

Leader's Guide to

LESSON 3

WHEN MARRIAGES HURT

NOTE TO NEW LEADERS

You can download the Leader's Guide from the website www.EveryManAWarrior.com to make it easier to follow while leading the lesson. It is important to follow the Leader's Guide while leading the lesson. While some items are the same each week, others are special, one time instructions that will negatively impact the study if missed.

WHEN MARRIAGES HURT

- ✓ Break into pairs and recite all your verses and *My Marriage Commitment* to each other.
- ✓ Sign off on the *Completion Record*.
- ✓ Open the session with prayer.
- ★✓ Go around the room, asking each man to share one Quiet Time. Encourage the men to use the suggested passages to help them develop a greater understanding of the topic.
- ✓ Begin reading the lesson paragraph by paragraph.
- ✓ Pages 42-46: Ask each of the questions on these pages. Depending on time, have two to four people give their answer. Try to include everyone.
- ✓ Page 43: Have everyone read his summary rewrite of 1 Peter 4:19.
- ✓ Page 46: Have each man read his *Points to Remember*.
- ✓ Page 47: Read the *Assignment*. Have the men place 1 Peter 4:19 in the front pocket of their *EMAW Verse Pack*.
- ✓ Page 47: End the session practicing the *WAR* method of prayer. This may be a time when men want to pray about any hard issues confronting them in their marriages.





WHEN MARRIAGES HURT



The ringing phone woke me out of a deep sleep at 11:45 p.m. It was Kevin, and he'd been drinking. With a slurred voice, he said, *"Lon, I'm going to do it! I'm tired of this crap; I'm going to leave my wife!"*

We'd had this conversation a number of times before. Perturbed and still a little groggy, I yelled into the phone, *"No, you're not! You are not going to hurt your four kids by leaving their mom! You are going to go to God and do what's right! Now go to bed and call me in the morning!"* He sheepishly said okay, and we hung up.

Kevin and Carol had come to Christ during college and had met in the church they both attended. They wanted to serve God even though neither had been raised in Christian homes. In their love for Christ, they defied all cultural norms of the 1970s and stayed sexually pure during their courtship.

But Kevin's anticipation of their honeymoon was shattered on their wedding night when Carol rolled up into the fetal position, pulled the covers over her head, and quietly sobbed. She later revealed that her older brother had sexually abused her during high school.

In the first decade of their marriage, sex was never good. Carol had performed her wifely duty even though Kevin knew she hated it and resented his physical needs. Now twenty years into their marriage, with four children, Kevin was losing hope. As they got into their late forties, Carol became increasingly angry toward him. Her bursts of rage and stares of hate were driving Kevin into depression and despair.

Now, they hardly ever had sex. Kevin's frustration kept mounting and once a month or so he would demand to have sex. Afterward, Carol would go sleep on the couch and seethe at him for days. Sex made her feel the horrors of her brother's abuse and caused her to explode at her husband.

Kevin was a gifted entrepreneur. His business had grown to be one of the most successful in the state. He worked 60 to 70 hours a week. At least at the office he felt successful, valued, and appreciated. Plus, it was an escape from the torture of home.

Kevin had never had an affair, although the temptation was high. He remembered his own shattered childhood when his dad had run away with his secretary, leaving Kevin's mom and three children. His dad had been a harsh,



unloving man who constantly berated Kevin. Now with the potential collapse of his marriage, he again felt the bitterness and despair he remembered as a child.

Once when Kevin was struggling, he revealed to a close Christian brother the pain and hurt he was feeling. His friend rebuked him and said, "Toughen up! Stop your whining; lots of couples have sexless marriages."

Kevin and Carol began a rotation of seeing counselors, but no one was really helping. One Christian counselor told Kevin it was hopeless and he should file for a divorce. It was this counsel that brought Kevin to give me his late-night phone call. I told Kevin to come see me.

At our first meeting, I was not sure I would be able to help Kevin. But God was working in Kevin's heart. After our initial chit-chat, we prayed and I asked Kevin how I could help. His first statement gave me hope. With tears coming to his eyes he said, "Lonnie, during my drive over this afternoon, I prayed and told the Lord that I wanted Him to make me into the man He wanted me to be and that I would do whatever He told me in order to save my marriage!" Hearing this one statement of commitment, I decided I would do whatever I could to help Kevin.

