

UNCOMMON MARRIAGE

MONTH

ALL-WOMEN'S GROUP STUDY

The following discussion guide is designed for a five-week all-women's group study of *Uncommon Marriage*. Questions within each week are broken up by chapter so you can adjust for a shorter or longer study as best fits your needs. Feel free to stop and focus on the questions or ideas that resonate most with your group; this guide is intended to be a starting point for deeper conversations and discussions, for stronger community, and for spiritual growth. Use this discussion guide as a base, and let God guide your time together.

Week 1: Read Introduction and chapters 1–3

Introduction

1. In this book, Tony and Lauren aim to tell the story of their marriage, in hopes that their story will encourage you. If you are married, take a moment to think about the story of your own marriage so far. What have been the biggest ups and downs in your relationship? Where are you now? What do you hope to gain by reading this couple's story?

Chapter 1: Beginnings

1. One of the obstacles Lauren faced early in her relationship with Tony was communication, and this led to misunderstanding and sometimes conflict. How do you and your husband or fiancé communicate differently? Do you believe there are fundamental differences in the ways men and women communicate? If so, what are they?
2. When Lauren met Tony's parents, it helped her understand Tony better. What about your husband's or fiancé's family helps you understand him better?



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Chapter 2: The Sky's the Limit

1. One of the priorities early in Tony and Lauren's marriage was building a spiritual foundation by finding a church and making time to talk about spiritual things. What do you think it means to build a spiritual foundation? How are you building a spiritual foundation in your family?
2. Because of Tony's career in football, Lauren had to adjust to spending time away from her husband early on. What factors in your husband or fiancé's life (i.e., career, in-laws, hobbies) affect your lifestyle? What, if any, adjustments have you made as a result?

Chapter 3: Hail to the Chiefs

1. When Tony told Lauren he was looking for a job with another team, Lauren was very upset, but she resolved to support Tony wherever they went. What life changes or events have caught you off-guard in your relationship? How did you keep your marriage strong during that time?
2. Even though relocating was hard, Lauren and Tony made the decision together and were both at peace with where they were going. After a time of redirection, have you ever thought, like Lauren, *Maybe that will be good for us?* What did you learn about your spouse and about God's plans during redirection?

In Summary

In these chapters, Tony and Lauren talk about the beginnings of their marriage: how they met, their wedding, and the joys and challenges that came in their first few years together. Tony and Lauren learned a lot about each other, about communication, and about how to make decisions together even when God's redirection was difficult. As you think about these chapters and about how Tony and Lauren learned to understand and love one another, consider these verses:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not



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demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

“Haven’t you read the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “They record that from the beginning ‘God made them male and female.’” And he said, “‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”

Matthew 19:4-6

Week 2: Read chapters 4–6

Chapter 4: Welcome to the Neighborhood

1. After relocating, Lauren made sure not to live in the past, but rather to enjoy where she was in life. How easy it is for you to live in the past? What do you enjoy about your place in life right now, even if it’s not where you want to be?
2. At Tony and Lauren’s new church, Lauren was greatly impacted by Ulysses and Augustine, a couple who loved their small daughter, Catherine, through her short and difficult life. What couples in your life have greatly impacted you? How important do you think it is to find role models for yourself and your marriage?
3. In Kansas City, Tony and Lauren learned the importance of carving out time for one another, even during a busy schedule. Have you and your husband or fiancé set aside a specific time for each other? What might you do with your spouse during that time? If you haven’t set aside a time, pick a day this week to spend time with your spouse.

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Chapter 5: Into the Cold

1. When Tony decided to leave the Chiefs and move the family to Minnesota, Lauren felt very left out of the decision-making process. Explain a time when either you or your spouse felt left out of a decision in your family. How did the two of you resolve that situation?
2. Even though she didn't want to go to Minnesota, Lauren made the best of the move and tried to set up their life there. How hard is it for you to make the best of a painful situation? If you feel comfortable doing so, tell about a time when you had to adjust your desires and expectations because your circumstances were not ideal?

Chapter 6: Spousal Support

1. One of the toughest situations Tony and Lauren faced was when they had a difference of opinion and there was no right answer; however, Tony and Lauren learned that instead of figuring out who was “wrong,” it was helpful to consider the other person’s point of view. When have you gotten hung up on figuring out who was “wrong” in your relationship? What was the result? How could you learn to consider your husband or fiancé’s point of view instead?
2. Since Lauren believes Tony has the primary responsibility to lead in their home, she felt it was right for her to follow Tony even when they disagreed on a decision. Still, she learned to express her disappointment without complaining. Explain a time when your husband or fiancé made a decision you disapproved of. How did you express your displeasure? What is the difference between expressing disappointment and complaining?

In Summary

In these chapters, Tony and Lauren come face-to-face with the hardships attached to a life in football. After settling in Kansas City, they were uprooted and moved to Minnesota, despite Lauren’s displeasure with the change. During this difficult time, they both learned how to communicate and set aside time for each other, and how to make the best of difficult



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circumstances while nurturing their love. As you think about these chapters, consider these verses:

And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body.

Ephesians 5:21-30

The second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." No other commandment is greater than these.

