

Have a New Family by Friday

A Practical Plan for a
Happier Home in 5 Days

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HOW TO USE THIS PARTICIPANT BOOK

This participant book is designed to accompany the *Have a New Family by Friday* video curriculum by Dr. Kevin Leman. Each lesson includes Scripture, Reflection (basic content of Dr. Leman's video presentations), Discussion, 5-Day Action Plan and Prayer. If you are participating in a group and are not able to complete all of the discussion in the time allotted, try to complete it at home or continue the next time the group is together. Discussion and interaction are key learning tools where participants benefit by sharing their own thoughts and insights. Keep in mind that the seven *5-Day Action Plans* have been thoughtfully designed to be practical and helpful. They are crucial to the study. If you will faithfully follow through with each of these plans, you will be on your way to a happier home. Best blessings as you seek to *Have a New Family by Friday!*

Scripture references: *The King James Version, The Living Bible, The New Living Translation*

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LESSON

1



WHAT A DIFFERENCE A MARRIAGE MAKES!

Everything Works Better When the Marriage Is Working

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 6:33

1 Peter 3:7

Ephesians 5:21-22, 25

Jude 21

REFLECTION

After being married for 46 years—in a row—to the same lucky woman—having five kids, grandkids, a busy speaking and writing schedule, I’ve learned a few things about family life! One thing I’ve learned about marriage is this: The kind of person you are at the core of your being, your spiritual values, and how you feel about life in general has everything to do with the kind of marriage and family you’re going to have.

You may ask, “But can you really have a new marriage by Friday? We’ve been struggling for a long time.” The answer is “Yes, you can! I promise: You really can!” In fact, you can have a new family by Wednesday! By sundown today—if you decide to do a few things differently and stick with it!”

I’m sure you’re aware that our society is changing rapidly, but it’s not all bad news. There’s good news: The Word of God does not change! Now I’m not a Bible scholar—I’m a psychologist who tries to live by the

Word of God. (Someone once said that if you took all the psychologists in the world and laid them end to end around the entire globe, it’d be a pretty good idea to leave them there!) But listen to the profound truth in Matthew 6:33. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” In other words, seek after goodness, joy and peace, and live an upright life, caring for one another with God’s mighty Spirit working in you (Romans 14:17), and He will add to your life all you really need. I believe this applies to the marriage and family you need.

I think back often to when I was a young guy, standing at the altar shaking in my boots, my knees knocking, and this beautiful bride walks down the aisle toward me. And under her bouquet—I didn’t realize it—was a “rule book”! And in that rule book was a lot of rules I was about to discover for the first time! I sometimes think that God was the original humorist when He said “And the two shall become one.” Wow! How on earth were we going to pull that off?

Concerning marriage, here's a question for you: When the marriage ceremony takes place, how many people really get married? Two? Four? No, it's usually about six, because you marry a bunch of other people—your inlaws! You don't necessarily live with them, but they come with the package. And hopefully, this turns out to be a good thing. But sometimes it's challenging. If you happen to come out of a blended family, the number you "marry" changes from around six to ten or more. This can be even more challenging—but it can still work.

Now let's talk about four success factors that make marriage work better so that everybody in the home benefits. I could give you more than four, but let's focus on just four.

The first success factor is communication. The thing you have to understand about men and women is that they communicate differently. Women, for example, often conceal what it is they really want from us guys. For example, Sandy and I were driving home one night after dinner. We had declined dessert to save money. She turns to me and says, "Uh, you wanta stop for ice cream?" I answer "No" and keep driving. Ten seconds later, tears are running down her cheeks. "What's wrong?" I ask. "Nothing," she says. "What do you mean, 'nothing'? You're crying." "There's nothing wrong," she says again. "Well, something's wrong!" I say. She finally says, "I wanta stop for ice cream!" Women are interesting.

The point is: Women want you to know how they're feeling, gentlemen, without having to *tell* you how they're feeling. "Harold, will you come over and give me a hug?" Harold walks over and gives Sophia a hug. What does she say to herself? "Well, he hugged me all right, but only because I asked him to—not because he really wanted to."

Communication is the track that relationships run on—especially marriage relationships. You've got to share your thoughts, feelings, opinions, desires and beliefs freely with each other—without feeling that you're going to be put down, belittled, rejected or blown off. We'll talk more about communication later in the series.

