

Reading Your
MALE

AN INVITATION TO UNDERSTAND
and influence
YOUR MAN'S SEXUALITY

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

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READING YOUR MALE
Published by David C. Cook
4050 Lee Vance View
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

David C. Cook Distribution Canada
55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, Canada N3L 3E5

David C. Cook U.K., Kingsway Communications
Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NT, England

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LCCN 2008940794
ISBN 978-1-4347-6871-1

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Published in association with the literary agency of WordServe Literary Group, Ltd.,
10152 S. Knoll Circle, Highlands Ranch, CO 80130

The Team: Don Pape, Larry Libby, Amy Kiechlin, and Jack Campbell
Cover Design: Amy Kiechlin
Cover Photo: iStockphoto

Printed in the United States of America
First Edition 2009

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

SUGGESTED TWELVE-WEEK STUDY GUIDE

Week 1: Chapters One and Two

Week 2: Chapters Three and Four

Week 3: Chapters Five and Six

Week 4: Chapters Seven and Eight

Week 5: Chapter Nine

Week 6: Chapter Ten

Week 7: Chapter Eleven

Week 8: Chapter Twelve

Week 9: Chapter Thirteen

Week 10: Chapter Fourteen

Week 11: Chapter Fifteen

Week 12: Chapter Sixteen

WEEK 1: AN INTERVIEW AND AN EPIDEMIC

Chapter One: The Secret World of a Man: An Unforgettable Interview

1. What surprised you most about this interview?
2. What new insight did you gain into the men you know who are pursuing after God?
3. What struck you most in their frank advice to women?
4. What questions did this chapter raise in your mind that you are hoping will be answered in this book?

Chapter Two: Free Fall

1. Which *similarity* between the two epidemics (the “Mother of All Epidemics” and the modern epidemic of sexual sin) stands out most to you?

WEEK 2: OUR POWERFUL DESIGN AND THE FOUNDATION FOR CONNECTION

Chapter Three: The Power of a Woman

1. How would you explain the difference between authority and influence?

2. When it comes to your influence:
 - **Mothers:** What are some ways you can help to shape your son's masculine identity? His emotional acuity? His future relationship to women—and the woman he marries? Have you seen this to be true in your husband's relationship to his mother?
 - **Single women:** What are some powerful ways you can influence the single men around you? How could finding your strength and security in the Lord make all the difference for these men?
 - **Wives:** Did this chapter make you more aware of the powerful affect you have on your husband? Which one of these three—your personal priorities, your expectations of him, or your words—is presently having the most influence for *good* in his life?

3. Many women feel they possess very little power in terms of influencing their men. After reading this chapter, can you explain how these women still hold powerful positions of influence?

4. Why are men in a “weaker,” more needy and vulnerable position when it comes to sex? Why do you think God entrusted women with so much power in this area?

5. What DNA differences between men and women did you find most striking? Did you notice a correlation between the differences of men and women and the natural callings of men and women in life?

6. How would you explain the difference between attempting to “save” your man and *becoming a catalyst for change* in his life?

Chapter Four: Different Languages, Equal Needs

1. How do the fundamental sexual differences between men and women contradict the message we continually hear in our culture today?

2. What did you learn about men in this chapter that you didn't already know?

3. Were you surprised by our equal fundamental needs and drive for intimacy?

4. We learned that our ability to find intimacy has been thwarted by the Fall. What are some of the greatest barriers in your own quest for intimacy with the men in your life?

- **Mothers:** What usually creates the greatest conflict in your relationship with your son(s)? Boys can drive us crazy, and children are by nature selfish. But how can a parent's nature contribute to these conflicts?
- **Single women:** What causes you to shut down in a dating relationship? What causes the guys you know to shut down?
- **Wives:** When there is a misunderstanding between you and your husband, how does the nature of each partner make it more difficult for us to resolve conflict in marriage?

5. Does the gap of communication seem "unbridgeable" in any of your male relationships? If so, how do you find hope?

6. For true intimacy to happen in a broken world, there must be a central component. Read John 15:4–5. Is God the core engineer, the center, the foundation in your life? If so, read Isaiah 42:3 and 16 and claim this for yourself. If not, read Isaiah 43:11 and 44:6–8; you can pause even now and ask Him to become your savior and rock.

