



INTRODUCTION

Who are you surrounding yourself with that encourages, challenges, and inspires you to grow in your marriage?

USING THIS GUIDE

1. Print a copy of the guide for each member of your group.
 2. Watch the video as a group and use the guide to follow along and take notes.
 3. Complete the discussion questions when prompted by the video.
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PART I

VIDEO NOTES

EVERY MARRIAGE IS A DUET.

Song of Solomon:

[1:2-4] Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the young women love you! Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. [2:4] Let him lead me to the banquet hall, and let his banner over me be love. [2:14] My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. [2:16] My beloved is mine and I am his; he browses among the lilies.

Music stirs emotions.

What stirs in you when you think about your marriage?

EVERY MARRIAGE IS A DUET IN NEED OF GREAT BACKUP SINGERS.

When people think about your duet, do they praise your love?

Who brings harmony to your duet? **Turn them up.**

Who leads your duet off key? **Turn them down or mute them.**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
BEGIN ON THE NEXT PAGE**



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Finding time to connect with your spouse can be difficult depending on your season of life. Ted cited his children as one of his biggest challenges in finding time for his marriage. How can you relate?

2. What other challenges are preventing you from connecting with your spouse?

3. What stirs in you when you think about your marriage? Take 5-10 minutes to read and answer the questions below (either individually or as a couple). Then share any observations that jumped out to you with the group.
 - a. If God took a snapshot of your marriage today, how would he describe it?
 - Loving
 - Considerate
 - Fun
 - Stressful
 - Hurried
 - Detached
 - Distant
 - Playful
 - Serious
 - Loyal
 - Honest
 - Forgiving
 - Passionate
 - Other: _____

 - b. What's the biggest point of stress on your marriage?

 - c. What do you hope for the future?

 - d. What's missing right now?

 - e. If you could change one thing about your marriage today, what would it be?

 - f. What's one thing that's different about your marriage today than one year ago? Five years ago?

 - g. Describe your marriage in one adjective.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE**



4. Do you know a couple that has a marriage worth emulating? What specifically makes it so special?

5. Ted Cunningham says, “Every marriage is a duet in need of great backup singers.” Can you think of another couple that challenges, blesses, and encourages you?

What is one thing you can do this week to turn their influence **up**?

6. Are there people in your life who make your duet off-key? If yes, who?

What is one thing you can do this week to turn their influence **down** or **mute** them altogether?

THIS WEEK . . .

Consider this: When people think about your duet, do they praise your love?

Ted suggested that a good habit to practice is reminding your spouse of all the reasons you chose to marry each other. And, if you have kids, share these thoughts with your children as well. Try it this week and come prepared to share stories at your next group session.

PRACTICE REMINDING YOUR SPOUSE WHY YOU CHOSE TO MARRY ONE ANOTHER.

PART 2

VIDEO NOTES

**A GOOD BACKUP SINGER KNOWS WHEN YOU
CLOSE YOUR HEART AND ISOLATE FROM OTHERS.**

**A GOOD BACKUP SINGER
ADVOCATES FOR YOUR MARRIAGE,
NOT JUST FOR YOU.**

Where has your beloved gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your beloved turn, that we may look for him with you? Song of Solomon 6:1

**A GOOD BACKUP SINGER RESISTS CRITICISM, CONTEMPT,
DEFENSIVENESS, AND STONEWALLING DIRECTED TOWARD THE OTHER
SPOUSE.**

Where has your beloved gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your beloved turn, that we may look for him with you? Song of Solomon 6:1

“THOSE WHO ARE ABSENT ARE PROTECTED HERE.”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Ted defines a bad backup singer as someone who validates or joins in the criticism, contempt, defensiveness, or stonewalling—which he warns will bring about the death of a marriage. Below are four examples of bad backup singing. Read each scenario aloud as a group and select the offense taking place using the provided offense list.

Criticism: The inability to receive any opinion from your spouse without attacking

Contempt: Meanness and sarcasm

Defensiveness: The inability to receive a person's opinion without seeing it as an attack on yours

Stonewalling: Withdrawal from a situation or conversation

SCENARIO 1:

Last night, Steve and Joanne got into a heated argument over the credit card bill. Joanne stormed off to bed and left early in the morning to avoid confronting the issue. Joanne's friend Sarah advised her to ignore Steve until he apologized for the outburst.

SCENARIO 2:

Will and his wife, Ruth, have been fighting nonstop for a few weeks. Will has confided in his close friend John about the marital issues. In an effort to console Will, John says, "You could do so much better than Ruth."

SCENARIO 3:

Belinda and her husband, Tim, have been debating whether to send their daughter to private or public school. "He says private school will give her the best education. So I guess he thinks I'm stupid since I'm a product of public school," Belinda whines to Mary. Mary counters, "That's ridiculous. Just because his parents paid top dollar for private school does not make him smarter or more successful than you!"

SCENARIO 4:

Max has been happily working at the same company for ten years, which provides a modest living for his family. His wife, Erica, frequently badgers him about finding a new job that brings in more money. While showing off pictures of her newly renovated kitchen, Erica's friend Stephanie commented, "Maybe if Max got a better job, you could afford to redo your kitchen."

2. Which of these four issues most frequently pops up in your marriage:

- Criticism
- Contempt
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling

If you're brave, share an example with the group.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE** →

3. Have you ever vented about your marriage? (Be honest.) In light of the lens of good and bad backup singers, how would you describe the backup singers you chose to vent to?

4. What's at stake when we choose backup singers that tell us only what we want to hear and not what we need to hear?

5. For the next few minutes, discuss with your spouse your potential backup singers. Think back over your friendships and consider specific examples. List each friendship under one of the provided categories. Then share your thoughts with the group.

These friends tell me...	
What we <i>need</i> to hear	
What we <i>want</i> to hear	