



Leader Guide for

Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married



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Introduction

TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

- Plan—decide when to meet, where, and how long each session will be. And for how long will your group meet? open-ended? six weeks? (It might make a difference to those who consider joining.)
- Some of the chapters of *Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married* are short, especially the first few. You might have your group be prepared to discuss two or three chapters per meeting at first and see how it goes. Be flexible.
- Create a safe environment so participants will know anything personal they might share will remain in the group.
- Encourage participation by asking questions: “Anyone want to add to that?” “Does anyone else have a different idea?”
- Make sure participants feel listened to; use eye contact, paraphrase, echo, restate what they say. Or, “If I understand you correctly, you’re saying . . . ”
- Try *why* or *how* questions to follow up.
- Stay on track, but if the discussion goes a different way than you expected but is still on topic and helpful, let it go. However, you don’t want the discussion to get way off the subject you’ve come to discuss!
- Don’t be afraid of silence while people are thinking; don’t jump in too quickly just to fill it.
- If you have a dominating person who feels he or she must answer every question, try calling on someone else [carefully—not everyone is comfortable with this]; or go around the circle and ask everyone for a response; or say, “Thanks, John, that’s interesting; can you hold that thought and we’ll get back to you?”
- Disagreement isn’t something to avoid. Affirm participants’ ideas and experiences. Every honest response has value.
- Be a facilitator, not a teacher. If appropriate for your group, consider taking turns leading the discussion.
- Follow up when someone misses the session.
- Consider a break from the format and just have dinner together.

Chapter 1

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT BEING IN LOVE IS NOT AN ADEQUATE FOUNDATION FOR BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE.

1. If you are single, how would you describe what being “in love” should feel like?
2. How long does Dr. Chapman say this “in love” feeling generally lasts after the wedding? Why might it change?
3. If you’re married, do you agree with Dr. Chapman’s conclusion about the “in love” euphoria? Have you noticed this in your own relationship? In relationships of others you observe?
4. How important is it to identify the social, spiritual, and intellectual interests each of you has? Can a couple still feel or be “in love” with contradictory value systems and goals?

Chapter 2

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT ROMANTIC LOVE HAS TWO STAGES.

1. What are the two stages of romantic love?
2. What are some different characteristics of these stages?
3. Name each of the five love languages and briefly describe each.
4. How can you determine your love language?
5. Do you know your primary love language? That of your spouse/fiancé? What is something practical you can do to demonstrate love to your spouse in light of his/her love language?

Chapter 3

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT THE SAYING “LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER” AND “LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON” IS NOT A MYTH.

1. If your parents have set a poor example in any area, are you destined to repeat it?
2. What does Dr. Chapman say about communication styles you saw growing up?
3. How can we determine whether communication (or other) patterns we were familiar with were healthy or just “were”?
4. What do you admire about your parents? How do you want to be like them in marriage? How do you want to be different?

Chapter 4

I WISH I HAD KNOWN HOW TO SOLVE DISAGREEMENTS WITHOUT ARGUING.

1. If you're married, did you expect to have conflicts after the wedding? If you're single, do you expect to have conflicts once you're married?
2. Does conflict mean the marriage was a mistake? Why or why not?
3. Dr. Chapman suggests setting up a "listening time" to discuss a conflict. Have you ever tried this? What was the result? (You might have an example between friends or at work, as well as between spouses or engaged couples.)
4. Dr. Chapman suggests three positive ways to resolve a conflict. Describe "meeting in the middle," "meeting on your side," and "meeting later." Have you tried any of these? If not, think of an example of a conflict that could be resolved using each or any of these.

Chapter 5

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT APOLOGIZING IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH

1. Why is it so hard for most of us to apologize?
2. What are the five languages of apology? Briefly describe each.
3. Different occasions call for different apologies. “I’m sorry I ate all the cookies.” “I’m sorry I made fun of you in public.” What do you expect to hear in a sincere apology? What apology language speaks to you the most?
4. When did you receive an apology that seemed sincere? What made it sincere to you?