WEEK 3: LOST MANLINESS AND THE FEMININE SUMMONS

Chapter Five: In Search of Manliness (I): The Lost Male Template

1. Why is the search for “manliness” such a critical battlefield for our men?
2. Can you articulate the biblical definition of *manliness*?
3. What are the three great waves that pulled our men underwater and created such an identity crisis? How do you think the feminist movement was most damaging to men? What about the culture of divorce and the postmodern edict of political correctness? Does this historical perspective give you a greater compassion for your men?
4. Can you explain to someone the difference between effeminacy and feminization?
5. What specific ways have you observed the discouragement of manliness in the modern church, as described in the following statement: “Biblical masculinity takes charge and leads, is unafraid to call a spade a spade, and takes the fight to the enemy, all the while *tempering such strength with patience, kindness, sacrifice, and sensitivity*”?

6. What is the answer/solution to feminization? What is the one thing you must *never* do?

Chapter Six: In Search of Manliness (II): The Feminine Summons

1. In light of the two descriptions of unhealthy femininity, how would you describe healthy femininity? Do you see areas where your generation has distorted femininity?

2. Think about your design to be the “counterpart,” the “other,” in your man’s life. How could a healthy woman help a man to discover healthy manhood—simply by virtue of being strong in her own femininity?

3. What ways do we women tend to squelch manliness?

4. What is your natural response to male passivity and reticence? (Are you an enabler? Do you tend to “just take over”? Do you go “crazy” on your guy, lose respect, and carry a deep-seated anger?)

5. How can you encourage biblical manliness? This chapter is a starting point. Be creative.

WEEK 4: THE SEXUAL WAR

Chapter Seven: Hooked (I): The Rise of Pornography

1. Why do you think the loss of manly identity has made our men more vulnerable in the sexual war?
(See the end of the chapter 6.)

2. We will discover in later chapters why our men are so vulnerable sexually. But do you have any thoughts up front as to why sexual temptation would be every man's Achilles heel?

3. What was your initial reaction to all the statistics about the pervasiveness of pornography on the Web? What surprised you most about the relationship of Hollywood, the White House, and Wall Street to the skyrocketing success of the porn industry?

Chapter Eight: Hooked (II): What Pornography Does

1. Are you old enough to relate to the opening poem? (You don't have to answer that question!) Do you identify with the longings of the writer?

2. What does *pornea* mean? How does pornography lead to *pornea*? While our modern culture sees pornography as innocuous, what does Jesus say about it? (See Matt. 5:28.) Select a few of the following passages in Proverbs (2:16–19; 5:3–5; 6:26–33; 7:6–23; 9:17–18) and read firsthand what God wants us to know about the deadly nature of sexual sin.

3. What does pornography do to the mind? How does it alter reality?

4. What usually motivates women to be drawn into the world of pornography and sexual sin? Have you seen this to be true among the women you know?

5. What does pornography do to a person's relationship with God?

6. How does pornography warp a man's approach to sex in marriage? How does it increase his desire for premarital sex? How does it destroy intimacy in marriage? (Consider why "ease of access" and "instant gratification" can easily short-circuit the healthy process of conflict resolution, sacrificial love, and genuine intimacy.)

7. What does the idea of “consumer high” mean to you?

8. What makes pornography particularly addictive?

9. Why is it so important for a woman to be tuned in to this hidden world where such a ferocious battle is being waged for the souls of our men? What steps can you take with your son(s)?

10. What are the “good” and “true” things that give us real hope? Take a few moments to read some of the passages on pages 116–117, and contemplate the nature and promises of our God.

WEEK 5: FEELINGS AND MEN

Chapter Nine: The Great Secret: A Man's Innermost Feelings

1. How is your man similar to the Great Barrier Reef? Are you surprised to learn that men are highly emotional beings?
2. Consider the three factors—personality, upbringing, and the generation into which your man was born. How have these influenced your man's emotional development? (For example: Does he easily identify and express his feelings? Did his upbringing help or hinder his emotional development? Did he have a healthy, close relationship with his dad? His mom? What experiences contributed to his hidden emotional world? How does he handle anxiety, stress, anger, and grief?)
3. How are men wired differently than women when it comes to emotions?
4. What are the two great and irrefutable callings of our men? How does the ability to compartmentalize equip them to better fulfill these great callings?
5. Does your man feel appreciated by you for the battles he fights every day at work? Does he feel understood and supported in his attempts to lead your family?

6. How does sex meet a man's emotional needs? Can you explain the difference in how sex is emotionally different for women than it is for men? Why is "lack of sex ... as emotionally serious to a man as his sudden silence or poor communication is to you" (p. 132)?

7. How are our emotions a reflection of the image of God in us?

8. Were you surprised to discover the powerful role of emotions in our lives? Which of the eight things that emotions do for us was most enlightening to you?

