
BIBLICAL

MARRIAGE

**SMALL GROUP
DISCUSSION
GUIDE**

MIKE D'ATTOMA

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

By: Mike D'Attoma

Based on *BIBLICAL MARRIAGE* by Dr. Dave Earley

SECRET 1: BUILD ON A SOLID FOUNDATION

“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.” The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.” (Genesis 2:18–25, CSB)

1. What is the value in a strong foundation? Why is a foundation so important?

2. What is so important about the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:6, and Mark 10:8-9?

3. What is the primary foundation that our marriage should be built upon?

4. Of the 9 foundation builders that Dr. Earley mentions, which 3 come naturally to you and your spouse?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

5. Of the 9 foundation builders that Dr. Earley mentions, which 3 are more difficult for you and your spouse?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

“No couple has to go it alone. God Himself is ready, willing, and able to lend His wisdom, guidance, and strength.”

- Dave Earley

SECRET 2: FULFILL YOUR VOWS

“This is another thing you do. You are covering the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands. And you ask, “Why?” Because even though the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, you have acted treacherously against her. She was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant. Didn’t God make them one and give them a portion of spirit? What is the one seeking? Godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, so that no one acts treacherously against the wife of his youth. “If he hates and divorces his wife,” says the LORD God of Israel, “he covers his garment with injustice,” says the LORD of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.” (Malachi 2:13–16, CSB)

1. What is the difference between a covenant and a contract?
2. Why is the word covenant so important in the Bible?
3. What does it mean that the “two become one” in covenant marriage?
4. What does it mean that “Biblical marriage is a sacred, lifelong covenant between *three* people”? Who are the three people?
5. How does viewing our marriages as covenant marriages, rather than contractual agreements, strengthen our marriages?
6. Gary Thomas, in *Sacred Marriage*, poses this question: What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy? Discuss this question and truth.

“Christian marriage is not merely a social contract between two people. Biblical marriage is a sacred, lifelong covenant between three people—husband, wife, and God.”

- Dave Earley

SECRET 3: PUT GOD FIRST | GO TO GOD

“Unless the LORD builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain; unless the LORD watches over a city, the watchman stays alert in vain.” (Psalm 127:1, CSB)

1. What is so encouraging about the reality that God is committed to help us in our marriages?
2. What is the primary objective for us as followers of Christ?
3. As we, husband and wife, grow in our relationship with God, what tends to happen in our relationship with one another?
4. Why is it so valuable to pray with your spouse? Do you find this easy or difficult to do together?
5. Why is it so valuable to worship with your spouse? Do you find this easy or difficult to do together?
6. How can serving together deepen your relationship with God and with your spouse?

“Be encouraged. Right this moment, Jesus is addressing the Father on your behalf, and on behalf of your mate and your marriage. Jesus is praying for your marriage. . .right now!”

- Dave Earley

SECRET 4: CELEBRATE YOUR DIFFERENCES

“The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:20–24, CSB)

1. What is the greatest difference between you and your spouse?
2. How does celebrating our differences strengthen the marriage?
3. Describe a clear example of how you and your spouse responded in a completely different manner to the exact same situation.
4. What is the beauty in the way God gave husbands and wives different responsibilities?
5. Fill in the husband/wife responsibility chart below from the verses in each box.

| HUSBAND | WIFE |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ (Ephesians 5:23) | 1. _____ (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1-6) |
| 2. _____ (Ephesians 5:25, 33) | 2. _____ (Ephesians 5:33) |
| 3. _____ (Ephesians 6:4) | 3. _____ (Titus 2:4) |
| 4. _____ (1 Timothy 5:8) | 4. _____ (Titus 2:5) |

6. What are your spouse’s top 3 love languages?

*“Remember, it was probably your differences that first attracted you to your mate.”
- Dave Earley*

SECRET 5: LOVE AND RESPECT

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.” (Ephesians 5:25, CSB)

“To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33, CSB)

1. Why is love and respect so important to a strong marriage?
2. Why is love so important to the wife? Why is respect so important to the husband?
3. The question, “Doesn’t my husband need to first earn my respect?” is often posed. How would you answer that question?
4. How can unconditionally respecting your husband result in God receiving glory?
5. How can unconditionally loving your wife result in God receiving glory?
6. Wives, which of the RESPECT acrostic is easy for you to do for your husband? Which is difficult?

“Realize that if God commands you to do it, He is obligated to enable you to fulfill His command.”

- Dave Earley

SECRET 6: MEET YOUR MATE'S NEEDS

"I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?" (2 Corinthians 12:15, CSB)

1. What is your mate's greatest need?

2. How does Jesus describe love as an investment?

3. What does Williard Harley refer to as the "love bank" ?

4. Read 1 John 2:17-18, and James 2:15-16. What do these verses have to do with meeting your spouse's needs?

5. Husbands need respect. Wives need love. How is the husband, according to Ephesians 5:23-29, 33 supposed to love his wife? (Four Key Elements)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

6. Husbands, Which of the seven expressions of love from "Biblical Marriage" come naturally to you? Which are more difficult?

"Just as men deeply need respect, women deeply need love."

