

Group Leader Guide

Welcome to the guide we have created to help group leaders navigate the *For Couples Only* (FCO) study. This can be used with the FCO section of the 3-in-1 *For Women Only, For Men Only, For Couples Only* DVD study and Participant Guide. It can also be used with the *For Women Only* and *For Men Only* books alone. This Group Leader Guide will help you navigate the options for leading your group and arranging your discussion time after you watch the DVDs and/or read the relevant chapters in the books.

As noted in the Participant's Guide, this study was created to be flexible enough to work with whatever format is best for your goals and your group. Your decision about what your format and time frame is going to be for the study itself, will directly impact how you use the materials.

OVERVIEW

As noted in the Participant Guide, each of the six video sessions is made up of two segments—each roughly ten minutes—Part One (sharing surprises about men) and Part Two (sharing surprises about women). Each session in the Participant Guide includes multiple options for discussion questions and interactive exercises for your group (or, if you are counseling a couple, your couple), for both part one and part two topics. The intent is NOT for you to try to get through them all. Rather, this is a “pick and choose” tool, where you make the choices that are right for your use, the amount of time that you have, what looks most interesting to you.

Before your group meets the first time, we suggest you—the leader—scan the layout of session one to get a general sense of what questions and/or exercises to do in the first meeting. Once you see how it goes (for example, how long it takes to discuss Key Questions versus the Case Study), you can adjust as needed the following week.

NUMBER OF MEETINGS?

The most common use of this study will likely be in groups that meet for either six or twelve weeks, depending on if you do both parts one and two the same week, or do one each week. But you could also condense it by cutting out certain subjects (or discussing more topics in one meeting), or expand it by exploring one subject in greater detail over several meetings.

If you are using this in a one-on-one context, such as in premarital counseling, you may simply want to pick a few subjects and just discuss those chapters or just watch those few videos.

Below are a few format examples.

- A. Six-week study format: Complete your chosen segments for parts one and two for each session, every week for six weeks. Pick and choose a few of the discussion elements for each part, so the topics for men and women are equally represented.
- B. Twelve-week study format: Alternate weeks, completing session one, part one (about men) the first week, then part two (about women) the next week, and so on. Pick and choose discussion elements for the topic you are covering that day.

- C. Four-week study format: Pick and choose which four sessions to cover and complete part one and two for each session. Alternatively, watch the video for all six sessions, choosing which two weeks to double up on (that will presumably mean you have to cut down on discussion time during those weeks).

HOW TO USE THE DISCUSSION EXERCISES

As a reminder, here are the elements and discussion exercises for each session:

- ~ For This Discussion (reading and video session reference for the session)
- ~ Key Questions
- ~ From the Video Study (discussion questions after reviewing the video clip)
- ~ Life Story (a case study based on a real-life situation)
- ~ Bringing it Home/On the Home Front (questions designed specifically for discussion at home with your spouse)

Pick and choose what works for you, depending on what you're most interested in and the time available.

For example, suppose you're doing a couples' Bible study, and one week you have an hour for discussion time, but the next week you only have 20 minutes. The first week, you could talk through some Key Questions, explore a Life Story, and finish it off with five minutes of discussion From the Video Study about how you might handle things differently. But the second (rushed) week, you'd either pick just a few of the Key Questions, or perhaps skip those and do only one question in the From the Video Study section for a change of pace.

Or, as a different example, suppose you're leading a six-week book club, and you are watching all the video in the For Couples Only study for parts one and two together, to see "both sides of the story" about both men and women each week. During your discussion time, you'll want to pick questions, case studies, or other elements from both the part one and part two topics for that week.

ARE YOU USING THE BOOKS, THE VIDEOS, OR BOTH?

Here are a few pointers, depending on your format:

If you are using the video

The discussion guide is self explanatory. Pop in session one, and start viewing, with pen in hand to take notes in session one of this guide! Pick whichever questions or exercises work best for your group or your use.

To enhance the learning, in addition to the roughly ten-minute teaching time, each segment starts with two or three minutes of short clips of everyday men and women sharing how they think and feel in these areas. It is powerful to hear these comments in their own words, just as we did when we were doing the research. If you are pressed for time, simply skip the interviews and go right to the teaching. (Alternatively, if you want to see more, we include additional interview segments as bonus material in the "Resources" section of our website, www.shaunti.com/resources-landing/) where you will find resources grouped by audience - For Women, For Men or For Couples, and then by topic within each group. Look for the topic Interviews with Men, (or with Women or with Men and Women).

If you are using the books in some way (whether or not you are doing the video)

The best advice for using *For Women Only* and *For Men Only* as a couple (outside of any group discussion time) is to switch books and personalize them before each chapter is read. In other words, read the book about your own gender first, and highlight or underline or make notes on those things that most matter to *you*. For example, highlight quotes or paragraphs that so perfectly describe how you feel, that they could have come directly from you. Or circle “your” survey answers. Then switch books, and begin reading. You now have a book about your mate customized with what is most important to him or her!

Although it is better to read the relevant chapter before watching the video, if you are pressed for time, the teaching in the video will suffice to get you started on your discussion.

