



I CONFESS...



Stuff Christians struggle with,
but are afraid to admit

Small Group Teaching Guide
MAY 21, 2017



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying 1 Peter 1:1 - 3:7. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation..

DETERMINE

Many questions have been included in this guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

PRAY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study and your group's openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

God shapes you through marriage's joys and difficulties.



GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What do you do when a relationship is difficult; when it seems more life-taking than life-giving? Maybe you don't see eye-to-eye on a certain issue. Maybe one of you doesn't feel loved or cared for by the other. God designed marriage (and relationships for that matter) to be a blessing, but also something that shapes us. This week your group will take an honest look at marriage and how to find joy and growth in relationships, even when it's difficult.

Q: *If you're married, what do you enjoy most about marriage? If you're not currently married and hope to be one day, what is it that you look forward to concerning marriage?*

Q: *Why, to have our marriages be clear displays of the gospel, does marriage require intentionality and work?*



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

A WORD FOR WIVES

Epistles in the New Testament were written to real people facing real problems. These various letters show us how, even among 1st century Christians, relationships got messy at times. Peter wrote his first epistle to believers in the thralls of suffering and persecution. He encourages his readers by directing them to the Gospel and the truth that believers are to live differently in a world that rejects Christ. He wants his readers to understand that what believers believe about the Gospel changes their relationships, including marriage.

In one section of Peter's letter, he gives instructions for wives and husbands. This section gives us insight into what a godly relationship should look like. First, Peter addresses wives and instructs them to submit to their husbands. Peter isn't saying women are inferior to men. What he is saying is that husbands are called to lead in marriage and women should honor that role. How does a wife honor her husband? By allowing her inner beauty to shine through her respect, purity and gentleness. Living this way can soften even the hardest hearts of unbelieving husbands.

READ: *Read 1 Peter 3:1-7. What stands out to you in this passage?*

Q: *How does a wife reflect God in her role within a marriage?*

A WORD FOR HUSBANDS

Next, Peter instructs husbands. Husbands aren't to lord their authority over their wives. Instead, they should honor their wives. How does a husband honor his wife? By respecting her and seeing her as a spiritual equal ("heirs with you of the grace of life"). When a husband fears God, he will do everything in his power to honor his wife rather than exploit, demean or abuse her.

Q: *Think of a married couple that honors one another well. What can you learn from them?*

Q: *How does a husband reflect God in his role within a marriage?*



LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

Expectations matter in marriage (or any relationship for that matter). They affect every aspect of our relationships. They affect the way you see your spouse, yourself, your kids, your problems and your future. Unrealistic expectations put you on an unhealthy path leading to disappointment, hurt and stagnation. In any healthy relationship, expectations are clearly stated and understood. Clear expectations put you on a better path leading to fulfillment, healing and growth in a relationship.

EXPECT TO WORK

The truth is, you have to fight to keep your marriage in this world. Consider the context of Peter's letter. His readers were suffering. They faced opposition and needed encouragement to remain faithful. In the midst of hard times, the

easy way out can be tempting. For some, the easy way out is putting off that conversation you know you need to have. Others try to avoid pain by becoming emotionally distant or disengaged. Some use overwork as an escape route when a relationship gets tough. But no one who ever took the easy way out made their marriage stronger because of it. Just the opposite. Marriage is hard work, but it's work that you do together.

Q: *Imagine a friend confides in you she's struggling because marriage is too hard. How would you counsel her?*

EXPECT TO CHANGE

Couples that expect to work should expect to change. One of the clearest signs of a strong marriage is that both continue forward in their path of sanctification. Peter challenged his readers to change. Rather than see beauty in externals, Peter called on wives to see the inward beauty of heart and character. He called on husbands to understand their wives and elevate them to a rightful place of honor (something unheard of in Peter's day). Marriage moves us to change. From selfish to serving. From stubborn to teachable. From demanding to giving.

