

Small Group Leader's Guide

Thank you for leading a Savage Marriage small group! You're embarking on a journey that will change group members' lives while reinforcing your marriage.

Many Savage Marriage group members have said their small group experience was the most impactful they had ever attended. Couples have found they can move forward in their marriages, spiritually and emotionally healthy, from struggles with conflicts, infidelity, addictions, sexual immorality, and wounds.

We appreciate your commitment and dedication to helping other couples overcome the trials and challenges of marriage—a journey worth taking! Please let us know you are leading a small group via email at phil.fretwell@savagemarriageministries.com. We'd love to include you in periodic opportunities for leaders to connect and discuss what they're learning!

Embrace and Share Your Testimony!

As leaders, you should supplement the *Savage Marriage Study Guide* with your personal testimonies and stories about your marriage, trials, challenges, and past. When you transparently share your struggles with the group, the honesty and transparency level of the group will go up significantly. Don't expect group members to be more transparent than you! For that reason, you will need to reach deep and ask God to help you embrace the humility to let others see that you aren't perfect and your need for God's grace in your marriage.

Group members

The optimal group size is three to five couples, plus you as the leaders. We encourage you to talk with each couple before the first meeting and confirm that they're a good fit for the group.

- Make sure they know what the study covers and how potentially transparent the group can become.
- Confirm that they are committed to attending all the meetings and completing each week's reading and homework.
- Share that each meeting should take approximately two hours, though it's not unusual for some meetings to stretch longer when group members have a lot to share.

Meeting Flow

1. If you elect to forego the introductory session (see below), you will need to include time during the first session to share your marriage testimony and orient the group to *Savage Marriage Study Guide*. You will also need to ensure everyone has purchased a copy of *Savage Marriage Study Guide* from Amazon.com prior to the first session, and that they have read the material for session 1 (but not the homework, which will be completed after the material for session 1 is covered in the group meeting).
2. Start each session by reviewing the homework from the previous week.
 - Use your discretion whether to review every question.

- Allow group members to volunteer answers. You may also need to call on people to help them be more engaged.
- 3. Try to finish the homework review in 30 to 45 minutes.
- 4. Use the remaining time to cover material for the new session, and have group members discuss the questions included in the reading. Remember to frequently share *your* examples to supplement the discussion. Your personal stories will encourage others to become vulnerable.

Remind group members that *Savage Marriage* doesn't have the power to fix everyone's problems, but God does! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, can God use *Savage Marriage Study Guide* to help restore marriages.

Introductory and Wrap-Up Meetings

Although *Savage Marriage Study Guide* includes nine sessions, you may want to add an introductory session and conclusion session. If so, your group will meet eleven times. If you decide to do this, please consider the suggestions below.

How to Hold an Introductory Meeting

You may want to schedule an introductory meeting before the first session to:

- help everyone get to know each other;
- discuss the overview of *Savage Marriage Study Guide*;
- share your testimonies of what God has done in your marriage; and
- discuss expectations and commitments for the group.

Additional Suggestions

1. Allow two hours for the meeting.
2. Consider providing an easy meal to help foster the group socializing to get to know one another.
3. Have name tags available and ask everyone to introduce themselves (you may want to do this for the first few sessions as well).
4. Discuss expectations and commitments for the group.
5. Discuss the introduction to *Savage Marriage*.
6. Acquire the book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Updated Edition* by Peter Scazzero and discuss with the group his concept of “Going through the Wall”, using his diagram on the book's page 99. You may want to use a flipchart or poster to illustrate the diagram. Note that the diagram covers the following typical stages of the Christian life:
 - a. Life-changing awareness of God
 - b. Discipleship (learning)
 - c. Active life (serving)

THE WALL

 - d. Journey inward
 - e. Journey outward (from inner life)
 - f. Transformed into love
7. Discuss how everyone goes through a “wall” at some point in their life.
8. Summarize your own story and the walls you've gone through. Use your introduction to let group members know you aren't perfect. Include a summary of your challenges and God's

rescue. Let them know you'll unpack the details of your story throughout the study. Be humble and transparent. Set the tone for openness and humility.

9. Express that your desire is for them to be able to share transparently, that the enemy creates fear about being open with others, and that everyone has a different pace toward their ability to share.
10. Express that we should share our own stories rather than someone else's. After all, God wants us to confess our own sins, shortcomings, and victories—not someone else's.
11. Ask each person to share
 - a. why they decided to come to Savage Marriage;
 - b. what they hope to gain from this journey; and
 - c. any walls they've faced.
12. Consider asking how their life has compared to the stages presented in point six above.
13. Review *Savage Marriage Study Guide* and refer to the table of contents. Review topic titles and assign meeting dates and times. Remind the group that each meeting should take about two hours.
14. Ask everyone to read Session 1 prior to the first meeting (or after the introduction meeting, if you choose to hold one).
 - a. They should endeavor to answer the questions embedded in the reading prior to attending the group session. Ideally, they would discuss the questions with their spouse prior to the group meeting.
 - b. Share that the group will be going through the answers at each meeting and they should come prepared to discuss what they learned.
15. Explain that homework activities should be completed **after** the group has reviewed the current session together. Each meeting will start with reviewing the homework activities from the previous session. Then the group will cover the reading materials for the current session. For example, Session 3 meeting will cover homework from Session 2 and then the reading for Session 3.
16. Share participant's contact information with the group.
17. Ask group members to make the following commitments to the Savage Marriage journey:
 - a. Attend every session unless providentially hindered, and let the leaders know if you cannot attend a session. The course builds on itself, so it's important to stay engaged in homework activities and attendance every week.
 - b. Be on time so group sessions don't continually run over two hours (some people may have babysitters and need to leave on time).

