Welcome, Leader!

Thank you for your willingness to lead a Family Project group discussion. You have the enjoyable task of helping your group members take a closer look together at the centrality of the family and why God created it in the first place. The purpose is to open their eyes about God himself and an institution we all take for granted, and to help them consider ways to make their own families better.

These twelve lessons cast light on many aspects of family life, including how the family and individual members of it carry the image of God into the world.

Your goal in this discussion should not be to act as the “answer man” on every issue but to encourage group members to help one another wrestle with the material. Often your best response to a question might be, “What do the rest of you think?”

You’ll need to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of a session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

If your group members haven’t already watched the documentary film _Irreplaceable_, we would encourage you to schedule a viewing session. It will provide context and whet appetites for this series.

For more resources on Christian worldview and God’s plan for the family, please visit familyproject.com.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>PAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>YOU ARE HERE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An introduction to the most basic needs of each human being and a discussion of humanity’s desire for belonging and significance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LET US MAKE MAN (IMAGO DEI)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Man is uniquely made in the image of God—but what must we understand about that image to know who we are?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>IT IS NOT GOOD TO BE ALONE: HOW FAMILY COMPLETES THE IMAGO DEI</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humanity’s first and most fundamental problem was isolation. God solved this problem by joining Adam and Eve in a relationship to fully reflect His image in the world.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FOR THIS REASON</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God unites the first two humans in a wedding and commands them to be fruitful and multiply. What does this tell us about God—and about ourselves as bearers of His image?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>THE MAN HAS NOW BECOME LIKE ONE OF US</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the Fall, a family was divided. But redemption also came through a family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God’s design for family is essential to the health of every culture. Social science and practical experience prove this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SESSION</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>EXCURSUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MOTHERS AS IMAGE-BEARERS</td>
<td>The relationship between mother and child exemplifies the nurturing care of the God of the universe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>FATHERS AS IMAGE-BEARERS</td>
<td>God as “Father” is more than a motif; it is central to His nature and core to our being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CHILDREN AS IMAGE-BEARERS</td>
<td>Every child is a divine statement of blessing. The bond between father, mother, and child reflects the triune God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>THE ENEMY</td>
<td>What is the greatest enemy of the family? It might be closer than you think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>THE GREAT MYSTERY AND DESTINY</td>
<td>Marriage foreshadows the future of every Christian: the wedding of Christ to His bride, the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>MY IMPERFECT FAMILY</td>
<td>Families consumed with appearing “perfect” deny reality. But every family must ask, “What is God calling us to do together for His kingdom that we can’t do alone?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WELCOME TO THE FAMILY PROJECT CURRICULUM!

Thank you for investing the time and effort to learn more about God’s design for the family and how it reflects His very own nature.

As we will see in session 1 of this curriculum, as we explore the meaning of family, we’re also embarking on a journey to answer three key questions that all human beings ask in some form:

*Where do we come from?*

*What are we?*

*Where are we going?*

In this pursuit, we will encounter two primary reference points to help us find answers.
Just as every town has main roads that serve as the common reference points for getting around, so also there are two main “intersecting roads” in our journey.

**OUR EAST-WEST PATHWAY:**
**FULLER WORLDVIEW BOULEVARD**

The Christian worldview is typically understood in three parts:

- **Creation**
- **Fall**
- **Redemption**

But in looking at the big picture, we see there are really four additional parts, with the other parts in the smaller arrows below:

As we move through each session, the significance of each will be made clear.
OUR NORTH-SOUTH PATHWAY:
DEFINITIVE STATEMENT AVENUE

This second main thoroughfare consists of four definitive statements from God that give meaning and understanding to where we come from, what we are, and where we’re going:

1. **God’s First Definitive Statement:**
   “Let us make man in our image…”
   (Genesis 1:26).

2. **God’s Second Definitive Statement:**
   “It is not good that the man should be alone…”
   (Genesis 2:18).

3. **God’s Third Definitive Statement:**
   “Behold, the man has become like one of us…”
   (Genesis 3:22).

4. **God’s Fourth Definitive Statement:**
   “Behold, I am making all things new”
   (Revelation 21:5).

Look for these worldview parts and definitive statements as they address those three key human questions in order through the sessions that follow.

For more resources on Christian worldview and God’s plan for the family, please visit [familyproject.com](http://familyproject.com).
LEADER NOTES:

GET THEM TALKING
(5 MINUTES)

Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

When the group has settled in, greet them cheerfully and then say, “Let’s play a little word association. When I say the word family, what are the first words that come into your mind?”

If the group doesn’t speak right up, prime the pump by offering a couple of responses yourself—parents, children, unconditional love, memories, or whatever words first occurred to you.

This question may spark responses both positive and negative, depending on group members’ experiences, and that’s okay. Some might be humorous, too. But don’t take the time now to delve into the reasons for their answers.

Finally, say, “Okay, before we go any further, let’s watch our first video session in The Family Project.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 13.
INTRODUCTION

In the words of an old pop tune, we are all by nature “people who need people.” We need to belong to others, and we long for a meaningful role—an assignment or task—within that community. Without belonging and significance, life seems to have no purpose. But how did we come to be such creatures? The book of Genesis tells all.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. . . . The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. . . . Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

—Genesis 2:7-8, 15, 19-20

You might also want to read: 
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

LEADER: Say something like, “Let’s turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic.” Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. According to Genesis, how did God give mankind a place of significance right from the beginning of time? Despite this role, what was missing?