If you are ONLY going through the books (not the videos)

We re-ordered and combined a few of the books’ subjects, in order to be able to cover them all in just six video sessions. Thus, the layout of this guide follows the order of the subjects in the *videos*, and does not always follow the chapter order in the *books*. We recommend reading chapter one in your book (the introduction), and then reading through the chapters and discussing them in the order found in this guide. (See list below to match this guide to the chapters in the book. **We are using chapter numbers from the 2013 revised and updated editions of the books.**)

Other than the fill-in-the-blank video guide, all the other questions and exercises in this discussion guide apply equally to the books and the video. In order to get the “Aha!” moments you are looking for, you will have need to read the relevant chapter before discussing that subject if you are not doing the video.

DVD Sessions and the Corresponding Book Chapters

Discussion Guide / Video Sessions	For Women Only Subject	For Men Only Subject
Session One	Chapter 3: Insecurity	Chapter 4: Decoding
Session Two	Chapter 2: Respect	Chapter 2: Reassurance
Session Three	Chapter 4: Processing Chapter 5: Providing	Chapter 5: Security Chapter 6: Listening
Session Four	Chapter 6: Sex	Chapter 7: Sex
Session Five	Chapter 7: Visual Chapter 9: Appearance	Chapter 8: Beauty
Session Six	Chapter 8: Romance	Chapter 3: Windows/Emotions

SENSITIVITY ALERT!

Just a quick note about vulnerability and sensitivity: you will need to have your radar up!

We have found that it is entirely possible for a participant to unintentionally embarrass a spouse/significant other by the way they answer a question in a group setting during these exercises. As the group leader, you will have to keep an eye out for that, and be ready to gently redirect the conversation if you can see that someone is getting very uncomfortable, and their spouse doesn’t realize it.

You'll also need to set a great example by not offending or embarrassing your own mate!

GENERAL NOTES ON SEVERAL SESSIONS

Session One

The tone of the discussion in this session will set the stage for all the sessions to come. Seek to create a safe environment for realness and true communication of feelings in your group, but try to bring things back in to a positive resolution if you are hearing too much tension, anger, hurt feelings, or defensiveness. If one or more people happen to be highly vocal about their unhappiness in their relationship and/or the person which whom they are taking this study, you may need to talk to the vocal person offline so they realize that others need a chance to talk, and even to celebrate happy marriages without feeling like their happiness will be shot down. Since someone like that often truly just wants to be heard, you can encourage the naysayer to bring concerns to you or another designated listening ear.

Session Two

Both women and men will be sharing their stories of areas where the man manifests some pain about enduring disrespect and the woman experiences pain from a man's lack of reassurance of his love. So this session should be handled delicately, always bringing the tone back to the positive. As group leader, keep a particularly sharp eye out for where a woman might inadvertently be sharing something in public that is making her man feel inadequate and thus pained and uncomfortable. If so, be ready to redirect the conversation—or even (if it is appropriate in that context), gently or jokingly say, “This may be an example of where even talking about this is hitting that nerve, so let's move on.”

Session Four

The couples will discuss this age-old dilemma of varying sex drives and timing issues. Gently guide the couples to relaying their stories in a tactful way and giving the opposite sex real understanding and guidance in how everyone's physical and emotional needs can be met in this area. (Keep in mind that some couples may need a referral to a professional counselor or pastoral intervention if there are serious dysfunctions or any kind of abuse.)

Session Five, Part One

Because this can be a difficult subject for husbands and wives to discuss, please approach it with discretion and compassion— including skipping a question or even a whole segment if it seems that one or more of the couples prefers not to talk about it. Be very sensitive to the fact that in any group it is likely that at least one, if not more, of the couples are struggling because one or both (especially the husband) is struggling with this issue. For some couples, it will be healthier for their marriage if they only lightly participate, and instead are referred (if they aren't already) to the help of a trained counselor who specializes in this area.

Even if you don't have a sensitive couple, it is important to keep things very calm, and non-judgmental, and to hide your shock if something is said that shocks you. In this culture, many millions of men struggle with this area and may have made bad choices at times.

BEFORE THE SESSION: It would be a good idea to be aware of available resources so that you can calmly encourage a couple that reveals a real struggle to pursue healing. For example, you can find great resources at xxxchurch.com, or at pureintimacy.org (the latter has confidential

counseling and referrals in your area). We list other helps on our website, on the forwomenonlybook.com page.

FINAL WORD...

Dear Group Leader...

We personally want to thank you for your willingness to lead a group through the For Couples Only Study. Please know that we have prayed over this study and the leaders who will help guide people through it. We want to help marriages and relationships thrive, and obviously you do too or you wouldn't be facilitating this group. We have a common bond with you through our shared passion. We trust that there will be many eyes opened and lives changed.

We would love to hear from you about how God worked through this study in your group to strengthen marriages and relationships. If you have a story to tell, or any feedback about the study, please send it to us on our contact page on www.jeffandshaunti.com.

One final word to you... If you have the chance, we encourage you to share your faith story (if you have one) with your group. No amount of new knowledge of research concepts can change our lives and relationships without a willing heart, transformed by the hand of God. Your couples need to be encouraged to both establish and strengthen their relationship with their maker, the true transformer of hearts and minds.

It is our prayer that in your own life and relationship you would find and forever enjoy the incredible love, help and companionship of the Lord. If you'd like to hear more about our faith journey and receive some resources for establishing your own relationship with God, please visit us at www.shaunti.com. We'd love to hear from you!

Thank you for laboring with us to help marriages and relationships grow stronger. Our best to you in your adventure!

~ Jeff & Shaunti