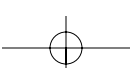
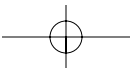


OOPS!

I Forgot My Wife

DISCUSSION GUIDE



Doyle Roth &
Paul Santhouse



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Contents

How to use this discussion guide	4
1. What it means to be a man	6
2. The self-centered male	8
3. Asking for directions	10
4. Whose responsibility is it?	12
5. The ranting of men	14
6. Sharing the air	16
7. Whose idea was marriage, anyway?	18
8. The intermission or the hunt?	20
9. The humor of fools	22
10. Four types of leadership	24
11. A leader protects	26
12. A leader reaches	28
13. Why God hates self-centeredness	30
14. Family trees and self-absorbed men	32
15. Self-willed and self-righteous men	34
16. Self-serving and self-indulgent men	36
17. Self-defensive and self-justifying men	38
18. Self-deceived and self-ambitious men	40
19. Running out of gas	42
20. Does loving my wife mean losing my freedom?	44
21. The end and the beginning	46
Final Exam!	48

Oops! I Forgot My Wife Discussion Guide

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How to use this discussion guide

*Learning is not about filling a bucket,
but lighting a fire.*

Any time you open a book or study guide you're inviting a mentor into your life. Someone who can bring insight, experience, and encouragement to your present situation. And not just yours, either! By investing your time in this study you're choosing to make a difference in many lives. Your spouse certainly will be impacted, along with the rest of your family. Others in your group will benefit from your growth, as will the people you influence in the future because your growth equipped you to help them. Not a bad return for a couple of dollars and a few hours of time!

As you dig in, remember there are two parts to personal growth. One involves *learning*, King Solomon advised, "Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7, NIV). The difference between success and failure often comes down to what you know.

But learning alone does not guarantee growth. As James clearly states in his New Testament letter, it's not the person who studies that walks away blessed. It's the one who obeys (James 1:22-25). Growth requires *obedience*.

When we choose to study biblical truth, we come as disciples, not reporters. We're searching for meaning, not gathering facts. As we probe, dig, test, and consider, we're opening our souls to the One who makes all things new. And when we practice what we learn, the truth sets us free. That's what bringing glory to God is all about. It's about the day-to-day application of truth in every corner of society (Matthew 13:33).

How this study works

The OPEN FOR DISCUSSION series is built on the premise that, as we connect what we learn with how we live, spiritual growth happens. Accordingly, we've designed a tool that will provoke your thinking and encourage a response.

As you thumb through this discussion guide, you'll see that each two-page spread consists of text on the left and questions on the right. The text is designed to spark your thinking, while the questions are meant to foster application. And since each two-page spread is a stand-alone study, you can do as many or as few of them as fit within your group time and setting.

If you've already read *Ops! I Forgot My Wife*, you'll notice that the les-

sons in this guide follow the progression of the book. However, their stand-alone design also makes them flexible. If you don't have time to do all twenty-one, pick the ones that look relevant to your situation. As far as reading the book goes, you'll find it helpful but not necessary. Each lesson contains enough material to foster healthy discussion. The "Further Reading" suggestions simply provide more background. In case you haven't read the book yet, here's a quick overview to help you keep the characters straight:

- **Carter** is a businessman and rancher from Colorado who does marriage counseling on the side. He and his wife, **Minnie**, have weathered all the ups and downs of marriage during their forty years together and have learned how to truly love each other.
- **Gerry** and **Sue** are a younger couple whose crumbling marriage was pieced back together again with Carter's help. They now live in Wyoming and have referred their good friends, **Mitch** and **Stacy**, to Carter for help.
- **Mitch** and **Stacy**, Gerry and Sue's good friends from Wyoming, are having serious marital trouble. Mitch's self-centered lifestyle has made married life unbearable for Stacy, so she and the kids have moved out. Mitch does not believe in God or the Bible, does not like his will to be crossed, and does not want anyone's help. The trouble is, he's got this crisis on his hands, so he decides to contact Carter for advice.

The story is told through a series of emails, so the excerpts you'll be reading in this discussion guide are part of a larger conversation going on between these six characters.

Pursue understanding! Live what you learn! And don't forget to write!

We're as interested in the outcome of your study as you are. Everything we do at Lewis & Roth Publishers stems from our mission to equip the body of Christ as expressed in Ephesians 4:11-16. That's why we want to hear from you. Did you find this discussion guide helpful? Could we have made it better? What else would you like to learn about? Please let us know and we'll include your input in our future planning. (Our address is on the bottom of page 2, or you may email us at: info@lewisandroth.org) Now, may God bless your discussions!

1

What it means to be a man

(Further Reading: Prologue, Email 31)

Gerry to Reader
Carter was an enigma to me. Though he had a way of dismissing us younger guys with colorful putdowns and questions about our manliness, there's not a single one of us he didn't intentionally pursue with friendly intent. Over time I came to see how deeply he cared about us and wanted to see us grow into men — and he was *very* clear about what a man is supposed to be. “A man stands for something,” he'd say. “A man is more concerned about a stain on his character than a stain on his pants. A man cares more about keeping his integrity above reproach than about keeping his SUV spotless. A man opens the car door for his wife, and always treats her with honor and respect.” To be honest, he made being a man something I wanted very much.

Carter to Friends
Guys, you need to know something about my camping trip last weekend. It's about this “man” who settled in the spot next to ours. (I could tell right away what kind of a man he wasn't by the size of his tiny hatchet. I've seen beavers with bigger teeth.)

This guy could not stop ripping his young son to shreds. He called him names, made fun of his efforts to help, and verbally abused the little guy all weekend. It broke my heart and made me madder than a swarm of hornets. What kind of “man” does stuff like that? This guy wasn't a man, he was only a male.