   (We not only need important work to do, but also someone to do it with. Being alone is just not in our nature. And only humans will suffice; pets are a blessing but no substitute.)

2. What would it be like to grow up without love and acceptance? Can you tell us about someone you know who had that experience? What happens to us when we don’t feel we belong to anyone?

   (You might also ask, “What would life be like if society were not organized into families, but instead we were all on our own?”)
3. Why do we all need to feel significant? What are some things you’ve observed people doing to achieve that? How do you strive to be important?

(People try to claim a connection with someone successful or famous. Or they acquire wealth. They strive for beauty or physical prowess. They develop a talent in order to garner praise. What else?)

4. What does the fact that God gave us these needs for belonging and significance tell us about Him? About ourselves?

(It is not good for us to be alone, because God himself has never been alone. From all eternity He has enjoyed a community of persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.)

5. Does being in a family help you feel significant? If so, how? Tell us about a time when you or your family did something that helped a member feel a real sense of belonging and significance.

(In a well-functioning family, we receive recognition from parents and siblings, aunts and uncles and grandparents. But it works both ways; our lives take on significance by having an important role in other family members’ lives. Families should brainstorm ways to honor one another when a family member does something well.)
ONE STEP I CAN TAKE TOMORROW

LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Today we reflected on the fact that we each derive our identity from whatever purpose shapes our life and the community or family of which we’re a part. Understanding God’s design of the family is vital to our becoming good spouses, parents, and children. Thus equipped, a strong family can be used by God to strengthen the church and be a powerful witness in the world.

Leader: Say something like, “Can I ask two or three of you to summarize what this session was about? What thoughts were new to you? What would you like to explore further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

Session 2
Let Us Make Man (Imago Dei)
Man is uniquely made in the image of God—but what must we understand about that image to know who we are?

Then close with prayer.

Please remind the group that more resources on Christian worldview and God’s plan for the family can be found at familyproject.com.
LEADER NOTES:
GET THEM TALKING
(5 MINUTES)

Lights Out
Now watch the DVD together.

Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there's a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Begin by teasing the group with this question: “Tell me, has anyone here ever seen God?” After a little discussion, acknowledge that Jesus said no one has seen God except himself (John 6:46).

Next ask, “Well, then, what about the next best option: Have you ever seen God's image reflected in something else?” Their answers will probably include the night sky or another natural scene, perhaps music or art, and maybe people.

Ask, “What about people?” “Why people?” “What sort of people?” “How do you see God in them?” Make sure every group member has a chance to talk.

Finally, say, “Okay, let’s see what we can learn from today’s video.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 21.
INTRODUCTION

What’s so special about mankind? A lot of people today would say, “Absolutely nothing!” In their view, the earth itself and the animals that crawl on it are more important than man, who has messed everything up. But who is man? In Psalm 8, David pondered that question because he saw both our seeming insignificance and yet our astounding nature that sets us apart from all the rest of creation.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

—Genesis 1:26

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

—Psalm 8:3-5

You might also want to read:
Matthew 25:37-40
Romans 1:19-20
2 Corinthians 3:18
Colossians 3:9-10
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. How does this session answer those key human questions of where we come from and what we are?

(We come from the God of the universe, and we are uniquely made to reflect His image.)

2. What does it mean that we’re made in the image of God? In what ways are we like Him? In what ways are we different?

(We have a spiritual dimension that gives us “glory and honor”; we can know God directly. He also gave us the capacity to relate to one another—to love, as well as the ability to reason, to work and create, to perceive beauty. But unlike God, we are not omnipresent or omniscient, and we still await the moral perfection and immortality promised us.)
3. How does being formed in His image affect the way you think and feel about yourself? About others? Explain how this gives meaning and significance to your life.

(Everyone has intrinsic value and deserves respect, because we are, to one degree or another, exhibits of God’s nature. Our worth is derived not from what we can contribute to society, but rather from the One whom we represent and who breathed His life into us. Still, we each have significant, meaningful work to do as a steward of all that He owns.)

4. From your observations, how do people pervert the image of God in the ways they think and act?

(Dr. Wayne Grudem wrote in his Systematic Theology, “Since man has sinned, he is certainly not as fully like God as he was before. His moral purity has been lost and his sinful character certainly does not reflect God’s holiness. His intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding; his speech no longer continually glorifies God; his relationships are often governed by selfishness rather than love, and so forth. Though man is still in the image of God, in every aspect of life some parts of that image have been distorted or lost.”)

5. Describe something you did or said this past week that likely reflected God’s own nature. In another moment, how did your behavior or attitude fail to mirror the Lord? What areas do you need to work on so that you can more clearly reflect the image of God?

(Have them think back on a recent conversation. Did they speak with the same love and understanding that Jesus would? Or when they were hurt by someone, did they respond in a way that pleased God?)
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Did anyone ever say to you as a child, “My, you’re the spitting image of your father”? Or, instead, “Shame on you; your mother would never have acted that way”? We bear a tremendous responsibility, because the person we should remind people of is God himself. But we can do that only if we see others as people made in the image of God, deserving the kind of attention and compassion that He wants them to receive through us.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Would two or three of you please summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 3**
*It Is Not Good to Be Alone: How Family Completes the Imago Dei*

Humanity’s first and most fundamental problem was isolation. God solved this problem by joining Adam and Eve in a relationship to fully reflect His image in the world.

