

DEVOTIONAL
STUDY GUIDE

Men Are Like Waffles— Women Are Like Spaghetti

Bill and Pam Farrel



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Week One

The Preparation of Waffles and Spaghetti

You know it's time for a marriage retreat when . . .

- ❖ She sets the table, and you're the only one who gets a paper plate.
- ❖ Lately, the family dog has been getting better cuts of meat than you.
- ❖ All week long she's only been making her side of the bed.
- ❖ Life is so stressful at your house, you've been in the bathtub since August.
- ❖ Your picture in his wallet has been replaced by a Kroger's discount card.
- ❖ The last night out he planned involved the Laundromat.
- ❖ With all your fighting, more flying objects can be seen in your house than at Roswell.

- ❖ You catch yourself trying to figure out a way to drop the kids off at church for summer Vacation Bible School and pick them up after the Christmas pageant.
- ❖ The last picnic lunch you shared was some crackers and Cheese Whiz you found under the front seat when the car broke down.¹

This may be how you're feeling—or maybe you want to avoid feeling this way about your marriage. Either way, it's time for a retreat, and that's just what this study guide is meant to be—a short oasis each day to connect your hearts. If you're willing to take a few minutes each day and invest them well, you'll find love is a picnic—and not one featuring old Cheese Whiz from under the car seat! Let's focus this week on how God created us to be unique.

Day 1

The Daily Special

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

—Genesis 1:26-28

Table Talk

Three times in three verses, the Bible states that men and women are created in the image of God. What do you think this means? How does knowing that your spouse is made in God's image help you value him/her? When, in marriage, might holding your partner in high esteem as a creation of God help you as a couple? (In decision making? In conflict management? In deciding how to treat one another?)

Being created in the image of God does not mean we are exactly alike. In fact, God has made you very different than your spouse. In our book we say men are like waffles, women are like spaghetti, and we see that God created those differences to work *for* us in marriage. Compliment your spouse on at least one difference he/she has from you, and tell him/her why you think that difference is beneficial to your marriage and family.

Prayer for the Day

Lord, thank you for creating my spouse. You made him/her exactly what I needed to complement me. Lord, today help me see many ways in which my spouse reflects your image. Help me value my mate as a gift. Let me value my mate with the same kind of sacrificing love as you portrayed when you died for us on the cross. Amen.

List as many differences as you can think of in how you and your spouse think, act, and process life. Then write next to each difference how your marriage and/or family *benefits*. Choose one difference, and compliment your spouse all day, or even the rest of the week, whenever you see that difference enhancing your life.

[illegible]

Day 2

The Daily Special

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

—Genesis 2:18

Read also Genesis 2:19-25 in your Bible.

Table Talk

God designed marriage to be a blessed union between a husband and wife. If you are newlyweds, think of some couples you know who have healthy marriages. What are some of the habits they have in their marriage? (If you don't know, call them up for a coffee double date and ask!) For example, a habit we have had in our relationship since engagement is that we pray before each meal then kiss. It is hard to stay mad at someone you kiss that often! If you have been married awhile, what habits are you glad you have layered into your life? Are there any habits, behaviors, or actions you used to have in your marriage, maybe during courtship or your first few years together, that you'd like to see return? Talk about how to integrate those healthy habits back into your relationship.

Prayer for the Day

God, thank you for the model of a healthy marriage. Today help me value my spouse as my best friend, the one who completes me. Help us show respect to one another and keep our relationship a priority. Amen.

Journal Assignment

Which part of the foundation of your marriage is the weakest? Look at the list below and choose one area. Brainstorm ways *you* (not your spouse) can help strengthen that area. Commit to one idea. Write out your commitment as a prayer to God.

- ❖ *Companionship.* How's your friendship?
- ❖ *Completeness.* Are you valuing your spouse's strengths?
- ❖ *Connection.* Are you respecting your mate's opinions, decision-making style, parenting, etc.? Are you looking for ways to help him/her become his/her God-given best?
- ❖ *Cleaving.* Are you treating your marriage relationship as a priority over parents, extended family, work, and other friendships?
- ❖ *Closeness.* Is your sex life active and consistent? Are you interested in your spouse's needs as much as your own? Does your sexual interaction give evidence that the rest of your relationship is healthy?

Day 3

The Daily Special

The LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

—Genesis 2:16-18

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

—Genesis 3:1-3

Table Talk

Today’s verses are in two parts. The first section explains God’s command to Adam:

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Then in chapter 3, we see Eve’s rendition:

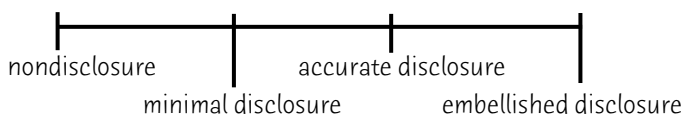
“We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

Notice the difference?

