

Enrich Your Marriage

group leader's guide

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This four-week discussion guide is ideal for small groups of six to twelve participants. If you are using this guide with a larger group of women, create multiple small groups of six to twelve that can consistently meet together for these discussions.

Each session includes:

- **Pair Up**—A chance for participants to reflect on their week’s experiences with a partner.
- **Tune In**—A brief time of prayer focused on tuning in to God’s presence.
- **Talk Through**—Small group discussion questions that open the week’s themes.
- **Reflect On**—Small group Scripture exploration and discussion.
- **Live By**—A brief time of prayerful corporate Scripture contemplation.
- **Step Out**—A concluding exercise focused on life application.
- **Offer Up**—A closing prayer to wrap up your meeting.
- **Plan On**—Specifics about preparation for next week’s meeting.



GOD'S GOOD GIFT

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 1–7 in *Enrich Your Marriage*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Enrich Your Marriage* days 1–7 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What do you most hope to gain from this four-week devotional journey exploring marriage? Why?
- Share about a couple whose marriage you admire. What stands out to you most about their relationship?
- Imagine a younger woman asked you, "What is the purpose of marriage?" How would you answer her? What key ideas would you include in your explanation? Why?

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Genesis 2:15–25**.

- What's your reaction to the idea that Adam's "not good" aloneness was not a mistake—rather that God created humanity with an innate need for relationship? (Encourage participants to interact with the ideas in day 2 "Ponder.")
- God also created us as sexual beings. What's your impression of the way the church speaks about sex and sexuality? In what ways has church gotten in right? On the other hand, have you ever felt confused, frustrated, or disappointed by the general Christian message about human sexuality? (Prompt participants to consider day 4 "Ponder" and their notes from day 4 "Examine.")
- In **Ephesians 5:31–32**, Paul directly compared a marriage relationship with the love-relationship between God and his people. In what ways has marriage given you a glimpse of what God is like? Or of what God's love and commitment to his church is like? Explain.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Ephesians 4:22—5:2**.

- Marriage is the ultimate training ground for living out the Christian life as we get the daily opportunity to show another person Christlike love and godly character. What's your reaction to reading **Ephesians 4:22—5:2** through a marriage lens? How does it inspire you? Convict you?
- How can even the difficult parts of marriage be God's gift to us? What's your reaction to this idea? (Encourage participants to refer to day 6 "Symbolize.")

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Ephesians 5:1–2** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Direct participants to reflect on **Ephesians 4:22—5:2**. Then select one specific word, phrase, or command from the passage that they feel led to focus on in their marriage. Prompt them to share that commitment with a partner.

OFFER UP

Close by challenging participants to pray for their partner and her husband by name, asking God to work powerfully and miraculously in their marriage during this devotional journey.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 8–14 for next week’s meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting. Also direct participants to bring a wedding picture to next week’s meeting.



HOPES . . . HURTS . . . HEALING

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 8–14 in *Enrich Your Marriage*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting, as well as a wedding picture.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Enrich Your Marriage* days 8–14 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

Have everyone hold up her wedding picture for the rest of the group to see. Then as a small group, talk through these questions:

- What first attracted you to your husband? Explain.
- What were you thinking the day you got married? What were the main hopes, fears, dreams, or expectations you had of marriage?

- Now look at that handsome guy in your picture and try to read his mind. What was your husband thinking about? What do you think were his main hopes, fears, dreams, or expectations of marriage?
- What is your reaction to the notion that idealized expectations of Christian marriage are actually dangerous? (Encourage participants to refer to day 10.)

REFLECT ON

Have a volunteer read aloud **1 Corinthians 13:1–13**.

- This passage can be viewed in two ways when it comes to married love: (1) as the expectations you have of the way your spouse is supposed to love you; or (2) the expectations you have for the way you are to love your husband. Which view of the passage do you naturally tend toward? What is most challenging about the second way of understanding this passage?
- Marriage inevitably involves legitimate hurts and disappointments. What do you think are the most common hurts, conflicts, and disappointments women face in marriage? (*Note:* You may have participants who are dealing with serious marital issues such as domestic abuse, pornography addiction, or adultery. If you suspect that is the case, connect those participants with a pastor who can offer professional help.)
- How can keeping a record of wrongs in marriage negatively affect the record-keeper (1 Cor. 13:5)?

Invite a volunteer to read **Colossians 3:13** aloud.

- How does this passage challenge you in the way you relate to your husband? Share an example of a specific situation in which you could have been more patient (“bear with each other”) or more generous in your forgiveness toward your husband.

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **1 Corinthians 13:4–5** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
 Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
 Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
 Amen.

