

SESSION 1:

He Said/She Said

Open in prayer.



THE BURNING QUESTION

How do we fulfill our God-given roles in marriage?



Fireproof Rule of Engagement: Remember that the objective for these sessions is to strengthen your marriage and encourage your partner. If you are doing this study in a small group, answer the discussion questions honestly but be careful to guard your partner's feelings; do not share anything that might embarrass or offend them. Save private thoughts and feelings for the *Fireproofing for Couples* talks with your spouse. Your consideration will encourage a safe environment for discussion and growth.



WARM-UP

Use this section if you're doing *Fireproof Your Marriage* in a small group setting.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: How did you meet your spouse, and what first attracted you to him/her?

Share your answer with the group.

“Sometimes I wonder if men and women really suit each other. Perhaps they should live next door and just visit now and then.”

– KATHARINE HEPBURN



FIREPROOF VIDEO

Watch the **SESSION 1** video clip on your *Fireproof Your Marriage* DVD.



DISCUSSION

QUESTION 1: Caleb claims Catherine “doesn’t _____ him.” What word does he use? What emotion(s) do you think he’s feeling at the time?

QUESTION 2: Catherine has some complaints about Caleb. What are some of the things she says he doesn’t do? Why do you think those things are important to her?

QUESTION 3: Caleb suspects his wife is meeting with her friends and “making me sound like a criminal.” How does he seem to feel about Catherine complaining to others about him?



FIREPROOF ILLUSTRATION



Read the following section either quietly to yourself as you prepare for your weekly session or aloud during the discussion time with your small group or spouse. The *Fireproof Illustration* for each session will include a real-life application or example that will help you understand and apply each lesson.

Jokes about the differences between men and women are timeless and nearly infinite in number. They're told at parties, shared over coffee, and read and forwarded as emails to friends and co-workers. Consider the joke below.

Men are just happier people because...

- *Your last name stays put*
- *The garage is all yours*
- *Car mechanics tell you the truth*
- *Wedding dress: \$5,000 Tax rental: \$100*
- *Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat*
- *Three pairs of shoes are more than enough*
- *You can "do" your nails with a pocket knife*

We laugh over the jokes and teasing stories, but how true are they? Are men and women really that different? One online survey asked people what they thought of the differences. See how you would answer the actual survey question below:

Indicate your level of agreement with this statement: "Men and women are SO different."

- Yes, worlds apart!*
- Not really, it's all hype*
- I'm never sure*

In the actual poll results, seventy percent picked, "Yes, worlds apart". Eighteen percent chose, "Not really, it's all hype" and twelve percent selected, "I'm never sure".²



"There is no unisex brain. Girls arrive already wired as girls, and boys arrive already wired as boys. Their brains are different by the time they're born"

—DR. LOUANN BRIZENDINE, UCSF MEDICAL SCHOOL¹

¹Walt and Barb Larrimore, *His Brain, Her Brain* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 30.

²Ibid, 29.



DISCUSSION



In your group or with your spouse, read Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 5:2.

QUESTION 4: These verses indicate that God deliberately made the two sexes different. Why do you think He chose to do that?

QUESTION 5: If you're studying *Fireproof Your Marriage* in a small group setting, have the men in your group share one thing they particularly like about women. Have the women share one thing they like about men. If you're studying *Fireproof Your Marriage* as a couple, share with your spouse what you like about the opposite sex.



Read Ephesians 5:21-33.

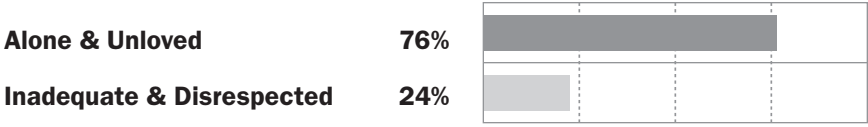
QUESTION 6: In this passage, verse 25 gives instructions to husbands, and verse 33 gives instructions to wives. What one word characterizes how a husband should treat a wife? What one word describes how a wife should treat a husband?

QUESTION 7: The passage affirms that God created us male and female—two different creations. As our Creator, He clearly understands how the sexes are different and what our needs are. How closely do you feel God’s commands match up with the needs of men and women? Explain your answer.

 **Read Psalm 139:13-16.**

QUESTION 8: What does this passage say about God’s knowledge of us?

One survey asked men, given the choice, how they would prefer to feel: “alone and unloved” or “inadequate and disrespected.” The survey results are shown below.



In addition, the key complaint made by respondents was that the choices weren’t different—the men felt being disrespected was the same as being unloved!

QUESTION 9: Do you agree with the results of the survey? Are you surprised? Why or why not?



HOT QUESTIONS FOR MEN & WOMEN

Read and answer the questions in the section below that applies to you. When everyone is finished, share your answers.

QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN

A: Read through the quotes below. Put a check beside the ones that would make you feel most loved, if said by your husband. Why?

- "It sounds like you had a stressful day today. Would you like to talk about it? What happened?"*
- "I really like that new haircut. It makes you look very pretty."*
- (In response to you calling him at work, sounding very upset and asking to talk with him.) "I have some people in my office, but I want to hear what's wrong. Hold on just a minute, and I'll get to a place we can talk privately."*
- "Those boxes are really heavy. Here, let me get them for you."*

B: Read through the quotes below. This time, check the ones that would make you feel most unloved. Why?

- "I know your birthday is tomorrow, but I've been really busy. Here, you can take the credit card and spend 50 bucks on yourself."*
- "I heard John's wife went to that new fitness class and lost 10 pounds. Why don't you go check it out—it might make you feel better about yourself."*
- "When are you going to clean up this house? It's a mess."*
- "Can't you see I'm in the middle of watching the game? You're always wanting to talk about something when I'm trying to relax."*

QUESTIONS FOR MEN

A: Read through the quotes below. Put a check beside the ones that would make you feel most respected, if said by your wife. Why?

- “The garage door opener doesn’t seem to be working correctly and I know you’re better at understanding mechanical things. Would you take a look at it?”*
- “My husband took the kids out to the park yesterday to give me a break. He’s really great about getting me the breaks I need.”*
- “That’s great that you got a raise at work. You’ve earned it.”*
- “I’m having a hard time with my co-worker—he has been undermining me with my boss. What do you think I should do?”*

B: Read through the quotes below. This time, check the ones that would make you feel most disrespected. Why?

- “You’re not really a fix-it kind of guy—don’t you think you should call someone to repair that?”*
- “When are you going to start being responsible and quit spending so much time on that dream of starting your own business?”*
- “Last night, it took my husband three hours to figure out how to get the new computer working. Technical things are not really his strength.”*
- “When are you going to start making more money at work? We really need to have more income to get all these bills paid.”*



DISCUSSION

QUESTION 10: Men—share some general comments about what “respect” looks like. Why is respect such a critical issue?

QUESTION 11: Women—share some general comments about how they feel love. Why is emotional connection and understanding so important?



Read Proverbs 15:1 and Ephesians 4:29.

QUESTION 12: What do these passages teach about the importance of communication and using our words to “build up” our spouse?

Close in prayer.



FIREPROOFING APPLICATION



Fireproof Rule of Engagement: As we struggle in the marriage relationship, we may find ourselves blaming one another for our negative experience. As you share together, remember that the behavior you can most effectively change is your own. Jesus said, *“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?”* – LUKE 6:41-42

Resist the urge to point fingers at one another. Focus on finding and correcting your own flaws so you can personally become more like Christ; this will diffuse anger and ease conflict.



FIREPROOFING FOR WOMEN



Read 1 Peter 3:1-9.

QUESTION 1: Consider Caleb’s comments about Catherine’s lack of respect. Do you see any similarities in your marriage? Explain.

QUESTION 2: Consider your spouse’s answers to the questions about how he experiences respect. What did you learn about his feelings and needs?



Read Ephesians 4:2-9.

On the scale below mark how frequently you use words that “build up” or support your spouse.



Very Infrequently Neutral Frequently Very Infrequently Frequently

QUESTION 3: What specific ways will you limit “unwholesome talk” and instead “build up” your spouse? Commit to taking those steps this week.

FIREPROOFING CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Focus on one way in which your spouse feels respected. Commit to implementing it this week in a practical way.



FIREPROOFING FOR MEN



Read 1 Peter 3:7-9.

QUESTION 1: Think about some of the issues Catherine had with her husband Caleb. Do you see any similarities in your marriage? Explain.

QUESTION 2: Consider your spouse’s answers to the questions about feeling loved. What did you learn about her feelings and needs?



Read James 1:19.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high) mark how well and how often you feel you listen to your spouse.

1

2

3

4

5

QUESTION 3: What are some specific ways you can become a better listener? Commit to taking those steps this week.

FIREPROOFING CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Focus on one way in which your spouse feels loved. Commit to implementing it this week in a practical way.



FIREPROOFING FOR COUPLES

Open your time together with prayer, asking God to give you wisdom as well as a receptive heart and mind.



Read Ephesians 5:21-33.

QUESTION 1: Take turns sharing your thoughts about this passage. What phrases or ideas stood out to you? Explain.

QUESTION 2: Share your answers to the men's and women's sections on respect and love. Do any of your spouse's answers surprise you? Ask questions; clarify anything your partner finds confusing.

QUESTION 3: Men—share a few ways in which your partner can best show you respect.

QUESTION 4: Women—share a few ways in which your partner can best show you love and understanding.

QUESTION 5: Take turns sharing a trait you especially appreciate in one another.

Close in prayer.