

## ***Being God's Man.....***

### ***By understanding a woman's heart***

#### ***Introduction***

As Christian men, we crave true to life honest and revealing Bible study curriculum that will equip us for the battles that rage in our lives. We are looking for resources that will get us into our Bibles in the context of mutually accountable relationships with other men. But like superheroes who wear masks and work hard to conceal their true identities, most of us find ourselves isolated and working alone on the major issues we face. Many of us present a carefully designed public self while hiding our private self from view. This is not God's plan for us.

Let's face it. We all have trouble being honest with ourselves, particularly with other men.

We believe that many of the problems among Christian men today are direct consequences of an inability to practice biblical openness – being honest about our struggles, questions, and temptations – and to connect with one another. Our external lives may be in order, but storms of unprocessed conflict, loss, and fear are eroding our resolve to maintain integrity. Sadly, hurting Christian men are flocking to unhealthy avenues of relief instead of turning to God's Word and to one another.

We believe the solution to this problem lies in creating opportunities for meaningful relationships among men. This Bible study series is designed to be thoroughly interactive. When a man practices biblical

openness with other men, he moves from secrecy to candor, from isolation to connection, and from pretense to authenticity.

Men really do want close friendships with other guys. We don't enjoy living on the barren islands of our own secret struggles. However, many men choose to process life, relationships, and pressures individually because they fear the vulnerability required in small group gatherings. *Suppose someone sees behind my carefully constructed image? Suppose I encounter rejection after revealing one of my worst sins?* Men willingly take risks in business and the stock market, sports and recreation, but we do not easily risk our inner lives.

You probably already know how easy it is to get into a relationship with a woman, but it's not so easy to make the relationship work well. It takes energy. It demands effort. It requires education.

The fact is none of us would ever embark on an important project, a significant career change, or a major athletic challenge without gathering all the tactical knowledge possible to ensure a good outcome. Yet when it comes to relationships with women, most of us fail to apply the simple principles that make us successful in other areas of life.

The good news is that God says He's available to help, if we choose to accept it. But there's a catch: God's man must truly connect with God's purposes before he can truly connect with his wife (or potential bride). God uses our relationships with women to promote growth in our lives because it shows us where we come up short and drives us to Him for solutions. He knows the quality of that relationship will never surpass the depths of His character. And character is His specialty. If we want

true intimacy and connection with a woman, we need to grow up and graduate from God's school of character. This is where we trust God will bring you through this study. We hope you'll experience many breakthroughs in your beliefs and character so that these changes will impact your relationship with a woman.

The goal in this study is to stimulate personal reflection and honest dialogue with God and with other husbands (or future husbands) about these matters. As you work through each session, look in the mirror at your own life and ask yourself some hard questions. Also realize that complete honesty with you, with God, and with others will produce the best results.

## ***Week 1***

### ***Trust!***

#### ***I Desire the Right Motive***

#### **Key Verse...**

*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. John 14:21 (NIV)*

#### **Goals for Growth....**

- Expose wrong motives in my relationship with my wife
- Adopt the right motives for pursuing change in our relationship
- Experience a closer relationship with Christ

#### **Connect with the Word....**

Read 1 Peter 3:7

What two commands speak to the husband in this text? Why do you think God instructs husbands to focus on these two areas?

What does the command for a husband to understand his wife imply about the way men typically approach relationships with women?

What does this command imply about the way God views women?

What do you think it means to “live with your wives in an understanding way”? What does it mean for you in terms of everyday living?

What consequences will we experience if we do not heed these commands?

What does this tell you about God's heart and His desire for your relationship with your wife?

### **Connect with the group.....**

*Group opener....*

I (Fred) had trampled Brenda, crushing the opportunity for oneness in our marriage. I had stampeded her concerns, stepped on her feelings. Such trampling is sinning against your wife.

Yes, I said **sinning**. If you're thinking I'm off the wall and you're ready to put this material down, don't move so fast. Most of us Christian men sin against our wives regularly, but we're just too blind to see it. Odds are, you're a bit blind, too. So why do I say trampling instead of sinning?

The word sin has lost its communication value in our culture partly because it's considered too judgmental. No one likes to be called a sinner. That's for people who are really bad.

More important, sin no longer has a consistent meaning among Christian men. While we can all agree that sin is bad, we have trouble agreeing upon what qualifies as sin. Most of us smugly believe that we never sin against our wives. Most of us smugly believe that we never sin against our wives. Our hit parade of sins comes from the Ten Commandments and since we haven't stolen from or lied (oops) to our wives or cheated on them, we're in the clear, right?