Eve added, “If you touch it, you will die.” We don’t know for sure if God told Eve the parameters or if Adam did. We’re not sure if Eve was half listening and got it wrong or if she thought, “I’ll just add to it, and if I don’t touch it, I won’t eat it!” (Not a bad idea if she’d followed it—but it wasn’t what God said!)

Adam and Eve had different reads on the same command. How well do you really communicate? Do you give your mate enough details so you both are on the same page?

Rate your disclosure on the chart below:



When are you most likely to not be accurate (either less than the full truth or embellishing the truth)? Why do you think you are making those choices (fear of spouse’s wrath, disapproval, pain from past)? Talk with each other about the balance between truth and tact.

An entry statement can help you when you are trying to share the truth in a difficult area. One of Bill’s entry statements is, “Pam, I have something I need to talk to you about, but it may be hard to hear.” When Bill uses this statement, I try not to overreact no matter what he might say. As he is sharing with me, I try to place myself in his shoes, and that helps me listen better and with less volatile emotion. This frees Bill to share more fully.

Try to come up with your own entry statements that will enable you to speak honestly, and with love, to one another.

Prayer for the Day

Lord, help us both to be honest and accurate as we share with one another. More importantly, let us both be honest and accurate in our relationship with you. Help us rightly divide your Word and accurately share it, teach it, and apply it to our lives today. Amen.

Journal Assignment

Eve made up her own version of the truth. When are you most tempted to do that? Eve may have added to God's command out of fear. Have you added rules to your life, your marriage, your worship, or your children's lives that are based in fear? (For example, your wife can't have friends without your approval; your kids can't do anything without one of you present, no matter what age they are; your schedule is inflexible; your husband has no freedom to spend time with his friends; you have become legalistic in your church involvement.) God's Word says, "Perfect love casts out fear." Write out a statement that describes how God's perfect love can help you live in truth.

Day 4

The Daily Special

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

—Genesis 3:8,9

Read the context of these verses in Genesis 3:4-13.

Table Talk

How do you handle it when you sin? Do you cop out and blame your spouse the way Adam did? Adam and Eve entered into sin together and reaped grave consequences. Have you and your mate a history of sinning together? For example, maybe where you met one another isn't a place you're proud of. Or perhaps your early choices weren't God's best.

The best way to safeguard your marriage is to come clean before God together. If you need to, pray the repentance prayer below:

Lord, you tell us if we confess our sins, you will be faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We now confess that as a couple we _____

Please wash us and we will be whiter than snow. We want a fresh start and clean hearts before you. Amen.

Prayer for the Day

Make Psalm 25:4-7 your prayer for today:

*Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths;
guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God
my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they
are from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth and
my rebellious ways; according to your love remember
me, for you are good, O LORD.*

Journal Assignment

Two of the elements that keep relationships fresh are repentance and growth. What areas in your lives were hurt or damaged by past choices? What steps can you as an individual take to rebuild in the areas that might have been impacted by poor choices in the past? What area of your marriage do you think needs more work, more information, more steps of growth? What can you do as an individual to grow in that area?

Day 5

The Daily Special

The LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

—Genesis 3:22,23

Read the context of these verses in Genesis 3:14–4:1.

Table Talk

The consequences for breaking God’s plans are sometimes painful! What adversity have you been through as a couple? What did you do right to help get you through the struggle? What do you wish you had done differently? What transitions are ahead for you that might be sources of turmoil? What can you do as a couple to prepare for adversity?

Prayer for the Day

Lord, help us to be strong and courageous, knowing that you are with us wherever we go. We know that our life will not be perfect. We will experience setbacks and frustrations. Help us increase in strength in the midst of the struggles and teach us how to encourage one another when life gets hard. Thank you for putting us together as teammates for the journey of life. Amen.

Journal Assignment

Animals had to be sacrificed to cover Adam and Eve after they sinned. Sin always exacts a toll. Think back over your life together. What sin(s) forced a sacrifice to be paid by someone you love? For example, if one of you had an addictive behavior, the other spouse may have sacrificed time, money, and energy. Once my mother (Pam's) added up how much money my father had spent on alcohol and cigarettes over the course of their marriage. It was more than enough money to send all three of us children to Ivy League schools! Is your family making an undue, unnecessary sacrifice for any of your behaviors? (Do the kids have to hide out when you experience PMS? Does your wife have to clear the company out because of your anger?) Ask God to show you if any of your behaviors, actions, or attitudes are causing your family to pay a high price. What changes do you need to make?

Letter to My Love

What did you learn this week that changed your heart toward your spouse? Write him/her a letter and give the gift of support and encouragement. (Options: Consider all the ways your mate is different from you. Create a poem, a song, or even a list that shows how those differences are a gift to your heart, soul, and life.)