

The Savvy Bride's Answer Guide
Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: What Does It Mean to Be a Wife?

If a Martian were to watch each of the following TV reruns, what might he or she conclude that being a wife means? How does that differ from the ideas offered in this chapter?

- *The King of Queens*
- *The Simpsons*
- *Trading Spouses*
- *The Cosby Show*
- *Leave It to Beaver*

This chapter quotes several Bible verses describing husband-wife relationships. Here are principles from those verses. How do you feel about each part of this job description?

- Wives should be helpers to their husbands.
- Wives are to respect their husbands.
- A wife notices, regards, honors, prefers, and esteems her husband.
- A wife defers to, praises, loves, and admires her husband.
- Wives are to be good-natured, kindhearted.
- Wives adapt and subordinate themselves to their husbands.

Now read Proverbs 31:10-31. How is this job description different? If you were going to schedule a 15-minute activity this week that displayed each principle, what would it be?

Chapter 2: Why Isn't My Husband the Person I Thought He Was?

What misconceptions did Erica bring into counseling? What ultimately worked for her? What didn't? Why?

Based on the advice in this chapter, what would you do if you discovered one of the following about your husband?

- He only pretended to share your interest in ballet.
- He's already married to someone else.
- He doesn't really want to go to church after all.

- He leaves his fingernail clippings on the bathroom floor.
- He'd rather have his stomach pumped than talk about your relationship.

Chapter 3: Why Isn't My Husband More Like Dad?

How is the relationship between a daughter and father different from the one between a wife and husband? Knowing this, why would so many wives compare their spouses to their dads?

Make a list of your father's top ten strengths. Then make a list of your husband's (or fiancé's) top ten strengths. Make sure, though, that no strength that appears on one list appears on the other. Share your list with a partner; if appropriate, thank God together for the strengths on both lists.

Chapter 4: Why Won't He Talk to Me?

How much talking is enough for a husband and wife? How do you know? How much do you think would be enough conversation on each of the following topics in an average week?

- your relationship
- the children (if you have any)
- politics
- your faith
- money
- work

Which of the following "conversation stoppers" do you need to watch out for this week? How will you do that?

- accusing or blaming
- demanding longer talks than your partner is ready for
- trying to talk when the other person is stressed or tired
- overwhelming your partner with more emotion than he can handle

Chapter 5: How Can I Get My Husband to Open Up?

Is it hard to imagine a husband complaining that his wife won't share her feelings? Why or why not?

What do you think of the Ten-Minute Plan? Find a partner in your group and make a list of the five chapters in this book that you'd be most interested in using for this exercise. Then make a list of three discussion questions you could use for each of the five chapters. Are you willing to try the exercise this week? Why or why not?

Chapter 6: How Can We Talk about Feelings?

Which of the following feelings do you find it hardest to talk about? Why?

- fear
- joy
- anger
- jealousy
- doubt
- sadness

“Many arguments are about misunderstanding the actual issue.” For the statements below, list as many possible interpretations as you can. What misunderstandings might arise in the mind of the spouse who was being addressed? How would you go about finding out what the speaker really meant?

- “That certainly was an interesting dinner.”
- “You never cease to amaze me.”
- “The car needs an oil change.”
- “I see from this receipt that you went out to lunch today.”
- “I have a headache.”

Chapter 7: What Does He Want from Our Love Life?

If you had to come up with a different title for this chapter—one that doesn't use any words from the current title—what would it be? How do you think most brides might phrase the question? Would they actually ask it of anyone? Why or why not?

In each of the following pairs, how are the two concepts different? How could understanding this affect a marriage?

- “Be secure in your own sexuality” versus “Look out for number one”
- “Affirm his masculinity” versus “Feed his ego”
- “Give him freedom of access” versus “Do your wifely duty”
- “Understand his sexual needs” versus “Go along with whatever he wants”
- “Help him stay faithful” versus “Keep an eye on him at all times”

Chapter 8: Why Does My Husband Keep Hurting My Feelings?

If Frank and Marie Barone of *Everybody Loves Raymond* exemplify an insensitive couple, which of the following are better role models? Why?

- Fred and Wilma of *The Flintstones*
- Jim and Cheryl of *According to Jim*
- Michael and Janet of *My Wife and Kids*
- Ma and Pa of *The Waltons*
- Jim and Margaret of *Father Knows Best*

Read Job 19. How were Job's friends like an insensitive spouse? How are Job's feelings like those of a verbally abused mate? What hope does he express about the future?

Chapter 9: What If I Want Children, but He Doesn't?

When do you think is the best time for couples to discuss whether they want children and, if so, how many they want? Have you and your husband (or fiancé) talked about this? If so, how did you feel about the result? If not, why not?