What makes a man is godly character, integrity, and self-control. Real men are patient and kind. They are the leaders, protectors, and teachers of their families, not abusers, bullies (cowards), or overgrown children with tiny hatchets. Sure, there might have been cause for some training or discipline, but that's no reason to inflict wounds on your own child's heart. What would a real man do?

First, get a double-bitted axe and throw that tiny hatchet in the trash. Then learn to talk with the boy. Don't scream at him or smack him around! Take him by his hand and lead him! Model what you want him to become. Do you want your son to become a real man who has character, integrity, patience, and gentleness? Show him how! Don't be an abusive weasel with a weeny hatchet.

1. How would you express what it means to be a man?

2. Describe someone you know who models authentic manliness.

3. According to Carter, “a man stands for something.” What do you stand for?

4. What would you like to stand for?

5. In what ways do yelling and name-calling damage people?

6. Listed below are several characteristics attributed to real men. What practical steps can you take to grow in these areas?

- Godly character
- Integrity
- Self-control
- Patience
- Kindness

7. What family vacation stories could you tell that would help others learn something important about being a man?

If your wife were here . . .

What suggestions would she offer to help you become the man God designed you to be?

2

The self-centered male

(Further Reading: Emails 1-2)

Let me tell you something, Carter. This is one angry woman we're talking about. Here are some of the "high points" from Stacy's ocean of fury:

1. Mitch is nothing but an image manager. He's extremely concerned about what others think. Dress right, act right, fool everybody. Stacy is terrified that talking to us will set him off because it will tarnish his image. After all, "only weak people need help."
2. He is also a Jekyll and Hyde. At home he's unbearable, but to everyone else he's Mr. Charming.
3. Mitch is an even worse workaholic than I was. He enjoys what he does and makes a great salary, but the family doesn't benefit from it. He comes home to refresh himself, be waited on hand and foot, pat the kids on the head, load up on calories, watch the game, and have sex. Stacy says he would rather take a promotion with a divorce than decline the promotion and keep his family.
4. Speaking of which, he's totally disinterested in the needs of his family. He sees his home life as an intermission. What's most important to him is his work. He leaves his energy, creativity, personality, humor, patience, and love at the office. This makes him pretty irrelevant and boring around the house.
5. He is disconnected from his children. He understands that they need discipline, but never takes the time or initiative to get involved with them or deal with them gently. All he does is yell and order them around.
6. Mitch needs to be the center of attention. Stacy says she and the kids have to focus on his needs at all times. She would like to invite friends to their home, but he gets frustrated when her attention is diverted from his needs. When he's home, it's all about him.

I can't tell you how many times she used the word "self" to describe him. Granted, Stacy is really upset, but if even half of what she said is true I think we've got a menace on our hands.

1. What do you think of these six grievances? Are there any you would like to challenge from a man's perspective?
2. If these six points were a description of your life, which one would trouble you the most? Why?
3. If you were responsible for counseling Mitch out of this mess, what would you tell him to do?
4. Look at Stacy's second point (Jekyll & Hyde). Why do men often treat their families one way and other people a different way?
5. Pick one of these issues and explain how a wife *should* respond to it.
6. Review the characteristics of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Which of Stacy's six points would not be resolved if Mitch were to show her this kind of love?
7. How do you think a man can learn to love in this way?

If your wife were here . . .

How would she compare and contrast your performance as a husband and father with the items on Stacy's list?

3

Asking for directions

(Further Reading: Emails 3-6, 8)

Like most guys, the last thing I ever wanted was counseling. Sue and I had already tried that several times, and it only made things worse. We'd sit in somebody's office explaining what the other did that made us hurt or angry, then we'd go home and fight about what was said. I'm sure the counselors genuinely tried to help, but I was too stubborn to give any ground.

Carter to Mitch
Mitch, nothing makes me happier than to come alongside those I love and give them a hand. The question is, *are you really looking for help?* I wasn't so sure from your emails. Sometimes other people care more about our marriages than we do. For instance, my mom sure cares a lot about mine. You know something, Mitch? I care about your marriage, but I'm not going to force any "counseling" your way unless you're interested in it. We all believe in you and know you'll do everything you can to straighten out this mess. But it's your call. What about it, you slacker? Everyone would love to help if you're interested.

Carter to Mitch
When I was a young buck like you, it cost me six years of marital distress to realize I needed directions. I wandered around way too long trying to figure things out by myself. What a shame! It would have been so easy to ask someone for directions. But I was too self-directed to look to others for assistance. In the Bible (1 Corinthians 10:12) it says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." Our self-confidence in believing we can fix our problems often brings us to ruin. God gave us the Bible for instruction, correction, and training so we'll be equipped to live life properly (2 Timothy 3:16). The point of biblical teaching is to give us directions about how to live skillfully and with discernment.

Life was never meant to be lived without the use of directions. Don't be foolish. Not only are good directions available, but people all over the neighborhood of your life are eager to help you if you'll only stop and ask. What do you say, Mitch? Are you tired of driving around in circles yet?

1. Have you ever spent time working through an issue with a counselor? If so, describe your experience.

2. Why might a husband (or wife) not want marriage counseling?

3. What are the advantages of asking your friends, mentors, or church elders to help you through a time of marital difficulty? Disadvantages?

4. What role does the Bible play in your attempts to keep your marriage healthy and enjoyable?

5. What are the advantages of becoming a better husband?

6. Think of the imperfect couples you know. Whose issues seem easier to resolve—theirs or yours? Why?

7. Why do we often feel more concern for other couples' marriages than for our own?

8. If your marriage is less than perfect, for what percentage of the problem are you responsible?

If your wife were here . . .

How would she answer that last question?