

The Art of Marriage Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Do you enjoy watching any sports? If so, which are your favorite to watch?
2. How many weddings have you attended or participated in?

Read the following passage: Read Genesis 3:1-19.

Genesis 3 provides a powerful depiction of the entrance of sin into the human experience. The experiences of the man and the woman in the garden have been replayed countless times in the lives of every human who has ever lived: temptation, disobedience, hiding, shame, and relational discord. Significantly, in Genesis 3, these events play out in the context of a marriage, and, therefore, provide great insight into our marriage relationships.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. The serpent is an “intruder” in the garden and in the marriage of the man and the woman. He eventually persuades the woman to make a decision that will take the marriage in a very bad direction. We need to be vigilant to protect our marriages from intruders. Many of these intruders are good things that crowd out our time and energy and prevent us from investing in the marriage relationship. What are some practical “intruders” we need to guard our marriages from? How do we know when we’re giving our marriage sufficient time and energy?
2. The man and woman feel ashamed and exposed after eating the forbidden fruit. They try to cover themselves up with fig leaves. Each of us similarly has places of insecurity in our lives. How can a husband and wife practically speak and minister to each other’s places of insecurity? Read Song of Songs 1:5-11. Describe how the woman is feeling insecure. How does the man respond? What are some common places of insecurity for wives? For husbands?
3. When God questions the man and the woman after they have eaten the fruit, they each pass the blame to another party. Why do you think there is such a strong temptation to blame other people, particularly our spouses, for our attitudes and decisions?
4. Although other people certainly influence our decisions, ultimately, we are responsible for our attitudes and behaviors. Even though in marriage the “two become one,” we do not lose our individual personhood or identity. In our relationships with our spouses, what are we responsible for, and what are we not responsible for? Why is it a bad idea to try to take responsibility for a spouse’s attitude, reactions, or behaviors?

5. In Ephesians 5:33, Paul commands husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands. Interviews with hundreds of wives have shown that a majority of women feel loved when:

- Their husbands regularly reassure them of their love and make it clear that they are not secretly angry with them;
- Their husbands provide emotional security in addition to financial security;
- Their husbands listen, understand, and affirm them rather than try to “fix” them;
- Their husbands communicate that they treasure them, and are captivated by their beauty, inside and out.

If you are a husband, how well are you loving your wife in these ways? Explain.

6. Studies also indicate that men feel respected when:

- Their wives cheer on their desire to work, achieve, and conquer;
- Their wives acknowledge the effort they make to provide and protect;
- Their wives appreciate their ability to analyze and give counsel;
- Their wives engage them sexually.

If you are a wife, how well are you “respecting” your husband in these ways? Explain.

Pray