Then close with prayer.
Before you watch the DVD, remind group members of the value of taking notes in their own guides.

**LEADER NOTES:**

**GET THEM TALKING**

(5 MINUTES)

Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Begin by asking your group this: “Where can lonely people be found today?” Their answers might include places like a nursing home, homeless shelter, or singles bar. You might want to add, “What about in a large worship service?”

Next ask, “If you were to die today, who would remember you 20 years from now?” Their answers might include a spouse, kids, other relatives, or a specific friend. Ask how they feel about that.

Then read this quote from the former Beatle Paul McCartney (Observer Music Monthly, November 2008): “When I was a kid I was very lucky to have a real cool dad, a working-class gent, who always encouraged us to give up our seat on the bus for old people. This led me into going round to pensioners’ houses. It sounds a bit goody-goody, so I don’t normally tell too many people. There were a couple of old ladies and I used to go round and say, ‘Do you need any shopping done?’ These lonely old ladies were something I knew about growing up, and that was what ‘Eleanor Rigby’ was about—the fact that she died and nobody really noticed.”

Finally, say, “Okay, let’s see how all this relates to today’s video.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 29.

Session 3 is found on page 26 in the participant’s guide.

**LIGHTS OUT**

NOW WATCH THE DVD TOGETHER.
INTRODUCTION

Every time God created something, “He saw that it was good”—with one exception. “It is not good,” He said, “that the man should be alone” (Genesis 1:18, emphasis added). So He created Eve, and the rest is, literally, history. But there are still lonely people. Let’s think about that today.
Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
LEADER: Say something like, “Let’s turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic.” Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” . . . So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

—Genesis 2:18, 21-24

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

—John 17:20-26

You might also want to read:
Proverbs 18:22; 19:14; Ephesians 5:31-33; Matthew 3:13-17.
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion. Note that the video for this session is longer than in other sessions, so you’ll have less time for discussion and will need to be even more selective than usual in which questions you ask.

1. Why did God make us so that we cannot live without having others to relate to? What’s wrong with the idea of a solitary man or woman?

   (God made us to be like Him, and He has never been alone, since the community between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has always existed. Like Him, we simply can’t live without others.)

2. When have you felt the loneliest? Describe some of those times. What causes loneliness, often even for those who have plenty of casual friends, acquaintances, and family members?

   (Our culture encourages independence and discourages the honest sharing of our deepest thoughts and feelings, which is risky. Opportunities to speak from the heart seem limited, even in churches, when a reluctance to admit our faults takes precedence over building authentic relationships.)
3. Give an instance of how marriage uniquely meets the need for human connection. How is it different from our friendships? From sibling relationships? If you’re married, in what way is your spouse a “helper” fit for you?

(Only our spouse is “flesh of our flesh,” and by our union we create other human beings who join us in a lifelong relationship of love. Also, a spouse knows better than anyone else our habits, our strengths and weaknesses, our likes and dislikes, our dreams and fears—and hopefully helps us become the person God intended.)

4. In what ways do all families reflect the nature of God? If you’re married (or in marriages you’ve observed), do your marriage and family life have the same flavor, or same beauty, that you sensed from the John 17 reading? Why or why not? What experience comes to mind?

(The speakers in this video mentioned many aspects of the Trinity that carry over into family relationships, such as order, belonging, mutual responsibility and support, accountability, warmth, respect, community, submission, commitment, and most of all love.)

5. This session’s video shows the painting of the Creation on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. God is pictured reaching out to Adam but holding Eve in His arm. What might the painter have been thinking about God’s feelings for men and women?

6. How should the fact that the family reflects God’s nature influence the way we live together day-to-day?

(Our way of relating to one another should always reflect the love within the Trinity. You may want to recommend to your group The Family Project Devotional, which helps readers apply all the “one another” commands in the New Testament to everyday family life.)
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
When God saw that Adam was alone, He didn’t bring him some buddies to hang out with. Instead, He created a whole different kind of human being and named her Eve. So in a profound way, the ultimate answer to loneliness is the companionship of someone of the opposite sex—specifically, someone with whom a man or woman can form an intimate, unbreakable bond. And out of that bond, the two create a family, which itself is an image of God.

**Leader:** Ask something like, “Can I ask two or three of you to summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 4**

*For This Reason*

God unites the first two humans in a wedding and commands them to be fruitful and multiply. What does this tell us about God—and about ourselves as bearers of His image?

Then close with prayer.
LEADER NOTES:

GET THEM TALKING
(5 MINUTES)

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 37.

Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session as follows: Say something like, “Today’s session focuses on marriage and sexuality. As the presenters in the video will point out, God invented sex and gave it as a gift to married couples. Yet we have a tough time talking about it, don’t we? What are some of the reasons we find it so difficult to discuss?”

Answers might include the fact that it’s a private act, that it makes us feel vulnerable, that it can lead to frustration and pain as well as fun and joy, that it makes us feel “dirty,” and so on. Don’t be surprised if one or two answers are humorous as well.