9. How does "truth" anchor our emotions?

WEEK 6: THE STARTLING DISCONNECT

Chapter Ten: The Great Disconnect: Love and Sex

1. Can you explain why men are naturally wired to disconnect love and sex?
2. Why are women so very different in this area?
3. How would you define *hypersexual* and *hyposexual*? How is each of these unhealthy for men and women, and harmful to marriage?
4. Have you ever considered a man's "fragility" by virtue of his calling to step out daily and risk failure? How can we honor a man's fragility especially in the area of sex?
5. Discuss the seven major differences between men and women sexually. How does the image of a bridge and a river help you understand your husband sexually?

6. What great gift does a woman bring to the sexual table?

7. Why do you think it is so important for sex and love to be intimately connected?

8. How can a woman graciously implement a connection between love and sex?

9. Are men hopelessly enslaved to their sex drives? How does a lifestyle of masturbation create sexual disconnect and a certain kind of slavery?

10. What role does grace play in a man's deliverance from such slavery? Were you surprised at the "hidden gift" God has given to men who abstain?

11. Why is it so important for single women to understand a man's drive toward intercourse? How can we help our men, rather than becoming stumbling blocks?

WEEK 7: THE POWER OF VISUAL IMAGE

Chapter Eleven: The Great Turn-on: Visual Image

1. After reading this chapter, do you find yourself viewing the world differently through your man's eyes?

2. Have you found yourself inclined to judge a man's natural arousal by visual image? Were you surprised at the uninhibited celebration of this very trait in the book of Song of Solomon?

3. Why did God wire men to be so powerfully triggered through the eye-gate? On the other hand, why did He wire women to be triggered through relationship? One leads to regular arousal and a drive for sex, while the other leads to regular communication and conflict resolution. How can the two work together when both husband and wife appreciate how their mate is innately wired?

4. What is the line between "looking" and "lusting"? How do women lust?

5. When we understand the powerful effect of visual image, what are the implications for us in the way we dress and act publicly? How would you define *modesty*? (See 1 Peter 3:3–4.)

6. Is it wrong for men to desire for their wives to be attractive? Consider the difference between a positive, realistic expectation and an unbalanced, worldly, unrealistic expectation?

7. Why are women so damaged in this area? Do you see a connection between the increase in food disorders among women and the increase in pornography use among men?

8. What is a biblical view of beauty? Of the three—heart, health, and happiness—which area do you most desire to grow in? Does a biblical view of beauty set you free?

WEEK 8: A SYSTEM OF DEFENSE

Chapter Twelve: The Great Challenge: Building a Defense

1. Reread Proverbs 7:6–23. What is Satan’s six-step strategy for drawing a man (or woman) into sexual sin?
2. Which step is the crucial turning point in the march to the gallows? Is there a point of no return? If you are not sure, read 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. What rationales are used today for giving in to sexual temptation?
4. Who is the “other woman”? (See Prov. 8:1.) What promises does she make that are far *better* than that of the harlot?
5. What is the first step of building a strong defense? How would you describe a “fighting spirit”?

6. Do you know your innate vulnerabilities—the triggers that tend to draw you into sexual temptation? What are some of the innate vulnerabilities our men can possess?

7. To starve something is to *refuse* to feed it. What are some common ways we may unthinkingly feed sexual temptation in our minds today? How did John Newton starve sexual temptation when he was onboard ship? What are some ways we can starve temptation in our sex-saturated world?

8. Fleeing temptation involves a *decision* to run. What are some decisions a man or woman can make in order to flee from temptation?

9. Why is it so important to fill our minds with good things?

10. Why are the people we surround ourselves with so important? If “bad company corrupts good morals,” what does good company do? What does it mean to be accountable to someone else? Why is this so very hard? How can we become accountable to each other in marriage?

11. How would you describe “healthy sex” (p. 212)? Why is this the single greatest defense against sexual immorality?

12. What are the red flags of sexual addiction? What should a woman do when she sees a red flag?

WEEK 9: A FOUNDATION FOR CONNECTION

Chapter Thirteen: Grounded

1. What is a woman's great gift to men?
2. What does it mean to be grounded? How does being grounded enable a woman to become a great connector? What does it mean to "separate" from a man without "severing" yourself from him (p. 220)?
3. What do you think it means for a woman to "*converse within herself and with God—before she converses with her husband*" (p. 220)?
4. How does being grounded make a single woman more appealing to a single man? How does it change the dynamics in a marriage relationship?
5. What templates for womanhood did you have growing up?

12. Sometimes it takes a crisis to cause us to hunger for God's Word; but most of us would like to grow deep roots that would carry us through both the good and the bad times of life. What specific actions can you take right now to begin to make this happen in your life?

