

Foreword by Dr. Gary D. Chapman
Author of *The Five Love Languages*

Tools for a Great Marriage



*PRACTICAL HELP FOR BUILDING
A MARRIAGE THAT LASTS*

WILLIAM BATSON

Small Group Study Guide

A Small Group Study Guide for

Tools for a Great Marriage

by William Batson, MAFM

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PO Box 321 – Somersworth, NH 03878-0321
www.familybuilders.net
603-692-4895

Introduction

Welcome to the *Tools for a Great Marriage* small group study. We are pleased to provide this leader's guide as a small way of helping you lead a successful study of this book.

Studying with others is a very enriching and rewarding experience. You get to share in the wealth of insight a small group provides. Couples with a strong network of friends who believe in the value of long-term healthy marriages tend to have great marriages.

We have written 10 lessons for weekly, every other week, or monthly sessions with a group of married couples. You can abbreviate your study by combining sessions. If you use the weekly format, we suggest that you plan a fun time at the mid-point of the study. This may include something like a dinner or dessert night with some fun activities. Another fun and relaxing time at the end of the series is another means of having a successful group.

To help you with your small group study, we have designed the suggested format below. Of course, you are free to adapt this study guide to fit your own unique situation.

Suggested Session Format

- **Opening Prayer**
- **Sharing Question** – A question that helps couples get to know each other.
- **Chapter Discussion Questions**
 1. Allow at least 45-50 minutes for this part.
 2. You may not always be able to discuss every question listed in this section.
 3. When discussion and interest are high, you may take more than one session for each lesson.
- **Assignments** – Reading assignments and projects for the next session.
- **Prayer Time**
 1. Ask each person to share a prayer request that relates to him or her. It is better in this study to focus on the needs present in the room than on people outside the group.
 2. Encourage group members to write down these requests and pray for them until the next meeting.
 3. At each meeting, before giving new prayer requests, ask participants to share any answers to their previous requests.
 4. Conduct the prayer time according to what your group prefers. This may include going around the circle, choosing one person to pray a general closing prayer, or divide into smaller groups for the prayer time.
- **Announcements**

General Guidelines for Your Group

A successful small group study must have some general guidelines. Here are few that we have found helpful:

1. Set a definite beginning and ending time. Adhere to that schedule for the sake of those who have baby sitters and other commitments.
2. As the group leader, greet each couple as they come.
3. Set up the room for easy conversation with chairs in a circle, making sure that everyone can have easy eye contact with other group members.
4. Limit the size of the group to 12 people. This will enhance everyone's ability to participate.
5. Encourage group members to attend each of the sessions unless prevented by sickness or some other unpreventable event. It is their responsibility to call the group leaders if they are unable to come.
6. Refreshments may be served at the beginning or end of the study. You may decide not to have any refreshments other than a beverage. Do not let refreshments become a big issue.
7. Encourage members to share nothing about their marriages that will embarrass their mates.
8. Group members may "pass" on any question they do not want to answer.
9. To protect the integrity of the group, do not discuss with other people what group members share in the small group study unless you have their permission.
10. Any issues of concern that may create relational conflicts within the group should be brought to the attention of the group leaders before they are discussed in the group.
11. We have designed this study to be a group effort in discovering what the Bible teaches about marriage. Therefore, it is not necessary to have a lecture on the topics. The group leader(s) should encourage everyone to participate in seeking biblical truth and sharing what they discover. When questions are raised, the group leader(s) should not feel they have to have all the answers. Ask others in the group what they think.
12. It is not necessary to agree with everyone and some ideas may be challenged if they are not well grounded in the Bible. When doctrinal issues arise, you may want to speak with your pastor for any clarifications.

Session #1 – A Great Marriage Tool Bag

Chapter Idea: Every couple enters marriage with their own bag of tools, but many are frustrated by their attempts at fixing things. They either have the wrong tools or do not use the tools properly. Having the right tools in your marital tool bag and using them properly will help you build and sustain a great marriage.

OPENING PRAYER

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

1. Have group members introduce themselves (names, town they live in, number of years married, favorite junk food).
2. Review ground rules for the group sessions listed on page 2 of the Study Guide.
3. Make sure everyone has a copy of the book, *Tools for a Great Marriage*.
4. Explain the basic agenda for each session.
5. Ask if there are any questions about the group study.

SHARING QUESTION

1. What was the most unusual or the most creative wedding gift you received?

CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Introduce the study by reviewing the “tools” discussed in chapter one. You may want to display the tools and a tool bag to help couples visualize what the chapter is discussing. Ask them to think of other “tools” that might be symbolic of some aspect of the marriage relationship.
2. What would you like to gain from this group study of *Tools for a Great Marriage*?
3. How would you describe a “great marriage” to a couple considering marriage?
4. Ask a group member to read 2 Timothy 3:16. Discuss how the Bible can help couples build a great marriage. Ask for personal examples from the group. The group leader can model this with an example.
5. On page 18 in *Tools for a Great Marriage* there is a list of Bible verses that can be applied to married life. What are the real life differences that would be observed in a marriage that follows these guidelines?

ASSIGNMENTS

PRAYER TIME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Before the next session, each couple is to complete “Your Marriage Checkup” on pages 175 & 176. (Note to Leader: Offer to meet with each couple in your group to review the results of their checkup. This could take place in your home, their home, or at a coffee shop. Use the time to help them celebrate their strengths and give them guidance in how to improve their growth areas.)
2. Read Chapter Two and complete the “Tool Time for Couples.”

Session #2 – Building on a Great Foundation

Chapter Idea: The Bible, God’s Word, is the spiritual foundation upon which to build a great marriage. As you read and listen to its wisdom, putting into practice what you learn, you will establish a rock solid spiritual foundation for your marriage.

OPENING PRAYER

SHARING QUESTION

1. Where did you go on your honeymoon and what is one memorable moment (funny or serious)?

CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a key thought or lesson that stands out for you in this chapter?
(Note to Leader: This question is included in each of the following sessions. It is designed to help your group summarize the chapter content. Depending on your teaching situation, you may choose to simply summarize the chapter content yourself. This may be helpful in situations where people have not read the chapter for various reasons.)
2. Read Matthew 7: 24-27. According to Jesus’ teaching in this passage, how should a couple build their marriage?
3. The author, William Batson, wrote: “Unity and oneness in marriage is not automatic. It is the result of discipline, determination, and hard work” (p. 34). What do you do that promotes unity and oneness in your marriage?
4. How would you answer if someone were to ask you, “In what ways is your marriage uniquely Christian?”
5. What aspect of God’s character would you most like your marriage to reveal to the world?
6. After reading this chapter, what are three things you and your spouse want to do in the next 30 days to strengthen the spiritual foundation of your marriage?

ASSIGNMENTS

PRAYER TIME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Chapter Three.
2. Complete the “Tool Time for Couples.”