Then say, “Whether we talk about it in the home or not, though, our kids form ideas about sex from us, from friends, from TV and movies and the Internet, and so on. What’s the one truth about it that you would most like for your kids to understand?”

If necessary, prompt the group with an answer of your own. After everyone has had a chance to respond, transition by saying, “Now let’s see what today’s video has to say about marriage and sex.”

Before you watch the DVD, remind group members of the value of taking notes in their own guides.

LIGHTS OUT
NOW WATCH THE DVD TOGETHER.

Session 4 is found on page 34 in the participant’s guide.
INTRODUCTION

It’s trendy these days to think that men and women are basically the same kind of people inside, and that marriage is whatever we want it to be, however we want to define it. That’s why we need to go back to Scripture. There we discover where male and female originated, and we see where marriage came from in the beginning.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
LEADER: Say something like, “Let’s turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic.” Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

—Genesis 1:27-28

And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

—Genesis 2:22-24

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

—Hebrews 13:4

You might also want to read: 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. What does the fact that God told Adam and Eve, before they sinned, to “be fruitful and multiply” tell us about marital intimacy? What good purposes does it serve?

   (God’s command reveals that marital, sexual intimacy was His design from the beginning, not the result of the Fall. For starters, creating more human beings is the way God gave us to fill the earth and have dominion over it. It also fosters emotional and spiritual intimacy between spouses.)

2. If you’re married, why? Did you get married just because it was the accepted thing to do? Or to alleviate loneliness? To find happiness or sexual satisfaction? To have a family? What is the fundamental reason for marriage?

   (Marriage serves many of these purposes, but it is first of all a reflection of God’s communal nature. Christians should not pursue marriage for primarily selfish reasons.)
3. Is sex ever a physical act only, with no emotional or spiritual dimension? Why or why not?

(We are not solely biological creatures, nor are we spiritual creatures who just happen to have bodies. Both aspects of our nature are inextricably related and impact each other. Sex creates and strengthens emotional and spiritual, as well as physical, bonds.)

4. In everyday practice, how do you and your spouse include God as the third party in your marriage?

(You might ask, “Is there anything wrong with Christian couples who rarely or never pray together?”)

5. What has marriage done for your character, your spiritual maturity? Can you describe an incident that helped you grow?
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Since marriage and sexuality are among God’s best inventions, it shouldn’t surprise us that they have been greatly affected by the coming of sin into the world. In the next session, we’ll take a closer look at what has happened since the Fall.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Would two or three of you please summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 5**
*The Man Has Now Become Like One of Us*

In the Fall, a family was divided. But redemption also came through a family.

Then close with prayer.
Session 5 is found on page 42 in the participant’s guide.

LEADER NOTES:

GET THEM TALKING
(5 MINUTES)

Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session with the following:
Ask the group, “In this day and age, what are some of the common problems that cause marriages to fall apart?”

Answers might include things like money issues, infidelity, workaholism, loss of love, and so on.

Then ask, “In your own observation, what’s the number one reason that marriages fail, and why?”

After everyone has had a chance to respond, then say, “Let’s look next at the advent of sin and how it affects our families.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 45.

Before you watch the DVD, remind group members of the value of taking notes in their own guides.

LIGHTS OUT
NOW WATCH THE DVD TOGETHER.
INTRODUCTION

It’s the saddest story in history—how Adam and Eve’s happy marriage self-destructed after disobeying God, thereby threatening every family that followed. But it’s important to review the events in the Garden of Eden, because the story tells us exactly what we’re up against when we try to succeed at building a family.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
LEADER: Say something like, “Let’s turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic.” Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” . . . Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.”

—Genesis 3:1-13, 22

You might also want to read:
Romans 5:12-15; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-49.
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. Why do you think the serpent first approached just one person, Eve, rather than the couple? How did this evil tactic help break up their relationship?

(Since we were made to need each other, we are most vulnerable to temptation when we’re on our own. So Satan spoke to the woman when Adam was either absent or silent, subsequently causing Adam to blame her for their disobedience to God.)

2. In what ways did Adam and Eve die when they ate the forbidden fruit?

(The speakers in the video mention: 1. the breach between God and man 2. the loss of wholeness as an integrated human being 3. the alienation or death of relationships with others, and 4. an estrangement from the earth that man had been called to oversee. Encourage group members to describe these “deaths” in their own words.)
3. Satan is enraged not just with God, but also with marriage and family, since they are a representation of God. How did Adam and Eve’s sin affect their marriage? How has it affected every marriage since? Do you have an anecdote to share from your own marriage?

4. Just as the Fall attacked the family, so also salvation came through a family. How does Jesus’s birth into a family, and the fact that He remained in a family to the end of His earthly life, help you relate to Him? Do you see Him as fully human, or do you tend to think mostly of His divinity? Why?

(You might ask, “How would it have been different if Jesus just appeared, somehow becoming man instantly without being born of a woman?” Some famous heresies took this view. [The Fall and the Incarnation are the next steps in our fuller worldview, after the Creation of mankind.])