Find a partner and role-play one of the following conversations. Try to work in as many principles from the chapter as you can.

- You've been dating for three months, and your boyfriend mentions that he comes from a large family—an experience he “wouldn't want to repeat.” You want to find out how he feels about having kids.
- Your boyfriend has just asked you to marry him. You want to say yes but have never discussed your expectations about having a family. You feel it's important to talk that over before you give an answer.
- Your wedding is in two days. You and your fiancé haven't discussed having children. You're having your last “single” dinner together in a restaurant, and you're already on dessert.
- You've been married for six months. You're running out of contraceptives and ask your husband whether it's time to “let nature take its course.” You've talked only vaguely about having kids “someday,” and your husband looks very nervous.

Chapter 10: How Well Do I Need to Know My Husband?

Look at the nine questions listed in this chapter. What unpleasant surprises could arise as a result of not knowing the answers? How could knowing the answers make a couple's life easier, safer, more joyful, or more harmonious?

What answers to the nine questions would “freak you out” the most? Which of the following could help you prepare for answers you might prefer not to hear?

- praying together before you have your discussion
- having a counselor present during your talk
- asking no more than one question per week
- remembering that your husband (or fiancé) may have similar feelings about your answers
- other _____

Chapter 11: How Honest Do We Have to Be?

How would you answer the following questions from your husband (or fiancé)? Why?

- “Do you mind if I go play video games at Joey's house again?”
- “How about if we see *Alien vs. Predator 5* instead of *Four Funerals and a Wedding Shower*?”
- “Do you like that Ace Hardware gift certificate I got you for Valentine's Day?”

- “Will you kiss me even though I haven’t shaved or showered all week?”

How could you “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) in each of the following situations?

- You overspent your personal clothing budget by \$300 last month, hoping to hide the bills before your husband could see them.
- You have a sexually transmitted disease from an encounter with a previous boyfriend.
- Your husband’s haircut makes him look like he stuck his head in a blender.
- You’ve been having romantic dreams about a movie star.
- You’re still angry about your husband’s refusal to go to your nephew’s high school graduation 500 miles away.

Chapter 12: How Can I Get Used to Being Two Instead of One?

How is the “becoming one” of marriage like and unlike each of the following?

- a corporate merger
- mixing cake batter
- creating an alloy out of two metals
- $2+2=4$
- superimposing a photo of someone else’s head on a photo of your body
- singing a duet

If you’re already married, how has going from singleness to couplehood affected each of the following? If you’re engaged, what do you expect the effects to be? How might the advice offered in the chapter ease the transition in each area?

- the sounds in your home
- your taxes
- what you eat for breakfast
- how often you pray
- how you spend Sundays
- the smells in your kitchen

Chapter 13: Should I Tell My Husband about My Past?

What would you tell a newlywed wife about sharing the following with her husband? Why?

- having given up a baby for adoption ten years ago
- having smoked marijuana once in college
- having received Jesus as Savior at church camp
- having been molested as a child
- having been arrested for drunken driving at age 17

Based on what you know about the following Bible characters, what do you think they would need to tell their spouses about their pasts? Why?

- David
- Moses
- Eve
- Jacob
- Mary, mother of Jesus
- the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)

Chapter 14: How Can I Adjust to My Husband's Personality?

Do you think it's fair that spouses have to adjust to each other's personalities? Why or why not? Is there any real alternative to making that adjustment? Explain.

If you were a therapist, how would you use the principles in this chapter to counsel wives who came to you with the following concerns? What would you want the results to be?

- "I used to think he was funny, but now I see that he can't have a serious conversation about anything."
- "I thought he'd tone down his nitpicking once we got married, but he's gotten worse."
- "He keeps promising to be more optimistic, but the change never lasts more than a couple of days."
- "I don't remember him being so boring when we were engaged; he's not the same person."

Chapter 15: What Can I Do about His Irritating Habits?

How would you rank the following habits—from most irritating to least?

- snoring
- throat-clearing
- saying “uh” or “like” repeatedly
- being late for appointments
- failing to stop at stop signs
- leaving clothes on the floor
- forgetting to turn off the light when leaving a room
- not listening to you when you’re talking
- other _____

What factors (time of day, mood, other problems in the relationship, etc.) might affect how annoying a habit seems?

What are three good habits your spouse or fiancé has? How do you think he developed them? How might complimenting him on these habits help both of you with the ones that irritate you?

Chapter 16: Why Isn’t Marriage the Way I Thought It Would Be?

If you’re married, how has each of the following differed from your expectations? If you’re engaged, what *are* your expectations?

- the amount of time you’d want to spend with in-laws
- who’d do the cooking
- how often you’d talk on the phone
- how you’d feel at the end of the day
- how your spouse would look first thing in the morning

Why are the following responses to unmet expectations about marriage *not* a good idea? Based on this chapter, what would you recommend instead?