Chapter 6

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT A FEELING

1. Forgiveness—giving and receiving—is hard to describe. How do you know when you have truly forgiven someone?
2. Forgiveness does not destroy our memory. How can you deal with painful memories?
3. Forgiveness does not erase the consequences of an act. How does acknowledging this truth help deal with wrongdoing?
4. How can trust be rebuilt after you have been hurt or have caused hurt?
5. Is there someone you need to be reconciled with? Obviously the most important person in your life is your spouse, but is there another you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from?

Chapter 7

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT TOILETS ARE NOT SELF-CLEANING

1. Household chores can be a source of major conflict in a marriage. What expectations do you have about this area? [Or if you're already married, what expectations did you have?]
2. How have your family patterns growing up influenced your expectations in this area?
3. Do you need to change your thinking about how any particular chores or duties will get done?
4. What role do willingness, abilities, and likes/dislikes play in household work?

Chapter 9

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT MUTUAL SEXUAL FULFILLMENT IS NOT AUTOMATIC

*Also, consider separating men and women for a more open discussion on this personal topic.

1. What do you think of Dr. Chapman's assertion that "... men focus on intercourse, while women focus on relationship"?
2. How can each of the five love languages figure in a couple's sexual fulfillment?
3. Do you agree that our culture's sexual mores have given many people skewed ideas about the purpose of sex? Why or why not?
4. There are many resources for helping married couples enjoy a sexually fulfilling relationship. Dr. Chapman recommends some. If you are the group leader, you might come prepared to this session to share resources. You'll especially want to find material that offers a Christian point of view.

Chapter 10

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT I WAS MARRYING INTO A FAMILY

1. Dr. Chapman says, “When you marry, you become part of an extended family. You cannot ignore this extended family. They will not go away.” If you’re not yet married, do these statements surprise you? If you are married, have you found these statements to be true?
2. What are some positives about the reality of your spouse’s extended family? What are some challenges?
3. Dr. Chapman identifies different areas that may call for understanding and negotiation: holidays, traditions, expectations (including religion), patterns of behavior. Can you offer examples from each of these areas that have been or could be sources of conflict? How can these be resolved?
4. How can good listening skills help you build a strong relationship with your in-laws?
5. How can the love languages help you build and maintain a positive relationship with your in-laws?

Chapter 11

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT SPIRITUALITY IS NOT TO BE EQUATED WITH “GOING TO CHURCH”

1. Dr. Chapman suggests that couples discuss the following questions: Is there a God who created the universe and made mankind in His image? Has that God spoken? If so, how? What has He said, and how have I responded to His message?
2. Have you and your fiancé or spouse discussed these questions? Do you have basic agreement on the answers?
3. Why is it important to be in basic agreement on spiritual matters?
4. If you are a Christian, what kind of Christian would you describe yourself to be? Refer to pages 115–117 as you discuss your answer.
5. Some couples have not talked through these issues before marriage. If you are married and discover your spiritual values are different from your spouse's, how can you keep the lines of communication open to live compatibly?

Chapter 12

I WISH I HAD KNOWN THAT PERSONALITY PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCES BEHAVIOR

*Tim and Joy Downs have written *One of Us Must Be Crazy . . . And I'm Pretty Sure It's You* to help couples understand and appreciate each other's personalities and ways of seeing the world. If you're the group leader, consider recommending this highly readable, enjoyable, and useful book.

1. Dr. Chapman discusses various personality types. How does he describe a pessimist and optimist in the areas of adventure and money management? Where do you and your spouse or fiancé fall in these areas?
2. How can “neatniks and slob” live together in harmony?
3. Before marriage, the differences between a “Babbling Brook” and “Dead Sea” can be attractive. However, after the wedding, conflicts can arise. How can these two personality types enjoy and live with their differences?
4. Another challenge is when passives and aggressives marry each other. How does Dr. Chapman describe these two types? How can they complement rather than compete?
5. A “professor” is the logical type, while the “dancer” is intuitive. Which do you tend to be? How about your fiancé/spouse? Is one better than the other? How can you enjoy each other's characteristics rather than try to press the other into your way of seeing the world?
6. How can an organizer and a free spirit learn to admire each other's tendencies?