A second success factor is transparency and authenticity. By this I mean openness and honesty with one another. When this is not present in marriage, trust between partners suffers and eventually disappears, and

the ability to co-exist with confidence goes out the door. If you want that valuable close connection with your husband or wife, you've got to share the same core values—and at the top of the list are honesty, authenticity and a shared spiritual faith. Yes, women and men are very different—you've heard the differences—but they must share the same core values if they are to get along well, particularly the same *spiritual* values.

The person you are at your core will determine the kind of marriage and family you have.

A third success factor is an active, rewarding sex life. Look, I'm 69 years old. I mean I'm near death! At my age, I'm telling you, you slow down in some areas—physically, emotionally, sexually. But here's the kicker, to enjoy an rewarding sex life, certain conditions have to be met. The first thing Sandy and I did after we were married was to pull off the side of the road in a 1960 Corvair that burned 45 quarts of oil on the way to San Diego—and kneel at the side of the road and pray that God would bless our union—not bless our sex life. Forty-six years later—five kids—two grandkids—God answered our prayer. A rewarding sex life was a blessing.

A fourth success factor is spiritual oneness. When you consider marriage stats today, you find that the average marriage is cooked and done in seven years. Couples get married at about age 26 for women and 28 for men and are having babies later in life. Half of all marriages end in divorce. Sixty percent of those who get married between the ages of 20 and 25 end in divorce. If you were to examine these marriages closely, you'd see that they are lacking—particularly in shared spiritual values. Spiritual oneness means that you are in agreement on Christian values—your Christian faith, your church affiliation, your goals in life, your personal behavior and the example you set for your children.

Now let's talk about some **critical needs our wives have**. First Peter 3:7 tells us to "live with understanding" for a reason. *Among other things, wives especially need affection, understanding, support and communication.* Do husbands have to work at delivering on these? Yes. They're not natural for husbands at times. Wives need affection—not necessarily with sex—affection they

hear, sense, see and feel. They need us to understand their opinions and frame of reference, and appreciate their common sense and wisdom. And they need to know that we have their backs, that they have our support emotionally, physically, spiritually and financially. They need us to communicate with them in more than grunts and sentence fragments, encouraging them, telling them we love and appreciate them and that we're just proud to be seen with them. They need to hear from us and see our words backed up with action. This is a quick summary, but guys, we've got to meet these needs our wives have.

What about the husband's needs? Wives, he needs your respect and admiration—your affection and romance that is so fulfilling to him—your companionship—and a peaceful atmosphere at home. He wants to be close to you and feel that you genuinely care about him and what he's dealing with. He doesn't want to be interrogated with question after question. It'll make him tend to clam up. Certainly questions are necessary, but instead of asking tons of questions, speak more in comments and observations, with something like "Oh, sounds interesting. Tell me more about it" or "I bet you've had a tough day. I can't believe all you have to do." He'll respond.

Believe it or not, most men don't have an abundance of friends. Know who they really want to be friends with? You. More than anything, they want to be close to *you*. They want you to be their best friend. (This may be the best thing I've told you.)

Ephesians 5:22 says, "You wives must submit to your husband as you do to the Lord." Then verse 25 says, "And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her." But the best scripture of this little passage to me is verse 21 that says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." In other words, be respectful of each other, care for one another, and in so doing, you will be honoring Christ.

Wives, here's what I'd like you to understand. That husband of yours may burp—sit in boxer shorts in his recliner—watch two ballgames simultaneously—with a slice of pizza in one hand and a remote in the other—but he would take a bullet for you.

Now I understand that everybody participating in this study isn't married. Some have never been married, some are divorced or may be single parents; maybe some plan to be married. Whatever the case, understand this: The person you are at your core will determine the kind of marriage and family you have. Be an encourager, a listener, strive to meet each other's needs daily, pray together, stay honest and faithful, and "always stay in the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless you" (Jude 21).

Can you have a happier home in five days? Yes, you can. Follow the "5-Day Action Plan," and you'll be on your way to a happier home. I guarantee it! Everything works better when the marriage is working.



DISCUSSION

1. Reflect on the series title for a few moments and discuss as a group whether or not you think it's really possible to make significant changes for the better in a family—in just FIVE days. What kind of things have to happen? Make some notes.