- “I’m stuck with him, so I’ll just grit my teeth and be miserable.”
- “I didn’t sign up for this. I’m outta here.”
- “I’ll ask my friends whether they have to put up with this.”
- “Wait ’til I tell my parents.”
- “I should have married my first boyfriend instead.”

Chapter 17: How Should We Divide Up the Chores?

What do you assume about how “most couples” handle chores? Check your assumptions against the actual experience of other group members. Any surprises?

If chores should be divided according to aptitude and attitude rather than gender or habit, what duties might be assigned to each of the following spouses?

- Spouse A is very organized and hates germs.
- Spouse B is good at math and tends to procrastinate.
- Spouse C can fix most anything and is forgetful.
- Spouse D knows how to cook and loves music.
- Spouse E likes talking on the phone and has a terrible sense of direction.

Chapter 18: What If My Spouse Won't Take the “Right” Role?

If you and your spouse (or fiancé) were running against each other for the following roles, how would the campaign go? What would be your slogan? If you tried to draft your spouse (or fiancé) for each role, what might be his reaction? Why?

- spiritual leader
- financial expert
- master mechanic
- social director
- chief cook and bottle washer

If you're pressing a reluctant spouse or fiancé to assume a new role, how would you answer each of the following questions?

- How are you being part of the solution?
- Are you encouraging him, or are you nagging and putting him down because he won't assume the role?
- When he's tried to do this in the past, did you criticize or correct him?
- What will happen if he never assumes the role?

Chapter 19: Do We Have to Have a Budget?

Find a partner. Have a three-minute debate on the subject of budgeting—one person for, one person against. Then tell the rest of the group about the arguments used, who seemed the most convincing, and why.

What do you think the budgets of the following people might look like? Why? How might a budget reflect your values and priorities?

- your parents, when you were 12
- the current president of the United States
- Jesus
- your next-door neighbor

Chapter 20: How Often Is Normal?

What numbers would you guess apply to each of the following? Why?

- the percentage of couples who discuss the “How often is normal?” question before they get married
- the percentage of couples who discuss that question during their first year of marriage
- the percentage of husbands who believe the answer to that question should be higher than their wives do
- the percentage of couples who feel pressured to meet a certain standard of frequency
- the percentage of discussion group members who’d like to skip this chapter

Which of the following is most helpful as you consider the question asked in this chapter? Why?

- the story of Brady and Deanna
- the statistic quoted
- the comments from the Mayo Clinic website
- hearing that every couple is different
- knowing that quality is more important than quantity
- expecting frequency to change depending on circumstances
- permission to be more intentional
- believing that sexual intimacy is a picture of spiritual union

Chapter 21: What If We Don't Like the Same Things Sexually?

How do you think each of the following might react to this chapter? Why?

- Jill and Mark
- Solomon
- someone who thinks it's okay to live together before marriage
- a husband addicted to online pornography
- a wife who was taught that sex is evil

What does "sexual compatibility" mean to you? How could an engaged man and woman determine whether they're sexually compatible without having sex? Is it necessary to know this? Why or why not?

Chapter 22: Why Don't We Speak the Same Language?

What evidence have you seen, for and against, regarding each of the following?

- "God chose to wire males and females very differently."
- "Men tend to use language to transmit information, report facts, fix problems, clarify status, and establish control."
- "Women are more likely to view language as a means to greater intimacy, stronger or richer relationships, and fostering cooperation rather than competition."
- "What one of you thinks is the other's hidden meaning can be 100 percent out of phase with what the speaker really intends to communicate."

What conclusions have you reached about whether husbands and wives can understand each other?

Form teams of three. One person plays the part of Ralph; one is Nancy; one is a translator who helps each spouse understand the other's meaning. Act out a conversation based on the one in this chapter. Then discuss the results with the whole group.

Chapter 23: Is It Okay to Fight?

How do you usually feel when each of the following happens? What does that tell you about your attitude toward marital conflict?

- watching a movie in which spouses have a loud argument
- overhearing a couple fighting next door or in a restaurant
- seeing a cartoon or comic strip that features bickering spouses
- your husband (or fiancé) giving you the silent treatment
- seeing a story about spouse abuse in the newspaper or on TV

Each of the following violates one or more of the chapter's 10 things to remember about resolving conflict without fighting. Which one(s)? How would you change each statement to resolve conflict but not fight?

- "You're always putting me down in front of other people."
- "You're late again. This reminds me of the time you wasted money on that dot-com stock."
- "If she thinks I'm going to accept her apology right away, she's crazy."
- "You're irresponsible."

Chapter 24: How Can We Work Out Disagreements?