5. How does God use family to help bring good out of the Fall?

(Family helps us to understand God’s nature and to take part in it ourselves, extending grace, forgiveness, and acts of unselfish service to those we love.)
ONE STEP I CAN TAKE TOMORROW

LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
By one man, Adam, came sin and death. By another man, Jesus, came redemption and life. Every day, we experience both of those realities in our marriage and family life. But we can be victorious if we at least stay together as a family. Sadly, many marriages don’t hold together long enough to work through the problems. We’ll look at that in our next session.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Could I ask two or three of you to summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

*Session 6*

**What God Has Joined Together**

God’s design for family is essential to the health of every culture. Social science and practical experience prove this.

Then close with prayer.
Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session by saying, “Suppose I give you an old, 500-piece jigsaw puzzle and ask you to put it together. But the pieces are in a plastic bag, not the original box with the picture of the completed puzzle on the top. What might be some of the difficulties you could have in putting the puzzle together?”

Possible answers might be that some pieces could be missing, and some could be broken. Also, without the picture, how are you supposed to know what the completed puzzle looks like or how individual pieces fit together?

Then ask, “How might we say that modern marriage and family are like that jigsaw puzzle?”

Responses could include things like “missing pieces” in spouses’ emotional health because of issues in their families of origin; emotional brokenness from a failed earlier marriage; not knowing what a good marriage is supposed to look like because of parents’ divorce; and so on.

When everyone has had a chance to answer, say, “Let’s see what today’s video has to say about broken marriages.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 53.
INTRODUCTION

Everyone has an opinion about when divorce is justified or not. Sometimes even Christians seem reluctant to consult Scripture regarding the issue of divorce and remarriage. But only one thing matters: what Jesus said about marriage and divorce. So we begin this session by listening to His words.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

—Mark 10:2-9

You might also want to read:
Luke 16:18
1 Corinthians 7:10
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. Why is the family structure of father, mother, and children the norm in cultures around the world? Why have alternative forms of family never really had staying power?

(Since this structure was God’s design from the beginning, people intuitively follow it unless they are persuaded by another philosophy.)

2. In what ways are healthy families beneficial for those who are part of them? For society as a whole?

(A number of benefits for family members are mentioned in the video, including greater economic prosperity and a sense of belonging or connectedness. A society benefits from the order, child education, and moral instruction that families provide, so the result is less crime, poverty, and the need for social programs.)
3. What happens to society when a large number of families fall apart? Share a story or two of how this disintegration has affected your own family, friends, or community.

4. How does divorce in Christian homes affect what the world thinks of God?

   *(When the world sees Christians divorcing at high rates [though committed Christians don’t divorce as often as the rest of society], it’s only natural to conclude that there’s really nothing behind Christianity or the God we claim to worship.)*

5. How should we view modern efforts to redefine the family, or to have children be “owned by everyone”—that is, controlled by the state rather than by the parents? Tell about any struggle you’ve faced or freedoms you feel are threatened as a result.

6. How can parents in the church support one another in the task of parenting well?

   *(They can create a culture of shared values; teach children biblical truths; share their stories of parenting successes and failures.)*
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Breaking up is *not* hard to do; it’s staying together that’s a challenge. But doing so is vital, because every child needs and deserves both a mom and a dad, because a father is no substitute for a mother, and vice versa. Next session, we’ll explore what’s unique about mothers.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Would two or three of you please summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 7**  
*Mothers as Image-Bearers*  
The relationship between mother and child exemplifies the nurturing care of the God of the universe.

Then close with prayer.
Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session by asking, “Besides Mary, the mother of Jesus, who are some of the most famous mothers in history?”

Answers might include people like Eve (from the Bible), Jackie Kennedy, Mary Todd Lincoln, Michele Obama, Barbara Bush, Sarah (from the Bible), Queen Elizabeth, or Princess Diana.

Then ask, “What does the fact that we don’t remember the names of the moms of most famous people tell us about the job of mothering?”

Answers might be along the lines of “It’s a behind-the-scenes, supportive, self-sacrificing role that doesn’t attract the spotlight.”

When people are done responding, say, “Next let’s look at what today’s video has to say about the importance of mothers.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 61.
Once upon a time, a teenage girl from a small town in Galilee let God have His way in her life, and as a result she became the most famous mother in all of history. Mary, the “mother of all mothers” and the mother of Jesus, provides a fitting introduction to our topic in this session, motherhood.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” . . . And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” . . . And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” . . . And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.”


When Jesus [on the cross] saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

—John 19:26-27

You might also want to read:
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. How did Jesus view and treat His own mother? What was admirable about Mary’s character? To put it another way, why do you think God chose her, above all women, to be the mother of our Savior?

   (Even though Jesus’s divine mission took priority over His human family [see Matthew 12:46-50], He showed love and concern for His mother right up to the end. Mary’s acceptance of her difficult role in God’s plan, and the faith and insight she expressed in her “Magnificat” [Luke 1:46-55], mark a young woman of extraordinary maturity.)

2. In what ways is God like a mother to us? How should God’s “mothering” nature serve as a model for human mothers? What’s unique about a mother’s role in the family?

   (You might like to quote Isaiah 66:13 [“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.”] or Matthew 23:37 [“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”] The speakers in the video mentioned several nurturing traits of mothers.)
3. How would you describe the ideal mother? Who in your life has come closest to that ideal? (Tell us about her.) What do you appreciate most about your own mother?

4. Moms, what to you is the most meaningful aspect of motherhood? How did becoming a mother affect your relationship to God? What has it taught you about Him and His heart toward us, His children?