2. Where does the burden of responsibility for positive change lie? With the kids? The neighbors? In-laws? Friends? Church? Employer? You'd have to agree that it's the responsibility of the _____ in the home to maintain control and set the pace. For married couples, you could say "as the _____ goes, so goes the home." Why is this so? Discuss together.

3. Recall and list below the “four key success factors” of marriage we mentioned in the video session. Maybe you want to add a couple of factors. Share some personal experiences that illustrate how important these factors are. Trust me—you don’t want to miss on them!

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

4. I shared what I believe a *wife’s* most important needs are. Now what do *you* think they are? Write your thoughts below and share with the group.

Are these needs being met? Are some not being met? As you feel comfortable, share those areas where you’d like to see improvement—areas that would benefit your marriage

5. Now let’s consider the *husband’s* important needs. Again, you’ve got my thoughts. What do *you* think his most important needs are? Are they being met?

5-DAY ACTION PLAN

DAY 1: Read Matthew 6:33 and discuss briefly as a couple what “seeking the Kingdom of God” and His “righteousness” means to you. Romans 14:17-19 tells us that the “Kingdom of God” is not a place or collection of people—it is a way of “*living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*” So today, **focus on each other’s good qualities**—building each other up and purposefully maintaining a pleasant and peaceful home environment—through words and actions. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will enable you to create an environment where goodness, peace and joy reside, and everybody’s comfortable. **Focus on each other’s good qualities today.**

DAY 2: Meeting each other’s needs is one of the most important success factors in a good marriage. **Today, identify what you think are your spouse’s four or five deepest needs and focus on meeting at least ONE of them in a consistent way throughout the day.** If your focus today is “communication” or “conversation,” make every effort to show an interest in what your spouse is interested in, i.e., the kids, household needs, job, health, etc. As you communicate, avoid excessive questioning and interrogating. Try to speak more

in statements, comments or observations. This often produces better responses than questions do. When it comes to “communication” and “conversation,” remember that *how* you say what you say may be more important than *what* you say. Your tone of voice reflects your attitude—what you’re really feeling inside. Don’t blow a perfectly good day with a lousy attitude and tone of voice. **Today, identify what you think are your**

Focus on each other's good qualities, building each other up... through words and actions.

spouse’s four or five deepest needs and focus on meeting at least ONE of them in a consistent way throughout the day.

DAY 3: **Focus on meeting another specific need your spouse has.** If it is “companionship,” suggest doing something together—an activity, errand,



dinner date, a trip to the mall, etc. Whatever you do, never let your spouse think you don't want to be with him. If the activity or errand really doesn't interest you, no problem. Do it anyway! The next time you seek companionship, your spouse will likely be agreeable. Just realize that hesitation or refusal over time can be interpreted as rejection, and companionship will begin to suffer. Point blank, say, "I want you to *be* with me. I need your help, your input, your thoughts. . . ." Afterwards, express gratitude by saying "Your being with me meant a lot, and I appreciate it." Today, ***focus on meeting another specific need your spouse has.***

DAY 4: Today, ***focus on still another specific need your spouse has.*** If you're not sure what that need is, guess! You'll probably be right. If it's "affection" and/or "intimacy," be attentive, thoughtful and helpful throughout the day. Avoid negative and critical attitudes and words—not just today—but every day. Stay positive and complimentary, sincerely expressing your feelings of attraction and affection toward your spouse. Romance and intimacy begin with positive attitudes

and kind words which lead to feelings of warmth and comfort between a husband and wife. ***Focus on another specific need your spouse has.*** Take action and see good results.

DAY 5: ***Your action today is to show your respect and admiration for your spouse through words and deeds.*** This matter of respect and admiration is often thought to be the husband's greatest need, but it is equally important to the wife. And it must be demonstrated. Today, make sure your spouse knows that you recognize her contribution to the home and family, and to your own life and sense of well-being. She does something for you that no one else can. You recognize her abilities and support, her intuition and care for you and the kids, along with her financial contribution if she works outside the home. Let her know that the family would be in a heap of trouble without her! Make sure she knows how much you appreciate and admire her. ***Your action today is to show your respect and admiration for your spouse through words and deeds.***

PRAYER

Father, thank You for the assurance that You will help us make our marriage work as we commit our home and family to You. I promise to do my part to serve my family, communicating love and respect to each of them. Thank You for the blessing they are to me. In Jesus' name—Amen.