



Virtual Small Group Study
SESSION 1: THE ELUSIVE SECRET
Facilitators' Guide

Learning Objectives: By the end of this session, couples will have:

1. Recognized that for a marriage relationship to work, they need to establish a vertical relationship with God first.
2. Shared their experiences in trying to get their satisfaction from their spouse instead of allowing God to satisfy them.
3. Made a decision to offer Jesus the front seat of their lives and marriages.

I. Preliminaries

A. Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome them warmly to the group.
- Introduce yourselves briefly, ask them to introduce themselves: Name, spouse's name; # of years married; # of children; from where; work; 1 expectation from the study. (**Facilitators, kindly take note of their expectations**)

B. Share briefly the ground rules for a SAFE and fruitful discussion time (Note: Participants have a copy of this too): **S.A.F.E.R**

S-hare nothing that would embarrass your spouse (*Make sure you have an approval from him/her if it is a sensitive issue. Better yet, focus more on sharing your personal issues, concerns. Speak for yourself. What have you learned personally? What can you change? How are you contributing to your marriage- positively or negatively? Use "I statements", like, "I struggle with...", INSTEAD OF, "Many couples...or my spouse struggles with..."*)

A-nything shared in the group stays in the group. Respect privacy, maintain confidentiality.

F-ocus or listen attentively when someone is talking. This demonstrates respect and promotes understanding.

E-very one is encouraged to participate in the sharing but be brief and to the point.

R-espond to God and resolve to obey Him. Pray for and with your spouse. Make and apply your specific action plans/ steps: "I will _____". (**Refer to the Specific Application, "I will " Chart).**

II. Interaction /Discussion Time

A. Impression, Impact of the Video



- Which part of the video presentation did you like the most or was meaningful to you and why?

(Let 1 or 2 share maybe in just one or 2 sentences. Reserve more of their sharing in the discussion questions. **Example 1:** The part when they said something about “we think we married the wrong person...”; It really struck me because I’d entertained this thought many times. **Example 2:** I’m like Dave. I’ve rated my marriage 9.5 but my wife’s rating is 1”).

B. Discuss the ff. questions: (**Facilitators** – please try to have your answers to the questions for your sharing. Please help them clarify the questions by rephrasing them).

1. Read this quote and discuss: *“The only way a horizontal relationship will work is, if you go vertical first.” - Dave and Ann Wilson*
 - How have you experienced this in your relationship? How has your horizontal relationship (*husband & wife*) been affected by your vertical relationship with God?
2. One of the scriptures that Dave and Ann mentioned was Jeremiah 2:12-13, it says, 12 *“Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror,” declares the Lord. 13 “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”*
 - The Wilsons connect the “broken cisterns” to our unhealthy expectations of happiness and fulfilment from our spouse/relationships.
 - How have you seen this in your relationship? What are some ways that you create “broken cisterns” instead of choosing “a spring of living water”? Would you like to share your experience?
 - How does this scripture (*Jer.2:12-13*) connect with the statement “We think we married the wrong person but we are actually looking in the wrong place”?
3. Dave and Ann said, *“When we go vertical first, God quenches our thirst.”*
 - How could this perspective impact/affect your view of yourself, your relationship with others, your spouse, or your kids? Describe some specific ways this perspective could have an effect on you and your relationships. Share your personal experience.

4. How do we go vertical? The couple talked about how to **Divert Daily** (*Pray Together*), **Withdraw Weekly** (*Date Night, Church, join a small group*), and **Abandon Annually** (*Getaway, attend Couples Seminars*).
- Which one do you do best? Share 1 way you do this in your relationship. How does that allow you to keep a vertical-first relationship?
 - Which one do you need to improve?
5. How did you connect with the **Tandem Bike** illustration?
- Currently or most of the time, who is sitting in the front seat of your life and marriage?
 - What do you think keeps many husbands and wives (*or you personally*) from offering Jesus the front seat in life and marriage?
 - How can you choose to go vertical first this week?

(Attention Facilitators: Lead your group in prayer, whatever is applicable. See instructions below.)

➤ **(For non- believers):** Does Christ have a seat in your life? If you want Christ to have a seat and be on the throne of your life and marriage, you can ask Him by faith through prayer. If that is your heart's desire, I am going to lead you in prayer right now. You may repeat the prayer after me and make it as your personal prayer.

(LIFE-CHANGING DECISION: Prayer to receive Christ as Savior and Lord).

"Lord Jesus, I need You. I admit that I have been following my own plans and desires and because of this, I have sinned against You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I now open the door of my heart and receive you as my Saviour and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen!"

If you have prayed this prayer by faith, He has come into your life as he promised...

➤ **(For Believers):** Maybe some of you here have already Christ in your lives. Our sin is completely paid for but the effects of sin continues in our daily lives. The effects of sin carry over into our marriages as well. You might be a Christian but most of the time you find yourself being in the front seat of your life and marriage instead of God. He wants you to allow Him the control of your life. If this is your desire right now, by faith surrender every area of your life to God. Prayer is one way of showing your faith To God. You can express your heart's desire by considering to pray this prayer with me or saying it in your own words.

(LIFE-CHANGING DECISION: Prayer to be filled or to be controlled by the Holy Spirit)

“Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been directing my own life and that because of this, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ’s death on the cross for me. I now ask Christ to take His place on the throne of my life. Take control of my life through the Holy Spirit as You promised You would do if I ask in faith. I now thank You for guiding my life and for empowering me by the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Facilitators: Take notice if there are non-believers in your group. You may lead them to pray to receive Christ. If no more time or there’s just one of them in the group, you may schedule a personal time with them within the week to share the gospel. If your participants are believers you may lead them to a prayer of allowing Christ to take control of their lives.

The Wilsons said, *“The simple secret begins with realizing that a purely horizontal marriage just doesn’t work.” So, go vertical first and put Jesus at the center of your life and relationship. Put God first in everything you do... (Prov.3:6-TLB).*

“The scariest, safest, most wonderful place to be, is with Jesus in the front seat and in control.” – Ann W.

III. Specific Application:



As you reflect on today’s topic of going vertical first, what is your biggest takeaway?

What is your SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bounded) action plan/step? What is your “I Will” statement as a starting point this week? **Ex:** “I will start praying intentionally for and with my spouse every day, starting tomorrow.”(You can make a list of action plans/steps and continue doing them this week).

“I will _____”. **(Facilitators, you can ask a few to share if there is still time. Otherwise, encourage them to write their “I will” statements on their “I will” Chart and start applying them this week. Encourage them to have a Moments Together. See below for instructions. Make sure to review what happened during the next meeting 😊).**

IV. Moments Together: (Connect horizontally and vertically).



As a couple, you are highly encouraged to take time (make a date) and discuss the questions again together this week and come up with additional specific action points for your application. This is also the best time for you to go VERTICAL by ending your time praying together as a couple):

Wrap-up: Go back to the Big Group (for announcements, closing prayer & picture taking 😊).

/spm 😊 - 7/20, Davao City