13. Do you have another woman, or group of women, who can encourage you to become rooted and grounded?

WEEK 10: THE ANGLER'S SKILL

Chapter Fourteen: Drawing Out Your Man

1. How is the skill of drawing out a man like the skill of becoming a great angler?
2. This is a lifelong skill that we are ever improving and learning. How can we make our homes a *place of safety*—through verbal encouragement, providing a space for rest, and engaging in laughter and play?
3. Since women tend to be more naturally in touch with our emotions, it takes great skill to restrain our tongues and not to take things personally. What are some ways to listen with the “third ear”? How does your man most effectively “pull you into his soup”?
4. What are some “emotions beneath the emotion”? Are you in touch with what is happening at the core of your man’s day-to-day life? Do you know the pitfalls of his personality? What restores your man? What drains the life out of him? What other factors (work, wounds from childhood, physical health) do you see affecting his emotional life beneath the surface? Are you able to step back and recognize those things without taking his actions too personally?
5. What happens when we interrupt our men?

6. What is the secret to asking good questions? What are some “man-speak” words and phrases you can use? What words should you avoid when you begin the emotional journey with your man?

7. Where would you say you and your husband are right now when it comes to emotional intimacy? Are you in the “shallow end,” or have you moved into the “deep end”?

8. Have you asked him the hard questions regarding how he feels about your marriage (p. 259)? If not, what is holding you back? Most of us are fearful of hearing how we have failed; yet the mere act of asking these questions tells your husband you love him. It can be the tiny crack that breaks the damn and starts communication and intimacy flowing like never before.

9. Why is it so important to validate his feelings, even if you don't agree?

10. Some women easily communicate their thoughts and feelings. Others freeze up. Which most characterizes you, and why do you think you are this way?

11. Why do our men need for us to communicate honestly from our hearts? What will happen if we don't?

WEEK 11: WIFE, SISTER, FRIEND

Chapter Fifteen: Wife, Sister, Friend (I): Entering the Fire of Tough Love

1. Have you ever thought of yourself as a your husband's sister and friend?
2. What are the implications of being a true friend and sister?
3. Abigail was a remarkable woman. What do you find most remarkable about her?
4. Describe the two kinds of men she dealt with. Do you have men in your life who are like David or Nabal?
5. In each case, she used the same basic approach: What were the five considerations that she used in her dealings with David and Nabal?
6. Why is tough love in marriage so important when it comes to our children?

7. How are our men hurt when we shrink from addressing sin through tough love?

8. Why do you think “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6)?

9. How does taking ownership of *our* percent of the problem change the dynamics of a conflict?

10. Why is honesty in a *timely* fashion so very important?

11. How did David and Nabal respond to Abigail’s loving honesty? Whatever the response of our men, what does God promise the woman who honors God by walking into the fire of tough love? First Samuel 2:30 says, “Those who honor Me I will honor.” Read also Psalm 91:1, 14–15.

WEEK 12: THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP

Chapter Sixteen: Wife, Sister, Friend (II): The Check and Balance of Interaccountability

1. Do you feel loved by your husband? (Also, when you were growing up, did you feel loved by your father?) If not, how has your sense of not being valued and loved affected you and your children? How does this lack of love injure the unloving man?

2. What do we mean when we speak of God's "check and balance" in the marriage relationship? How would you define *interaccountability*?

3. Why is it important to embrace godly leadership, all the while hating its abuse?

4. What did you learn from reading the *contexts* of certain passages on male leadership? Do you see a balance in these passages between *tender* and *tough* love?

5. How would you define *tough love*?

6. What is a woman's responsibility when a man chooses a path of sin (p. 286)? Read Ephesians 4:14–16, 25; Galatians 6:1; and James 5:19–20. Do you believe God can powerfully use a woman who is willing to “walk toward the fire” of loving confrontation?

7. Why are boundaries the hallmark of great marriages?

8. What are the three essential boundaries of any healthy marriage? Describe what the boundaries of commitment, protection, and respect should look like. What commonplace expressions would you hear on a *daily* basis in a marriage where there are healthy boundaries (p. 289)?

9. What are we to do when boundaries are violated (p. 289)? Can you give some examples of firm and gracious consequences when a boundary is violated? What were the steps Jesus gave for implementing consequences (Matt. 18:15–17)?

10. Why is tough love especially hard for women? Do you understand why you cannot “live out this kind of purifying love in a place of isolation” (p. 291)? If you have no one with whom to bond in support and prayer, what will you do to seek out such a friend (even if it feels risky)?

11. What encouraged you most about the illustration of the blacksmith's shop?