- Dave Earley

SECRET 7: IGNITE THE ROMANCE

“Take me with you—let’s hurry. Oh, that the king would bring me to his chambers. We will rejoice and be glad in you; we will celebrate your caresses more than wine. It is only right that they adore you.” (Song of Solomon 1:4, CSB)

1. What is the easiest way for you to express your love for your spouse? The most difficult?
2. What is so evident in Song of Solomon 4:1-7?
3. What is even more evident in Song of Solomon 4:9-11?
4. What is so important about the pace of what is happening in Song of Solomon 4? What does this reveal about the man in Song of Solomon?
5. For the Gospel to be good news, it means there must have already been bad news. What is the bad news? (See Romans 3:23; 6:23)
6. Why is romance and responsiveness so important for sexual intimacy?
7. Husbands: How can you be more romantic? Wives: How can you be more responsive?

“When husbands focus on being more romantic, and wives focus on being more responsive, romance is ignited, passion is renewed, and love is deepened.”

- Dave Earley

SECRET 8: AFFAIR-PROOF YOUR MARRIAGE

“My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen closely to my understanding so that you may maintain discretion and your lips safeguard knowledge. Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her words are smoother than oil, in the end she’s as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps head straight for Sheol. She doesn’t consider the path of life; she doesn’t know that her ways are unstable. So now, sons, listen to me, and don’t turn away from the words from my mouth. Keep your way far from her. Don’t go near the door of her house.” (Proverbs 5:1–8, CSB)

1. Of the 5 Barriers to Adultery that were mentioned in the book, which make the most sense to you? Do you struggle with any of them?
2. What is the importance of always building up your spouse in public?
3. What is the danger in sharing personal, emotional feelings with a member of the opposite sex who is not your spouse?
4. How have you experienced the sufficiency of God’s grace and power?
5. What is so important about Proverbs 5:18-20?
6. How can you “woo” your spouse in a way that you have not in a long time?

“Keeping your covenant with your mate is right and honors God, whether you feel like it or not. Remember, in the Bible, you are commanded to love your spouse, whether you feel like it or not. Nine times out of ten, after you do the right thing, you will start feeling it.”

- Dave Earley

SECRET 9: FILL YOUR MATE'S TANK

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11, CSB)

"Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor." (Romans 12:10, CSB)

"Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2, CSB)
"For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love." (Galatians 5:13, CSB)

1. How do realistic and unrealistic expectations play a crucial role in our marriages?
2. Describe the idea of the "relationship tank" and its capacity + importance of being filled.
3. Which of the several "Marriage Relationship Tank Fillers" mentioned in the book are easiest for you? Which are more difficult?
4. Why is encouraging your spouse often so critical?
5. Which of the "Marriage Relationship Tank Fillers" does your spouse respond most favorably to?
6. This week, what can you do specifically to fill your spouse's tank?

"By helping each other through tough times, the difficulties will draw you closer together instead of driving you further apart."

- Dave Earley

SECRET 10: CONNECT WITH YOUR MATE'S HEART

"Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7, CSB)

1. Why can connecting with each other's heart be difficult in a marriage?
2. How is listening a sure way to understanding and connecting with your spouse?
3. In our media-saturated, screen-saturated culture, why is giving your full attention to your spouse so meaningful in a marriage?
4. How can "being a student of your spouse" be very beneficial in a marriage?
5. From this chapter, what are four ways you can honor your spouse?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
6. Why is continuing to DATE so important in a marriage?
7. Take a few minutes to schedule a date night with your spouse. Work out all the details. Put it on the calendar!

Strong marriages are the result of solid friendships. Such friendships are forged, and deep connections are developed, by remaining loyal in the face of great adversity.

- Dave Earley

SECRET 11: RESOLVE CONFLICT

“Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithful love; according to your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me. Against you—you alone—I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. So you are right when you pass sentence; you are blameless when you judge. Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within. Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Turn your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt. God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit.” (Psalm 51:1–12, CSB)

1. Why is humility so important in marriage, and specifically in conflict resolution?
2. Do you find it easy, or difficult to genuinely say these phrases to your spouse:
 1. “I was wrong” Easy or Difficult (Circle one)
 2. “I am sorry” Easy or Difficult (Circle one)
 3. “Please forgive me.” Easy or Difficult (Circle one)
 4. “I Forgive you, and I love you.” Easy or Difficult (Circle one)
3. What is the importance of “looking in the mirror” in resolving conflict?
4. Of the questions listed on the last page of the chapter, what questions were difficult for you to answer? What made them difficult to answer?
5. How do you and your spouse typically handle conflict?
6. At this time, is there anything for which you need to ask for forgiveness from your spouse, or offer forgiveness to your spouse?

God says that no matter who causes a problem in a relationship, both parties are to take steps to resolve it (Matthew 5:23-25). Fairness and fault are not the issue. What’s important is taking the initiative to be reconciled (Matthew 18:15).

- Dave Earley

SECRET 12: LEARN TO FIGHT FAIR

“Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, and don’t give the devil an opportunity. Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” (Ephesians 4:25–32, CSB)

1. Why is “fighting fair” so important in our marriages?
2. How can conflict resolution actually strengthen your marriage?
3. Why does honesty carry so much weight in a marriage?
4. Why is there so much value in “...not letting the sun go down while you are angry”?
5. Why is how you say something just as important as what you say?
6. What “gunpowder” words do you find yourself often using?
7. What is the danger of allowing bitterness to settle and fester?
8. What keys to fight fair do we get in Ephesians 4:32?

“Use the inevitable conflicts of life to draw closer to your mate, not further apart. Make the effort to be honest about conflict and approach it with self-control. Work toward resolution and use conflict to build bridges, not walls. Replace bitterness with active love.”

- Dave Earley