- c. Before each group session, complete the homework activities from last week's session, and read the new materials for the current session.
 - d. Come to each group session prepared to discuss the homework and reading.
 - e. Maintain the confidentiality of group members: What is shared in the group stays in the group.
 - f. Believe that God is going to do amazing work in your marriages!
 - g. Pray for each other.
18. Thank everyone for coming. Pray together and ask to God to create unity and transparency in the group.

How to Hold a Conclusion Meeting

If you decide to hold a final conclusion meeting after session 9, the objectives for this meeting are:

- Review homework from Session 9;
- Ask group members to share their New Identity Statements;
- Discuss their final action plans; and
- Pray for one another.

If you decided not to hold a final conclusion meeting, remind group members that they will need to have their homework, action plans, and new identify statements ready to share in Session 9.

Some groups have enjoyed having communion at the conclusion meeting, with husbands serving their wives. You can use your imagination to construct a special time of reflection. We've held times like this outside, with small tables, candles and music. It's done as a surprise at the final meeting, and has been well received.

Additional Teaching Points for Leaders

A few sessions provide opportunities for leaders to provide additional teaching, using the following points.

Session 2: Wounded No More

Wounds

Before covering Session 2, summarize for the group your wounds, their significance, and explain how they impacted your life. Bring out the following points:

- Acknowledge the pain and scars that wounds can create and remind the group that Savage Marriage is a safe place to share and receive healing.
- Because remembering wounds is painful, many of us bury them, believing the wounds will just go away if enough time passes, which isn't true.
- We look at the present through the lens of our past, and this includes sometimes continuing to feel the pain of a wound, even if it happened many years ago. A sign that indicates you have an unhealed wound is being overly sensitive when something brushes up against it (like brushing against a splinter).
- Past wounds can be very hard to discover. We need the Holy Spirit to search us to determine if there are any unhealed wounds. The exercises in Session 2 are designed to help us discover what wounds may be affecting us.
- Emphasize confidentiality of things shared within the group. While we are always free and encouraged to share our own stories, we should not share other people's stories in or outside the group.

Activity

Either present the following illustrations at the beginning of Session 2 to gain focus or after point four in Session 2.

What you'll need:

- A flipchart or poster board of the Two Roads diagram
- Two backpacks or duffle bags (Keep one hidden, filled with a few blocks to use later in the demonstration. It will be ideal if one bag has a small, separate or hidden compartment.
- 50 wooden blocks, approximately 2" x 2" (Hobby Lobby or Amazon are great places to find these)
- Markers to write on blocks

Before the group meeting: Write on 5 wooden blocks some common wounds many people encounter—each block a different wound, like alcoholism, verbal abuse, abandonment, etc. Put the 5 blocks in one of the bags.

Write wounds on 5 more blocks and place in a hidden area in the second bag.

At the Meeting:

Share that you're going to present a short illustration to show the impact of wounds.

1. Using the Two Roads diagram poster, draw in a “suitcase” at the fork in the roads.
2. **Present:** To fully understand the Savage Marriage journey, we have to acknowledge that we each come from a different background, and we each carry a bag full of experiences. We view our current life’s circumstances and experiences through the lens of our past. To deal with our experiences and see how we're each different, we need to unpack our pasts.
3. **Discuss:** Carrying our load of wounds makes it more challenging to navigate life's difficulties. While we may be able to manage most of our lives without a major issue, occasionally, our road is peppered with potholes of difficulties, making it harder to carry our bags of wounds. When our wounds become really heavy, or we hit “the wall,” we can crash—as illustrated by the meltdown on the Two Roads chart.
4. **Demonstrate:**
 - a. Dump out the 5 wooden blocks out.
 - b. Read the wounds on a few and put them back in the bag.
 - c. Distribute a few blank blocks to each participant and ask them to write typical wounds—one on each block—that come to mind. These can either be their wounds or wounds they've seen in other people. Participate with the group by writing wounds that come to your mind.
 - d. Ask group members to share what they've written and then toss their blocks in the bag. Add your blocks to the bag.
5. **Explain:** When we get married, we bring our baggage and look to our spouses for help. But we don’t realize our spouses have their bags. [Have your spouse bring out the hidden bag to illustrate they have a bag too.]
Also, some of us have wounds that are way down deep. [Reach into the hidden compartment to reveal the other deeper issues written on blocks, maybe your own wounds or rape, incest, abortion. Share your testimony about wounds that were hidden in your lives.]
6. **Summarize:** The goal of this session is to identify the wounds in our lives and bring them into light so we can be healed. Although this may be difficult, we can’t expect healing of wounds we can’t even talk about.

