

BIG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

4.25/26.09 // FIREPROOF MY MARRIAGE: HE SAID / SHE SAID

BiG IDEA: Put the needs of others ahead of your own.

Most of this material is from the *Fireproof Your Marriage* small group curriculum (outreach.com)

// Ice Breakers _____

Option 1: If you're married, how did you meet your spouse, and what first attracted you to him/her?

Option 2: If you're single or single again, describe your level of agreement with this statement: "Men and women are SO different" - (1) Yes, worlds apart! (2) Not really, it's all hype (3) Never sure. What do you appreciate about the differences between the genders? What drives you crazy about the differences?

// Questions for Discussion _____

How do we fulfill our God-given roles in marriage? Remember that the objective for these sessions is to strengthen your marriage and encourage your partner. If you're doing this in a couples group, answer the questions honestly, but be careful to guard your partner's feelings; do not share anything that might embarrass or offend them.

Marriage works best when both husband and wife surrender their rights for the good of the other...and when we understand our differences and treat each other accordingly

1 What key word describes how a man should treat his wife? What does that look like in a relationship? Why is it such a critical issue?

Ephesians 5:22-33

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

2 What does respect look like within a marriage?

3 Why do you think men and women are different in what they need from their spouse?

4 What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "submit" especially in marriage? Why? How well does the idea of "submitting" fit into our culture?

5 Explain how "submitting" within a marriage is supposed to work.

6 What do these passages teach about the importance of communication and using our words to "build up" our spouse?

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Ephesians 4:29

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

7 On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high) how frequently do you use words that “build up” or support your spouse.

8 On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high) how well and how often you feel you listen to your spouse?

James 1:19

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN

1 Read through the quotes below. Which ones would make you feel most loved, if said by your husband. Why?

- “It sounds like you had a stressful day today. Would you like to talk about it? What happened?”
- “I really like that new haircut. It makes you look very pretty.”
- (In response to you calling him at work, sounding very upset and asking to talk with him.) “I have some people in my office, but I want to hear what’s wrong. Hold on just a minute, and I’ll get to a place we can talk privately.”
- “Those boxes are really heavy. Here, let me get them for you.”

2 Read through the quotes below. Which ones would make you feel most unloved. Why?

“I know your birthday is tomorrow, but I’ve been really busy.

- Here, you can take the credit card and spend 50 bucks on yourself.”
- “I heard John’s wife went to that new fitness class and lost 10 pounds. Why don’t you go check it out—it might make you feel better about yourself.”
- “When are you going to clean up this house? It’s a mess.”
- “Can’t you see I’m in the middle of watching the game?”
- You’re always wanting to talk about something when I’m trying to relax.”

3 Share some general comments about how you feel love. Why is emotional connection and understanding so important? What makes you feel most loved? What makes you feel most unloved?

QUESTIONS FOR MEN

1 Read through the quotes below. Which ones would make you feel most respected, if said by your wife. Why?

- “The garage door opener doesn’t seem to be working correctly and I know you’re better at understanding mechanical things. Would you take a look at it?”
- “My husband took the kids out to the park yesterday to give me a break. He’s really great about getting me the breaks I need.”
- “That’s great that you got a raise at work. You’ve earned it.”
- “I’m having a hard time with my co-worker—he has been undermining me with my boss. What do you think I should do?”

2 Read through the quotes below. Which ones would make you feel most disrespected. Why?

- “You’re not really a fix-it kind of guy—don’t you think you should call someone to repair that?”
- “When are you going to start being responsible and quit spending so much time on that dream of starting your own business?”

- “Last night, it took my husband three hours to figure out how to get the new computer working. Technical things are not really his strength.”
- “When are you going to start making more money at work? We really need to have more income to get all these bills paid.”

3 Share some general comments about what “respect” looks like. Why is respect such a critical issue? What make you feel most respected? What makes you feel most disrespected?

QUESTION FOR ALL

9 Marriage works best when you grasp the deeper meaning of marriage. Referring back to Ephesians 5, how is marriage a reflection of the relationship we have with Jesus? How important does that make marriage?

// Application _____

Commit to memory Philippians 2:4 (NIV)

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

What specific ways will you limit “unwholesome talk” and instead “build up” your spouse? Commit to taking those steps this week.

What are some specific ways you can become a better listener? Commit to taking those steps this week.

Husbands: Do or say one thing each day this week to make your wife feel loved. What?

Wives: Do or say one thing each day this week to communicate respect to your husband. What?

Singles: Add value to another person by doing something to make him or her feel loved or respected. Who? What?

As we struggle in the marriage relationship, we may find ourselves blaming one another for our negative experience. Remember that the behavior you can most effectively change is your own. Jesus said, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?” (Luke 6:41-42). Resist the urge to point fingers at one another. Focus on finding and correcting your own flaws so you can personally become more like Christ; this will diffuse anger and ease conflict.

// Prayer _____

Pray for the marriages in your group. Pray for singles in your group and their needs.

Pray about dying to self (self-centeredness), and surrendering, so that Jesus can fully live in you.

Pray that God’s selfless love flows through you to others.

Pray that God shapes you into a person worthy of respect.