Not really. Our definition of sin is far too narrow. Many of us go through life without understanding the full height, breadth, and depth of God's definition of sin. Instead of asking, "How holy can we be?" we prefer to ask, "How far can I go and still be called a Christian?"

And how far we go depends upon the benchmarks set by our peers rather than by God. Under such a scenario, we miss standing in the center of God's holy ground, preferring instead to roam the outer edges where we step outside the lines too often. And if we find a few Christian brothers out there with us, we simply move the boundaries out a bit farther.

### **Discussion questions....**

Do you think the writer's assessment is right: "Most of us Christian men sin against our wives regularly, but we are just too blind to see it"? Why or why not?

When have you trampled on your wife, crushing the opportunity for connection in your marriage?

Are you consistent in assessing your own actions as you are in evaluating your wife's actions? Explain.

Why do you think husbands tend to cut themselves so much slack?

According to 1 Peter 3:7, why might we want to pursue a different way of relating to our wives?

Why are our wives often skeptical of our promises to change?

Think about the biblical motive you should have for connecting with your wife. What happens to the "control factor" in a marriage (the

tendency of husband and wife to control each other) when a man obeys God?

**Standing strong.....**

What aspects of your connection with your wife would you like to be different? Write down a few of your ideas.

What steps will you take to realize those goals?

Write a prayer expressing your desire to be God's man in your marriage. Let God know of your willingness (or unwillingness) to do whatever He asks or requires of you in the relationship. Invite God to meet your right where you are.

## Week 2

### Acceptance

#### I Want to Be Loved with Christlike Love

##### Key Verse.....

*But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 NIV*

##### Goals for Growth.....

- Recognize that God loved me most when I deserved it least.
- Reflect this same love toward my wife
- Recommit to assuring my wife verbally of my acceptance and appreciation.

##### Connect with the Word....

Read John 8:2-11

What were the teachers of the law and the Pharisees asking Jesus to do?

Was there a justification for exposing the woman's sin that made sense to her accusers?

To what extent was the woman's sin the real issue? What was the hidden agenda of the religious leaders?

What do you think of Jesus' answer to their question? What was His clear message to the accusers?

What affect do you think Jesus' handling of the situation might have had on the woman in the days that followed?

## **Connect with the group.....**

How do you react when your wife's faults come out?

- I magnify those faults
- I withhold love until she corrects her faults
- I love her in spite of her faults

Based upon your experience and or/observations, what impact does faultfinding have on a marital relationship? Give a specific example if you can.

What do you think goes through a woman's mind when her husband criticizes her?

What fears does your wife have? What can you do to show her unconditional love and acceptance as she struggles with her fears?

How does negativity gain a foothold in a relationship? What can we do to avoid falling into that mentality?

Think about your family of origin and your upbringing. Recall how your parents related to each other and displayed affection – or how they failed in these areas. What impact does your family background have on your marriage relationship today?

What steps can you take to become more tender toward your wife?

Ask your wife whether she feels loved and accepted by you. You might simply ask her, "What do I do that makes you feel loved and accepted or unloved and rejected?" Write some other possible questions below.

Spend a few minutes praying with your wife this week and express your desire to love and accept her based on God's love for you. (Plan to report to the group next week about what you did and said.)

## Week 3

### Connection

#### I Want You to Know Me Before You “Know” Me

#### Key Verse....

*My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19 NIV*

#### Goals for Growth....

- Understand what listening communicates to a woman
- Identify poor communication skills
- Learn to listen and be present with my wife

#### Connect With the Word....

Read James 1:19

What commands do you find in this verse? What do these commands suggest about our tendencies in relationships?

Do you think learning to effectively listen to your wife is part of God’s plan for you?

What do we communicate to others when we talk too much and listen too little?

How do you think God uses our listening in other’s lives? How does it minister to them?

Read Proverbs 18:13-14

What behavior is discouraged in verse 13?

When we answer before listening, what does this say about us?

What is one possible affect our lack of listening can have on our wives?  
(verse 14)

When we mentally or verbally answer before listening, what negative impact does this have on communication?

### **Connect with the group.....**

In general, would you say you make room for your wife's thoughts – or do you snuff them out? Explain.

In what ways can you relate to the description of the styles of communicating and listening before and after the wedding?

Why do men tend to invalidate the emotions of their wives by shutting conversation down or avoiding it altogether? What is our fear?

Why is it a sin against your wife to snuff out her voice and feelings?

Does becoming a good listener diminish your manhood? Why or why not?

Does your wife feel as if she has a significant voice in your life? See Proverbs 31:11-12. How do you know?

### **Standing Strong....**

List the obstacles that are preventing you from being a man who's quick to listen and slow to speak. Then pray and ask God to help you understand and honor your wife by becoming a better listener.