Session 3: Overcoming the Lies of the Enemy

When covering Statement 4, introduce the concept of the “three bottles.”

What you'll need:

- 3 plastic water bottles filled with dyed water: green for thoughts, blue for feelings, and red for actions.

At the Meeting:

Present the three bottles and share that they represent the connection between our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Explain: We do what we do (red bottle) because we feel what we feel (blue bottle) because we think what we think (green bottle).

We never do anything we haven't first thought about unless it's a reflex or programmed reaction based on previous thinking. Most actions, however, make at least a short trip through our emotions, even if it's a response we consciously know makes us feel good or bad.

[green bottle] Our minds interpret information received primarily through our eyes and ears, which becomes feelings [blue bottle]. And these feelings cause us to act [red bottle].

Hearing and seeing is how all advertising works: What we see or hear creates an emotional desire that leads us to buy. The mind also justifies our behaviors. Our thoughts make the hard decision of whether we should act on the thing we desire. Decisions of desire can be especially hard in questions of morality. We must remember that we don't ever do anything our minds haven't justified, at some point, as good for us and our right to do or have.

Thinking, feelings, and actions [three bottles] are a universal axiom for why we do what we do. This applies to all people—believers and unbelievers.

Nothing changes between these bottles until our words are used. Not sharing our thoughts enables us to continue processing increasingly dark thoughts and feelings [point out darkness inside the bag] and producing bad behaviors and outcomes [blocks].

Words that are God's words of truth poured and ingested in our thinking, feelings, and actions [all bottles] create spiritual changes. That's why we've been focusing so much in this study on bringing out our hidden thoughts, fears, and desires and talking openly about them. The words we use have the power to create new life or death.

Session 5: Experiencing Spiritual Intimacy

When covering the activity related to statement 6.f., generate discussion around the impact of occult practices. Pray with the group, encouraging them to renounce these practices and close any spiritual doors that were opened to the enemy.

Session 8: Becoming a Giver and Not a Taker

Present the following at the beginning of the session. Feel free to revise the points to reflect your personal situation.

What you'll need:

The two images at the end of this leader's guide:

- Light switch with a woman's hand
- Rubik's Cube in a man's hand

Explain: Sexual intimacy is an important and sometimes sensitive topic. So, before we get started, let's cover a few initial thoughts about this session:

- First, we are not sex experts. We have our own issues in this area, and God is continually at work in us to bring His vision of sex into our marriage. But we have seen God do a lot, and we're at a better place sexually in our marriage. [Or, substitute for your testimony.]
- We recognize that many couples deal with sexual issues that can seem insurmountable. They can also cause a great deal of pain. So, we don't want to treat the subject lightly or insensitively. We want to respect everyone. So, if we have a discussion that makes you feel uncomfortable, please raise your hand, which will indicate to us to slow down. We will then redirect the discussion to maintain an atmosphere of respect and love.
- We recognize that some couples have bigger hurdles than others in their sexual relationships because of past sexual trauma, infidelity, or addictions.
- Also, medical issues can cause sex to be difficult or even impossible. So, we don't want the discussion to seem as though we're inferring there are easy answers for everyone. While sexual intimacy may seem out of touch for some people due to complex issues, physical intimacy without sex can still be within your grasp. We'll talk about this aspect during the session.

As we head into this session, you may be anticipating learning something that will draw you closer in your sexual relationship. This can be complicated, so we've found a couple of pictures that capture what men and women are like sexually.

[light switch picture] This is what men are like. I love this light switch picture with a woman's hand. The light switch works the same way every time. It takes very little to make the light come on. Men are very predictable, easy to arouse, and easy to please. Sometimes, like in the picture, it only takes a finger!

[Rubik's Cube picture] But women aren't like a light switch. They're like a Rubik's Cube is in a man's hands. He tries to figure her out and needs both hands! The cube seems to work differently every time, and it takes a lot of studying to figure out how it works. Women are complicated and it takes time to understand them!

I think this picture of the Rubik's cube resonates with both men and women, but for different reasons.

- The man thinks the Rubik's cube is his wife's body, and he's just trying to figure her out sexually.
- He's hoping for a few tips and techniques that will create some excitement in bed.
- He knows she's full of knobs, buttons, and all sorts of other intrigues, and he's constantly observing and trying to solve her sexual puzzle.

- He's interested in his wife's participation in the sexual experience and hoping she's engaged, and she loves what he's doing, fulfilling all his desires, and she wants to do it again.

The wife, on the other hand, believes the Rubik's Cube is her heart.

- She knows she's complex, and she's hoping her husband will want to understand her heart, what she thinks, who she is, her wounds, and why she reacts to things the way she does.
- Her foremost concern is that he values her for who she is—not for what she can give to her husband sexually.
- She wants to be the object of his love, not the object of his lust.
- She can never perform sexually at a high enough level to satisfy her husband's lust, but she can embrace her sexuality in a way that fulfills her husband's desire for love.

We hope you keep these two pictures in mind as we think about what God wants to show us in the area of our sexuality.



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