Over the years I've thought many times about that phone call and the words God gave me. "*Go to God and do what's right!*" The phrase comes from 1 Peter 4:19. God had used the verse in my own life when He was taking me through my own time of marital testing.

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator [go to God] and continue to do good [what's right].

—1 Peter 4:19 (emphasis added)

(Some translations use "good"; others use "right." The Greek word means "a course of right action.")

In recent years this verse has become my definition for being a "real man of God." A real man of God responds to hurt, suffering, or trials by "going to God and doing what is right."

This does not mean that trials will be easy. God's plan is that trials will have a transforming effect on the kind of men we are. Sometimes the pain level necessary to change our character or values is quite high.

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Kevin and Carol are still together even though the journey has been long and hard. They have found counselors who have helped them, and Kevin changed the way he relates to his wife on intimacy. Kevin's time with the Lord has deepened, and this hard-charging businessman has developed new levels of compassion and understanding that have transformed his relationship with both Carol and his children.

- ✓ Write three observations about Kevin's situation. How would you have responded if you had been Kevin?

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

—1 Peter 4:19

Ask Questions

Is there:

A command to obey

A promise to claim

A sin to avoid

An application to make

Something new about God

Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why

Emphasize:

Different words

Rewrite:

In your own words

Use the *Ask Questions* method of meditation on 1 Peter 4:19. Jot down your thoughts.

Use the *Emphasize Different Words* method. See Book 1, lesson 5, if you have forgotten how to use this method. What additional thoughts came to mind?

✓ Summarize the above two meditation exercises by rewriting 1 Peter 4:19 in your own words. Be prepared to share your rewrite with the group.

✓ Jot down a time when you went through something hard in your marriage. Were you able to go to God and do what's right? Why or why not?

✓ How did your response affect the situation? How would you respond to the same situation today?

✓ Read the three translations of Colossians 3:19 below. What commands are in these verses?

Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. (NRSV)

Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. (NAB)

Husbands, love your wives and be gentle with them. (NCV)

—Colossians 3:19



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✓ What happens to a woman's self-image when her husband is harsh, bitter, or not gentle?

✓ What happens in their marriage relationship when the husband is harsh, bitter, or not gentle?

✓ A godly husband is a man of godly character. Read 1 Peter 3:7-9. What character traits do you see in this passage?

✓ How does 1 Peter 3:9 apply to marriage? What happens in a marriage when a couple violates the command: *"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult . . . repay evil with blessing"*?

Marriage can be a place of great personal pain and suffering. Sometimes the desire to leave the marriage can be overwhelming, and many men do. However, I have observed over the years that some men who hang in there and let God teach them through the trials come out the other side being better men, more fulfilled in their marriages, and better fathers to their children.



Memo from God

My son,



When you are suffering, trust me. Trust me to do what's best for you. I measure things differently than you. I want what's best for your soul, what will give you spiritual rewards in heaven. Men measure what is easiest, what is free from pain, what gives them pleasure. I measure what will bring you the greatest joy, joy that will last, joy that is based on an eternal reward, joy that comes from knowing me.

God

✓ Read the *Memo from God* and record three to four observations on what God wants when you are going through hard times or suffering.

✓ From the memo, what do men want when they are suffering?



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✓ Review the lesson. If your marriage is hurting, is it worth it to hang in there and do what's right even when we don't know the outcome? Why?

✓ Review the lesson and organize your thoughts. Jot down the most important *Points to Remember* from this lesson. Be prepared to share what you wrote.

Points to Remember

1.

2.

3.

4.

Points that others shared that I want to remember:





ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

1. Have your Quiet Times in the following passages: Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21; 2 Corinthians 1:1-11; Galatians 6:1-9; John 8:1-11. As you meditate, these passages will help you grasp some key biblical principles for the next lesson.
2. ✓ Place 1 Peter 4:19 in the front pocket of your *EMAW Verse Pack* and memorize it this week.
- ✓ End the session practicing the *WAR* method of prayer. This may be a time when men want to pray about any hard issues confronting them in their marriages.

Note from the author: I understand that not every marriage can be saved. In the next lesson we will discuss some of the realities of how woundedness can impact a marriage.



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