Your assignment for this week is: After things are shut down and the kids are in bed, ask your wife to tell you about her day. Give her your undivided attention for as long as she wants.

## Week 4

### Headship

#### I want Spiritual Leadership

#### Key Verse.....

*Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

*1 Corinthians 11:3*

#### Goals for Growth....

- Take responsibility for building a strong personal spiritual life
- Promote and support spiritual values and actions in my marriage and family
- Encourage my wife's spiritual gifts, pursuits, and dreams.

#### Connect with the Word...

Read 1 Corinthians 11:3

According to this verse, to whom is the man responsible?

Why does God emphasize the man's submission to Him before He assigns the man a position of spiritual leadership in the marriage?

What confidence should this sequence give a woman with respect to her husband's leadership? Do you see this type of confidence in your own wife? Explain.

What happens when men don't follow God's leadership sequence?

What purpose did Jesus' submission to His Father serve while He was a man on earth? What did He model for us that we can apply to our marriages?

What is the role of the head for the physical body? How does this metaphor apply to spiritual headship in marriage?

Read Ephesians 5;21, 25-33

In your own words, describe the analogy between a spiritual relationship (Christ and the church) and a human relationship (husband and wife).

According to verse 25, how are spiritual love and leadership expressed?

What was the main reason "Jesus gave himself up" (verses 26-27)? How does Jesus' example apply to you and your responsibility in your marriage (verse 28)? What are you called to do?

### **Connect with the group.....**

Think back over years of marriage. How has your walk with God affected your ability to provide spiritual leadership for your wife and family?

To what extent does your wife trust your walk with Christ? How do you know? How has this affected her level of trust in your leadership in other aspects of your relationship?

Was your own father the head of your household? In what ways does his example in spiritual leadership affect you today? Positively or negatively?

Does your wife see you as the spiritual leader in your marriage? Why or why not?

In what ways do you encourage your wife to grow spiritually?

Do you lead out of a heart of serving your wife? If so give an example.

What, if anything, is God calling you to consider doing differently so that you can better connect with your wife's needs for spiritual leadership?

How can this group help you achieve a greater level of spiritual connection with your wife?

### **Standing strong.....**

Write down at least one new way you can connect with your wife spiritually this week. Be specific. (for example, pray with her, serve her quietly, do a project she needs done, take over reading the Bible to the kids, etc.)

Reread Ephesians 5:25-33 and reflect on your responsibility as a husband. Pray for God's direction and His support of your efforts to meet your wife's need for spiritual leadership.

## Week 5

### Compassion

#### I Want a Strong Man with a Soft Heart

##### Key Verse....

*Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. Psalm 112:4 NIV*

##### Goals for growth.....

- Recognize that compassion is a core character quality of God
- Develop this quality in my own character
- Practice compassion toward my wife and others

##### Connect with the Word....

Read Luke 7:11-17

Why was the widow's situation so serious for a woman of that day?

How did Jesus respond to the woman (verse 13)? What emotional reaction did Jesus experience before He expressed compassion verbally to the woman?

Have you, like the widow, experienced God's compassion? If so, how?

Read Luke 15:11-24

What did the younger son have to experience before he came to his senses?

What do you think was going through his mind as he started home?

What did Jesus want His listeners to know about His Father in this parable?

Look at verse 20 again. What emotional and physical process was involved in the father's response to his son?

What enabled the father to express so much energy and compassion to his son?

Do you think the father's overwhelmingly compassionate response matched the reaction the son had been expecting? Why or why not?

**Connect with the group.....**

To what extent was your father a compassionate man? In what ways do you think his ability – or inability to show compassion impacts you today?

Based on the Bible passages you've studied, what does it mean to be compassionate?

How do you usually respond to people who are experiencing great loss or remorse?

How do you respond when your wife needs emotional support?

Based on the parable of the prodigal son, what experience should drive God's man toward a lifestyle of compassion and caring?

Finish the sentence, using as many different descriptions as possible:

God's compassion is.....

How does your wife expect you to react when she shares a struggle she's experiencing? What does this tell you? (Think: do I feel her pain and enter into it? Or do I avoid it and let her work things out?)

What practical first steps can a man take to develop a soft heart without sacrificing a strong personality?

Let your imagination go for a moment: What impact would developing a Christlike compassion have on your marriage?

### **Standing strong.....**

List some ways you could begin reaching out compassionately to those whom God has put in your life. Start with your wife and family, then include others.

Write a prayer thanking God for His mercy and compassion toward you. Ask Him to give eyes to see and the courage to help those who need to experience His compassion through you.