"Can you imagine Jesus dealing with disagreements as we often do with our spouses?" How *did* He deal with opposition in the following cases? Which seem to have the most application to handling conflict in a marriage? Why?

- when He disagreed with His earthly parents' priorities (Luke 2:41-52)
- when He opposed the commercialization of the Temple courts (John 2:12-22)
- when He disagreed with Peter (Matthew 16:21-23)
- when He was threatened in Jerusalem (Luke 13:34)
- when He was at odds with the religious leaders (Luke 11:37-54)
- when He was being executed (Luke 23:33-34)

Let's say that you and your spouse (or fiancé) disagree over whether you should borrow money from your parents for a down payment on a house. How might each of the following principles guide your discussion?

- Pick the right time and place.
- Be prepared.
- Talk about yourself.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Learn to see through conflict.

- Bring God into the conversation.

Chapter 25: Do I Have to Forgive My Husband?

The author writes about the “cash register of marital history,” the “gunnysack of unforgiven hurts,” and the “pent-up poison of accrued bitterness.” What does he mean? How have these affected you or others you know? Can you come up with three figures of speech describing forgiveness (for example, the “clean slate of erased infractions” or the “relieved sigh of canceled debts”)?

What kind of forgiveness do you think would be appropriate to offer your husband in each of the following situations? Why?

- He forgets your anniversary.
- He slaps you during an argument.
- He is seen kissing an old girlfriend at a party.
- He is arrested for embezzlement.
- He admits that he’s only been pretending to be a Christian.
- He has an affair.

Chapter 26: How Can I Get Him to Forgive Me?

How did James get his wife to forgive him? Do you think she would have done so if she hadn’t been a Christian? Why or why not?

The author names three kinds of fear that an unforgiving spouse might have: fear of losing control or power, fear of not being able to punish the wrongdoing, and fear of forgetting what occurred. How could you help your mate overcome these fears in the following situations?

- You didn’t change the oil in the car, and now the engine needs to be replaced.
- You joked about your spouse’s weight problem in front of friends.
- You forgot he’s allergic to macadamia nuts and put some in his birthday cake.
- You invited a male coworker over to watch TV while your spouse was out of town.

Chapter 27: How Can Faith Keep Us Together?

How would you respond to married couples who say the following?

- “It doesn’t matter that we don’t have the same religion. We get along great anyway.”
- “Faith only keeps you together by saying you can’t get a divorce.”
- “Religion isn’t what makes the difference. Being in love is the important thing.”
- “Christians split up just like everybody else.”

How could faith in Christ and involvement in a church help a couple through events like these?

- miscarriage
- loss of a job
- irritation over an annoying habit
- death of a parent
- infertility
- moving to a new town
- foreclosure on a house

Chapter 28: What If an In-law Doesn’t Accept Me?

You’ve just gotten a new job, but your in-laws aren’t impressed. Your father-in-law says, “Well, if that’s the best you can do, it’s the best you can do.” How would you reply if you were using each of the following suggestions from this chapter?

- Drop the rope.
- Use humor.
- Don’t take things too personally.
- Forgive, forgive, forgive.

Try putting yourself in your in-laws’ shoes. What concerns might they have regarding your marriage? What hopes? How might they want to get to know you better? How might you help them with these concerns, hopes, and questions?

Chapter 29: How Can We Keep from Drifting Apart?

Are couples who have drifted apart likely to drift back together? If not, what do they need to do instead?

How would you explain the following drift-prevention steps to an eight-year-old child? If a child can understand them, why do so many adults have trouble taking these steps?

- becoming better listeners
- taking responsibility for actions and feelings
- avoiding blaming
- being more affectionate and considerate
- becoming partners in parenting
- respecting each other's differences
- supporting each other in extended family conflicts
- praying individually and as a couple
- journaling feelings to God
- placing a priority on time together
- submitting to God as the authority
- being proactive by creating a plan

Chapter 30: How Can We Keep the Romance Alive?

If all you knew of romance was taken from the following sources, what would be your definition of it? Would you think it possible to keep romance alive? Why or why not?

- a display of Valentine's Day cards
- a cartoon of Cupid shooting darts at people
- movies like *Enchanted* and *Sleepless in Seattle*
- advice columns in the newspaper
- songs recorded by Josh Groban, Celine Dion, and Whitney Houston
- songs recorded by Alanis Morissette, Snoop Dogg, and Marilyn Manson

How much time would it take you this week to do the following romance-sustaining activities? On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being "no problem" and 10 being "gut-wrenching paradigm shift"), how much of an attitude change would it require?

- honoring one another by being honest, kind, and respectful in your responses
- showing affection throughout the day without expecting sexual intimacy

- having a regular date night
- lighting candles or having a sweet fragrance in the bedroom
- praying together
- sharing feelings
- taking responsibility for your offenses