5. Have you observed or even experienced firsthand an attack on motherhood in today’s culture? If so, tell us about it. What ideas about women form the basis for such attacks?

(Encourage group members to talk about any pressures they have felt to delay marriage, put career above family, or perhaps even consider an abortion.)
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Who else bears the image of God? That would be fathers, since God himself is pleased to bear that title. Next session, we stop to ponder the character of our Father in heaven and the nature of fatherhood today.

LEADER: Ask something like, “Can I ask two or three of you to summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

Session 8
Fathers as Image-Bearers
God as “Father” is more than a motif; it is central to His nature and core to our being.

Then close with prayer.
Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session by saying, “In the last session, we asked about famous mothers. So now, who are some famous fathers in history?”

Answers could include names like Adam (from the Bible), Barack Obama, Archie Manning, Abraham (from the Bible), and Abraham Lincoln.

Next ask, “If you could choose your own father from history, whom would it be, and why?”

After everyone has had an opportunity to respond, say, “Let’s see how today’s video session addresses the role of fathers.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 69.
Jesus had a lot to say about His Father. But since an invisible God can be hard to grasp, Jesus chose to communicate some of His most powerful truths through word pictures—those brief stories we know as parables. In this lesson, as we turn to the topic of fatherhood, we begin with one of the most well known of Jesus’s parables.

“OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN” SETS THE EXAMPLE.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’”


You might also want to read:
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. The parable we just read is more about the father than about his wayward son. Through this story, what was Jesus saying about God? How might God’s “fathering” nature serve as a model for human fathers?

(Some commentators have said that this parable should be called “The Forgiving Father,” not “The Prodigal Son.” Either way, it’s a powerful picture of God’s loving nature. He patiently endures neglect and abuse from His children and never stops caring for them.)

2. No cultures have a problem called “motherlessness,” but nearly all have one called “fatherlessness.” Given what fatherhood represents, why do you think it is so strongly under attack?

(Since the Bible often presents God as a loving father, diminishing that role also diminishes people’s understanding of, and love for, God.)
3. What happens to a family when the father doesn’t fulfill his role or isn’t even there? Any personal experiences you wish to share?

(The speakers mentioned many facets of a father’s role. If group members don’t have personal experiences to tell, ask them about their friends. Everyone seems to know someone who had a troubled or absent dad.)

4. How do the media portray fathers today, and what impact has this had on our culture? Which images or examples come to your mind? What other factors or influences have diminished the role of fathers in our society?

(We’ve come a long way from the wise, loving, respectable dad in “Father Knows Best.” But the media aren’t the only problem. For example, the welfare state has decimated the African-American family and the father’s role in it. Another factor is the delay of marriage.)

5. How would you describe the ideal father? Who in your life has come closest to that ideal? (Tell us about him.) What do you appreciate most about your own dad?

6. Dads, what to you is the most meaningful aspect of fatherhood? What is unique about your role in the home? How did becoming a father affect your relationship to God? What has it taught you about Him and His heart toward us, His children?
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
WRAP-UP

Where there are moms and dads, there are (often) children. And the children are what turn a marriage—a couple—into a family. But what is behind God’s command to Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply”? Why are children so important? So valued? That’s our topic for session 9.

LEADER: Ask something like, “Would two or three of you please summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

Session 9
Children as Image-Bearers
Every child is a divine statement of blessing. The bond between father, mother, and child reflects the triune God.

Then close with prayer.
Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session by asking, “What are some of your best childhood memories?”

Then ask, “What hope, confidence, or other benefits do those memories still give you?”

Finally, after everyone has had a chance to speak, say, “Let’s look now at today’s video about the part of children in God’s design for the family.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 77.

Before you watch the DVD, remind group members of the value of taking notes in their own guides.
INTRODUCTION

Jesus loves the little children. And so do most people. Children are often what make our lives so enriching. But not everyone feels the same way about kids. “What’s so great about being a parent? I already have a life of my own,” a newly married Christian might say. That’s our topic for the day.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
LET'S turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic. Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

—Psalm 139:13-16

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

—Mark 10:13-16

You might also want to read: 
1 John 3:1-2.
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. In what ways do children reflect the nature of God? Why all children, not just the “normal” ones? What has delighted you most about your own children (or nephews or nieces)?

   *(People might bring up such things as children’s ease in loving others, their trusting and forgiving nature, their delight in life and creation, and their innocence toward evil.)*

2. What does the fact that Jesus came into the world as a baby and went through every stage of childhood say about how God sees and values children?

   *(At the very least, it shows He was not ashamed to become one, and Jesus demonstrated to His disciples, in the passage just read, what He thought of children.)*
3. What would society be like (other than destined for extinction) if there were no children?

4. What’s the role of children in the family? How has your outlook on life been changed by them? Describe how being a parent has forced you to grow up and put others first.

(First, children keep the family going; they are the next generation to carry on the traditions and values of those who’ve gone before. But they also challenge the innate selfishness that we would all cling to if not forced to change. A big part of the reason we are on earth right now is to become more like our Lord.)

5. What scared or scares you most about becoming a parent? Explain. Why do many couples today choose not to have children?