STEP OUT

Ask participants to privately write down one to three items from a record of wrongs they've been holding against their husband. These might be specific incidents they feel resentful about or could be an attitude of irritation or lack of patience they have toward one of their husband's faults or habits. Clarify that whatever they write is completely private.

OFFER UP

Close by leading the group in a time of silent prayer, prompting participants to offer their hurt and bitterness to God in honesty. Then lead participants in ripping their papers to shreds in order to represent their choice to fully forgive with God's help. As participants drop the scraps in a garbage can, say "Amen!" together.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 15–21 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



Love (in *Real* Life)

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 15–21 in *Enrich Your Marriage*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Enrich Your Marriage* days 15–21 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What's one positive way your relationship with your husband is different now than it was when you first fell in love?
- Imagine you were writing a short pamphlet describing the stage of marriage you're in. What benefits or highlights would you point out in a short, bullet-point list? What negatives or challenges for this stage of marriage would you warn others about?

- If you've been married for more than twenty-four hours (weddings and honeymoons excluded), you know that marriage doesn't happen in fairy-tale land; rather, it's situated squarely in the middle of messy, stressful real life. What are some of the main factors of daily life that strain your marriage at times?
- How does stress and strain usually show itself in your marriage? In conflict? Resentment? Taking each other for granted? Something else? (Encourage participants to reflect on day 16 "Journal" and "Interact.")

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **1 Thessalonians 5:18**.

- From a spiritual perspective, why do you think it's so critical for Christ-followers to be people who embrace life—even difficult circumstances—with gratitude?
- How can a grateful mind-set transform a person? How can gratitude transform a marriage? (Encourage participants to refer to the experiences on days 18 and 19.)

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Ephesians 5:21** and **Philippians 2:3–7**.

- When is it most difficult for you to have an attitude of self-less service and mutual submission in your marriage? Share an example.
- How do you most desire to grow in grace, gratitude, service, and love toward your husband? Explain.

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Philippians 2:3–4** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
 Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
 Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
 Amen.

STEP OUT

Direct participants to form pairs and each share one specific answer to this statement: “I’m really thankful that my husband . . .” (They can highlight an action like “. . . works hard to provide for our family”; a character trait, like “. . . is faithful to me”; or something else like “. . . is a great dad to our kids.”)

Challenge participants to sincerely communicate that gratitude to their husband today—such as in a verbal conversation, mailed thank-you note, or text message.

OFFER UP

Close by leading the group in praying selflessly by focusing the group prayer entirely on participants’ husbands. Invite participants to take turns praying for their husbands’ spiritual lives, emotional well-being, and other important issues in their lives.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 22–28 for next week’s meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



My Lover, My Friend

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 22–28 in *Enrich Your Marriage*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Enrich Your Marriage*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Enrich Your Marriage* days 22–28 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- Imagine you were able to survey all of the husbands of the women in this group. How might they answer this question: What made you first fall in love with your wife?
- Now imagine how they'd respond to this question: What are your number one frustrations in your marriage today? What answers might you hear?

REFLECT ON

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Proverbs 16:24; 17:22; and 31:12.**

- What's your response to these passages in the context of your marriage?
- How do they speak to the tone you set in your relationship? (Encourage participants to refer to day 22 "Examine.")

Invite a volunteer to read **Song of Songs 5:16** aloud.

- What do the words *lover* and *friend* mean to you? Try to describe each concept fully.
- How might your husband answer the same question? What insights can you gain from the way his answer might contrast with yours?

Invite volunteers to read aloud some of the passages listed in day 26 "Examine."

- Do you think these commands are easier or harder to live out with your husband than with other Christians (like friends in church)? Share some examples.
- Which role strikes you as the area you most need to work on: lover, best friend, or spiritual sister? (Encourage participants to reference days 23–26.)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Ephesians 3:16–19.**

- What changes might you need to make in your thought-life and habits in order to come to your marriage from a position of confidence, strength, and spiritual maturity rather than from neediness, weakness, or insecurity? (Encourage participants to refer to day 27.)

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Ephesians 3:16–19** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Challenge participants to take seriously their powerful role of friend in marriage by committing to do one fun thing with their husbands in the upcoming week. The caveat: This must be something the participant's husband wants to do. (Prompt participants to review day 25 "Journal" and "Ponder" to guide their thinking as they come up with a commitment.)

OFFER UP

Close by directing participants to privately pray through Ephesians 3:16–19. Instruct them to first focus on prayer for their husband's spiritual life, then second to utilize it in praying about their own spiritual lives.

Plan On

Remind participants to complete days 29–30 on their own, being sure to highlight the Go Deeper ideas.

Optional: Organize a time for your group to gather at a park (or in your church) so that each participant can find space alone to do the Go Deeper "Prayer Immersion" experience. Afterward, gather together for women to share how God has been at work in their marriages.