do you have for your wife in your marriage? What about desires?

- Your thoughts?
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- What's my action plan going forward? What do I want/need to keep top-of mind?
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Capture Small Group Discussion Notes Here:

Leader Tips: Reserve the last 15 minutes or so of each meeting to wrap up the previous discussion, share the “big ideas” each week (see below); and review the next week’s homework assignment (next page). This is also a great time to field any final questions/suggestions and finally, to close the meeting by inviting God in this journey with us.

The Big Ideas:

- Confession, repentance, and forgiveness will bring healing and are often the door between mediocrity and abundance in your marriage
- Effective communications is less about technique and far more about our attitude, transparency, and vulnerability
- Sex and intimacy is one of the spiritual ‘fruits’ of our Christ-likeness, not the goal

Review reading assignments for week 6 (see next page)

Closing prayer (recommend having a participant lead the closing prayer each week)

Week 6 – Pre-read the following sections:

From “22 Practical Strategies”:

9. The couple that prays together, stays together (page 57)
10. Loving others at the expense of your wife (page 57)
11. We’d give up our life for our wife, but won’t take her advice (page 58)
12. Does your enthusiasm for your wife match your dog’s? (page 59)
13. Marriage as the training ground for life (page 60)
14. Are you dating your wife? (page 60)
15. Marriages without margin will struggle (page 61)
16. Don’t do life alone (page 62)
17. This trip requires some unpacking (page 63)
18. Five feet for five minutes (page 63)
19. Managing money together (page 64)
20. Marriage and raising kids (page 66)
21. Empty nest stage (page 68)
22. For those aspiring to marriage (page 71)

What Constitutes Success? (page 74)

Leader Tips: Welcome and opening prayer

Invite the group to have an open discussion on reflections from previous week’s discussion and “aha’s” from this week’s reading or application (10-15 minutes). As issues/topics are raised, don’t feel compelled to provide “the answer.” Instead, your role is to facilitate the discussion by asking others to react, inviting other perspectives and sometimes sharing your own insights. Effective facilitation is a balancing act between encouraging the men to share but not allowing any one (or a few) to dominate the discussion. It’s the process of participants struggling with the challenging questions and principles in the book and study guide that God will use to open each man’s heart to the truth in God’s Word and His design for marriage.

- Reflections from the previous week’s discussion/to-do’s:
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- Key “aha’s” on this week’s readings:
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- **Discussion starter: Key questions/topics for discussion with the group: (60 minutes) Note: Allocate 20 minutes to Strategies #9 through #21 and 40 minutes to the general discussion questions that follow – they represent a good set of wrap up questions that tie the entire 6 weeks together.**
 - i. **Strategy #9** - Do you and your wife pray together regularly? How can you become more intentional in this area?

- ii. **Strategy #10** - Do you tend to treat other people in your life even more graciously than your wife?
- iii. **Strategy #11** – What makes welcoming/accepting advice from your wife difficult?
- iv. **Strategy #12** - Does your enthusiasm for your wife match your dog's?
- v. **Strategy #13** - Do you believe that the lessons God designed for us to learn in marriage can make us more effective in other relationships (children, friends etc.)?
- vi. **Strategy #14** - Are you dating your wife? What's the evidence to convict you?
- vii. **Strategy #15** – Do you and your wife have enough margin in your life/marriage? What can you do to create more?
- viii. **Strategy #16** – Do you have other Christian couples that you 'walk' with and mutually support? How can you proactively find one or more?
- ix. **Strategy #17** – Have you and your wife 'unpacked' some of the trials and tribulations in your respective pasts to better understand their impact on your marriage? How can you begin to do so?
- x. **Strategy #18** – Have you tried this small experiment?
- xi. **Strategy #19** – Are money-related issues a strength or weakness in your marriage? What can be done to improve in this area?
- xii. **Strategy #20** – What are the biggest challenges in raising your children that impact your marriage?
- xiii. **Strategy #21** – What worries you most about the empty-nest stage of your married life? How can you proactively address these challenges?

General Discussion Questions:

- I. Common objection: "Won't a wife who is always shown preference become selfish?"
- II. Can you recall times when you weren't receptive to your wife's needs because you felt like your burden was greater than hers (or workload, etc.)?
- III. Sometimes it takes years for a wife to trust her husband again. Does it sometimes get tempting to "give up" on dying to self and becoming more Christ-like when we're not seeing a change in her response to you?
- IV. If you had to write on a piece of paper your commitment to become more Christ-like, what would it say? **Discussion starter: Invite a couple of the men to share an excerpt of their prayer/commitment as they feel comfortable/led**
- V. There's an immense need for workers in the field of struggling marriages. Do you have a heart to help others in this arena of marriage?
- VI. Have you tried to define what "success" looks like in an abundant marriage for you and your wife? Does she share your perspective?
- VII. Be prepared to discuss your progress in this journey over the past 6 weeks!
- VIII. Should your wife be encouraged to read this book? Why or why not?
- IX. What are your biggest questions that we haven't yet discussed in our group study?

- Your thoughts?
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- What's my action plan going forward? What do I want/need to keep top-of mind?
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Capture Small Group Discussion Notes Here:

Leader Tips: Reserve the last 15 minutes or so of each meeting to wrap up the previous discussion and to share the “big ideas” this week (see below). You may want to share this 9 minute video at this point that captures well the core principles from the book as spoken by John Piper, Paul Washer and Voddie Baucham: [Piper, Washer, Baucham 9 minute video](#) This is also a great time to field any final questions/suggestions and finally, to close the meeting by inviting God in this marriage journey with us.

This is also an ideal time to overview additional programs, resources, etc. that are designed to help strengthen and restore Christian marriages including church sponsored resources, counselors, books that you have found useful, etc. You'll find a one page handout of the 6 guiding principles on our website if you'd like to provide this as a handout to participants: www.menyourmarriagematters.com

Closing prayer (ask for a volunteer participant to lead)

The Big Ideas:

- Change/transformation in your marriage won't occur quickly – it's a marathon, not a sprint
- Success is not defined as a perfect marriage – it is our commitment to the journey to Christ-likeness (the rest is in God's hands)
- I pray that other men you know will benefit from what you're learning and applying!

Leader Tip: It's recommended that you send the survey questions listed below to participants following the last session in order to continue to refine and improve this program, the resources, and the approach.

Marriage Matters Final Session Survey Questions:

- What did you like about the book and/or the discussion meetings?
- What did you not like?
- You each shared your goals for the study in the first meeting – how satisfied are you that your goals were met? Why or Why not?
- Do you think it's practical to do this study over 6 weeks or would you prefer longer?
- Do you think there is an ideal group size? If so, what is it?
- What else would you change/add/delete about our study: Format? Timing? Location? Other?
- Any other thoughts, suggestions, or anecdotal stories any of you may have would be very helpful as I pursue this calling to help men to transform their marriages (and their life in Christ)!