6. How are childhood and children themselves being attacked in the world today? How are these attacks on God himself?

(Children are being exposed to life’s harshness and depravity [e.g., through online pornography] at young ages; their value is questioned; they’re aborted in large numbers; they’re exploited sexually. Because God loves and highly values children, attacks on them become attacks on Him and His desires for mankind.)
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
We’ve already hinted at what might make some people, even Christians, reluctant to have children. Self-sacrifice doesn’t come naturally to any of us. But we should explore this more thoroughly. What’s the core of the problem faced by families today? We face the hard facts in our next session.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Can I ask two or three of you to summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 10**  
**The Enemy**  
What is the greatest enemy of the family? It might be closer than you think.

Then close with prayer.
Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session by asking, "If you knew some enemy was trying to break into your home, would you just go on with business as usual, or would you take steps to make your home more safe? Why?"

Answers might include something about how protecting your family is a parent’s first responsibility, “forewarned is forearmed,” and so on.

Then ask, “What measures might you take to protect your home and family?”

Answers could include things like new or additional locks, improved lighting, an alarm system, bars on the windows, and so on.

Finally, say, “Let’s watch today’s video and learn about some very real enemies that threaten our families every day.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 85.
INTRODUCTION

It’s time to look in the mirror. If we’re honest, we will come to the same conclusion the apostle Paul did when he wrote, “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15). Today, we’re going to confront the worst enemy of the family today.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

—Galatians 5:16-26

For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

—2 Timothy 3:2-5

You might also want to read:
Matthew 16:24-25; Romans 7:15-20; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8.
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. The video session says that love of self is the family’s greatest enemy. How is that self-centeredness demonstrated in daily life?

   *(Refer group members back to the Bible passages just read. It’s all there.)*

2. What happens to a family made up of self-seeking individuals? Any anecdotes you can share from experience or personal observation?

   *(Note that self-centeredness, living for one’s self, is essentially living alone, but with other people around.)*
3. How does “the world” encourage individualism and self-centeredness? What are some of the pleasures we are told by our culture to seek after?

(Western culture, in particular, teaches people to pursue individual happiness; not much is ever said or done for the common good. This way of thinking is prominent even among Christians. Though we don’t chase as much after worldly pleasures, we still care most about the “American dream” of a nice house, fulfilling career, etc.)

4. What’s the opposite of self-centeredness? How is self-centeredness contrary to God’s nature?

5. How can one unselfish family member influence everyone in the home? Again, any stories to tell?

6. What’s behind most divorces, including those involving Christians? Does love keep a marriage together, or does selfless commitment to the marriage keep us growing in love? Explain.

(It’s rare to find a Christian who can say, “I will stick with my marriage no matter how unhappy it makes me, because pleasing Christ matters more than anything. I will die to self and follow Him.”)
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Once again, as the apostle discovered, there’s reason for hope in the battle against our own fallen nature. It lies in getting closer to God, in letting His Spirit dwell in us and take control. But just how intimate does God want to become with us? Next time, we look at what He has planned for the near future.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Would two or three of you please summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 11**  
*The Great Mystery and Destiny*

Marriage foreshadows the future of every Christian: the wedding of Christ to His bride, the church.

Then close with prayer.
When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 93.
INTRODUCTION

In this present age, maintaining or growing relationships is a constant struggle. Friendships falter, many marriages crumble, and all of us have difficulty listening to God or “abiding” in Jesus every day. But it will not always be so. The time is coming when we will enjoy being close to one another (without sin) and breathtakingly close to God—eternally! We begin today by reading about the wedding that’s in store for us.
NOTES

Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
LEADER: Say something like, “Let’s turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic.” Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

—Revelation 19:6-9

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

—Ephesians 5:31-32

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. . . . Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

—1 Peter 4:7-8, 12-13

You might also want to read: Matthew 22:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:2.
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion.

1. In what ways does human marriage reflect the church’s present and future relationship with Christ? How does this affect your thoughts or feelings toward marriage?

2. What does this “marriage” of Christ and His people say about how close He wants to be to us? By what means are you and your family pursuing such a relationship with Him here and now?

(The marriage analogy certainly tells us that Jesus intends to do more than just be in the same place with us. He wants to know us intimately, and us to know Him.)
3. How would you describe our responsibility to join with other believers throughout time and space in preparing the bride for the marriage supper?

(We tend to forget that “great cloud of witnesses” [Hebrews 12:1] who are looking on as we run our race. We also don’t pay enough attention to our history as a church, and we tend to ignore Christians in jeopardy when they are far away.)

4. What are you willing to do to defend your family (and families in general) in an increasingly hostile culture? Tell us what you expect Christians to possibly face in your lifetime. How can you help persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ in other countries?

5. How might Christians’ living more intentionally by God’s design in their marriages and as parents affect the society around them? Can you share any examples of this, either personally or from families you’ve observed?
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Good things are coming for the people of God. No wedding or wedding reception you ever attended, including your own, can measure up to that happy day when we will celebrate ultimate victory with Jesus and sit down for an unimaginable feast. In the meantime, we have to stay faithful and endure much hostility on behalf of Christ, which may even affect our own families.

**LEADER:** Ask something like, “Can I ask two or three of you to summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, describe the topic of the next session:

**Session 12**

**My Imperfect Family**

Families consumed with appearing “perfect” deny reality. But every family must ask, “What is God calling us to do together for His kingdom that we can’t do alone?”