Q: *What's one area of your life you'd like to grow? If married, how would that affect your relationship?*

EXPECT TO FORGIVE

We all have flaws. At some point, you will fail your spouse, and your spouse will fail you. And that will cause pain and disappointment. Are you willing to forgive your spouse and cover the failure with love and grace? Forgiveness isn't about ignoring or excusing sinful, foolish behavior. That should be addressed and dealt with. In the end, forgiveness is a choice to say, "I love you in the midst of your mistakes."

Q: *What makes forgiveness difficult? How do you overcome that difficulty?*

EXPECT TO ENJOY

If you're not married, maybe you're wondering, "If marriage is so tough and involves suffering, is it really worth it?" For sure, marriage can be a challenge, but it's a challenge that can shape you more into the person God intended you to be. You were designed to receive love and give love. Marriage allows you to experience a deeper level of intimacy, friendship and wholeness with another person. In marriage, you learn to depend on God and not your own strength. As you become more of the person God intended, your joy in God—and in life—increases.

Q: *Where do you see joy in marriage? Where do you see pain? What does that teach you about God?*



LEAD

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

DIALOGUE IN CONFLICT

Let's face it. You're going to experience conflict in a relationship. Conflict is common in relationships, because no two people see the world quite the same. We each bring our own opinions, beliefs, personalities and feelings into a relationship. Because of this, there will be times when those differences cause tension or disagreement. When there's conflict, your goal should be dialogue. In healthy relationships, couples feel safe enough to freely and honestly share their views and opinions. Dialogue enables you to get accurate information that helps you make better choices in a relationship.

Q: *What difference would it make in your relationship if you had more dialogue in conflict?*

Q: *What's one thing you could do this week to be more understanding and honoring in your marriage [or relationships]?*



PRAY

If you're married, go to God with your marriage. Ask Him to reveal any areas where you're not honoring your spouse. Pray for realistic expectations in your relationship and a more understanding, forgiving spirit. If you're not married, ask for God to reveal ways you can honor others and have healthy relationships.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read *Ephesians 5:22-33* and consider how Paul's instructions for wives and husbands relate to Peter's.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.



COMMENTARY

“DO NOT LET YOUR ADORNING BE EXTERNAL” – Peter isn't prohibiting women from expressing their personality or fashion sense. Rather, he's saying that true beauty comes from within. Godly character should be the focus of any godly woman.¹

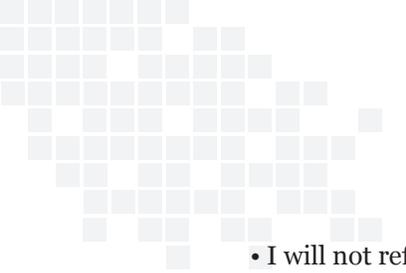
WEAKER VESSEL - “This refers primarily to a woman's physical weakness relative to a man's strength, not her moral character or mental capacity.”² The Bible affirms equality between men and women. However, men are called to lead in the institutions of marriage and the church.

BE A PEACEMAKER - In Matthew 5:9, Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Being a peacemaker is a powerful witness to others. As believers, our posture should always be that of a peacemaker in conflict. When you experience conflict, seek to do the following:

1. Glorify God (demonstrate God's grace in conflict) [1 Cor. 10:31]
2. Dislodge the log (enter conflict with humility) [Matt. 7:5]
3. Gently restore (speak the truth in love) [Gal. 6:1]
4. Go and be reconciled (restoring is more than simply confronting) [Matt. 5:24]³

I PROMISE - When you are ready to forgive someone, consider the following Four Promises of Forgiveness:

- I will not dwell on this incident.

- 
- 
- I will not refer to this incident again or use it against you.
 - I will not discuss this incident with others.
 - I will not allow this incident to get between us or hinder our relationship. ⁴

ENDNOTES:

1. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2409.
2. Douglas J. Moo, "The Letters and Revelation," in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2544.
3. Taken and adapted from Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004).
4. *Ibid.*