Then close with prayer.
LEADER NOTES:

GET THEM TALKING
(5 MINUTES)

Remember to keep a fairly tight rein on the time given to each part of this session, since there’s a lot of good discussion to squeeze in.

Reading the Introduction on the next page is optional.

Start the session by saying, “Television and the movies are sometimes accused of painting negative pictures of today’s families. Do you think they portray families accurately? Why or why not?”

Then ask, “If you ran a TV network, how would you want to see modern families depicted in your network’s shows?”

Finally, say, “Well, let’s take a look at today’s video session about today’s imperfect families.”

When it’s over, begin by simply asking the group what struck them about the video. After 1-3 minutes, move on to the next section, on page 101.

Before you watch the DVD, remind group members of the value of taking notes in their own guides.
So what now? What if our own families seem so messed up that we don’t feel ready to deal with anything larger? How can we, in our fallen state, possibly get involved in the battle for God’s kingdom, which includes defending the family in our community and nation? Scripture has some practical answers.
Watch the DVD and record your thoughts here.
LEADER: Say something like, “Let’s turn to the ultimate authority, the Bible, for our starting point in exploring today’s topic.” Then ask one or more group members to read aloud in the group:

Now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. … Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

—Colossians 3: 8-10, 12-15

You might also want to read:

1 Corinthians 13:7
Ephesians 4:1-3, 32
Philippians 2:5-8
James 5:9
LEADER: Take the group through a discussion based on the following questions. Let the conversation flow. Do not feel that you have to explore every question; we’ve provided lots of choices so you can pick the ones that strike a chord with you. Most important, encourage group members to share their personal experiences.

For many of the questions, we’ve offered a tip that contains either a possible answer or an idea on how to guide the discussion. Note that the video for this session is longer than in other sessions, so you’ll have less time for discussion and will need to be even more selective than usual in which questions you ask.

1. Does the truth that there are no perfect families give you hope or make you feel hopeless? Why? Why do people pursue the mythical perfect family?

2. Do you think our romantic notions about past family life are mere fiction, or was there indeed something that’s been lost? What was your family like when you were growing up?

(Back when the culture was more amenable to Christian values, families had an easier time of it. So for some, there is a real difference between then and now. But for many others, family life has always been difficult.)
3. How realistic is the Bible in describing the sort of relationships that should exist between God’s people in and outside the home?

(See the Bible passage just read. The apostle Paul knew full well that Christians will always need to forgive one another, even just “endure” or bear with one another. This is no unending love fest. Families are made up entirely of sinners who must learn to get along.)

4. What are some of the issues that contribute to the ill health of Christian families? In what areas would you like to see your own family improve?

5. What impact can stable but imperfect families have on society? How is your family reaching out to others in the church or community? Tell us about families you know who have adopted children or done something else redemptive.
LEADER: Ask your group members to think of and write down at least one practical thing they can do tomorrow as a result of today’s session.
Thanks for taking the time to go through The Family Project. We hope you found it both informative and inspirational. Now begins the real work! May God bless you as you strive to make your own family all that God intended it to be, and as you reach out together to heal a hurting world.

LEADER: Ask something like, “Would two or three of you please summarize what this session was about? Which ideas were new to you? What would you like to investigate further?”

Reading the Wrap-Up paragraph below and left is optional.

After discussion, remind the group that more resources on Christian worldview and God’s plan for the family can be found at familyproject.com.

If going through these sessions has surfaced a desire in one or more group members to seek Christian counseling, we encourage you to invite those members to call 1-800-A-FAMILY and ask to speak with the Focus on the Family counseling staff.

Then close with prayer.
Learn about God’s design for the family through these transformational resources.

**The Family Project Curriculum**

A home-based, small-group program consisting of 12 DVD sessions, approximately 60 minutes each, with discussion guides for leaders and participants.

The Family Project will help people understand their personal significance in God’s great plan, equipping them to live with an eternal perspective and model God’s design for family to their peers, communities, and the world around them.

Additional participants’ guides are also available.

**The Family Project Devotional**

Fifty-two weeks of exploring the Scriptures and growing stronger as a family by learning to love and serve one another.

**The Family Project: How God’s Design Reveals His Best for You**

This book will help you discover what the Creator of families has in mind for yours—and why there’s no substitute for His time-tested design.
To order an extra leader’s guide or additional participants’ guides, or to see other resources to help your family thrive, please visit FamilyProject.com
If you’re a pastor or ministry leader, we’ve got the tools you need to launch The Family Project™ in your church!

Visit ThrivingPastor.org/FamilyProject for:

- Free E-book *Why Family Matters* for you and your church staff!
- Promo videos & video sermon illustrations
- Sermon outlines & research
- Church wide campaign & movie night planning guides
- Licensing options for showing *IRREPLACEABLE* in your church
- Exclusive excerpts from related books/resources

Thriving Pastor is a ministry of Focus on the Family dedicated to serving and caring for pastors and their families. It’s an honor to come alongside you. Connect with us and let us know how we can help you and your ministry.

Stay connected with us throughout the year

- Pulse Check & Research Findings
- Weekly E-newsletter
- facebook.com/ThrivingPastor

Confidential Pastoral Care Line

844-4PASTOR (472-7867)