Mark 12:31

Week 3: Read chapters 7–9

Chapter 7: A Warm Landing

1. When Tony was offered a job coaching the Bucs, Lauren had a clear sense that the Lord had orchestrated all of it. Explain a time when you encountered a significant change in your life and clearly felt that the Lord had set it up. How did that affect your faith in God and your attitude about the change?
2. With the new job in Tampa came new responsibilities, and Lauren felt pulled in a thousand different directions with only prayer to ground her. Do you turn to prayer when you feel



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overwhelmed? Why or why not? What overwhelming circumstances do you want to bring before God this week?

Chapter 8: Tampa's Team

1. Tony's job in Tampa meant Lauren was more recognized than ever before, and she faced the pressure of living up to expectations. However, rather than changing who she was, Lauren realized she just needed to be herself. What pressures and expectations do you face in your life? How do you respond to those expectations and remain true to yourself?
2. Rather than abiding by rigid gender roles, Tony and Lauren try to divide tasks by who is good at what. Operating as a team, they consider each other's strengths and weaknesses. What strengths and weaknesses do you and your spouse have that do not align with gender stereotypes? How do you organize your lives to optimally use both of your strengths?

Chapter 9: Living the Dream

1. With all of the opportunities Tampa presented, Tony and Lauren quickly realized that they could not do everything. Rather, they learned to ask what only they could do, in order to discern what was important. When you think about the opportunities in your life, what can only you and your spouse do? How does that help you sort out what's important?
2. Lauren stresses that in marriage, it is very important for both spouses' passions to be considered, and for both husband and wife to sacrifice for each other's dreams. Do you feel like both your passions and your spouse's passions are honored in your marriage? Why or why not? If not, how can you address that with your spouse?
3. When Jordan was sick, Lauren noticed that she and Tony had very different ways of seeking treatment for him, and Lauren was often frustrated. What differences in personality cause conflict between you and your husband or fiancé? How do these same differences help your decision making?



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In Summary

In this section, Tony and Lauren's time of waiting in Minnesota finally came to a close, and they moved to Tampa where they face new challenges such as busyness, new responsibilities, and a larger family. They learned how to sort out what was important in life, and how to communicate well even when life was hectic. Furthermore, they learned that they needed to honor each other's passions and personalities and that their strengths and weaknesses brought balance to their marriage. As you think about these chapters, consider the following verses:

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17

Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

Philippians 2:2-4

Week 4: Read chapters 10–12

Chapter 10: An Unsettled Season

1. Before the Glazers fired Tony, Lauren had a feeling that something wasn't right. Explain a time when you had a feeling about something in your life and marriage that turned out to be correct. How did you communicate that feeling to your husband or fiancé?
2. Tony and Lauren reacted very differently emotionally to the events with the Glazers. While Tony prepared to move on, Lauren was very upset. Explain a time when you and your spouse or fiancé were at odds in how you reacted to a major change. How did you communicate and



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try to understand each other through that experience?

3. After Tony was fired from the Bucs, Lauren was despondent; however, all she could do was be still in the presence of God and wait for whatever was coming next. When have you found yourself waiting in a place of grief? How did you navigate your relationship with God and with your husband or fiancé during that time?

Chapter 11: Long-Distance Marriage

1. After leaving the Bucs, Tony and Lauren were presented with an opportunity to move to Indianapolis, where Tony would coach the Colts. During this process of decision making, they talked to make sure they were both part of the decision. How important do you think it is to talk carefully through major decisions in marriage? How do you and your spouse usually talk through those things?
2. Even though the Bible says not to go to bed angry, Tony and Lauren found that it was sometimes better to resolve conflict in the morning when they weren't both exhausted. What happens when you try to resolve conflict with your spouse late at night? When do the two of you best communicate?
3. Tony and Lauren stress the importance of being committed to one another, no matter the distance or circumstance. What do you think it looks like to be that committed? How can you embody that each day with your husband or fiancé?

Chapter 12: Together Again

1. Whether Tony won or lost, Lauren always made sure to wait outside the locker room after the game to support him. What small things do you do to support your husband or fiancé, no matter his success or failure?
2. Over the course of their marriage, Tony and Lauren worked to find common interests—even though they both knew they wouldn't like all the same things. What common interests have you and your spouse developed? What things do you accept your husband or fiancé will never like?



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In Summary

In this section, Tony and Lauren experienced another major change—leaving the Bucs and Tampa for Indianapolis. They learned to listen to each other’s insight and respect each other’s reactions to difficult circumstances. They braved long-distance marriage for a season and reflected on how they support each other and focus on their common interests to maintain the strength of their marriage. As you reflect on these chapters, think about the following verses:

Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

1 Peter 3:8

If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.

1 Corinthians 12:17-18

Week 5: Read chapters 13–15 and Afterword

Chapter 13: Remembering Jamie

1. When their son Jamie died, both Tony and Lauren were heartbroken, though they expressed it in different ways. Their distinct ways of grieving sometimes caused conflict, as they wanted to mourn at different times. How do you and your husband or fiancé grieve differently? What can you do to be sensitive to his way of grieving?
2. Jamie’s death put life in perspective for the Dungys. The loss of the playoff game and other disappointments paled in comparison to the tragedy. Explain a time when a tragedy put your life in perspective. How do hard times shape our understanding of success and what’s important?



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Chapter 14: Champions

1. The Colts wrapped up the 2006 season by winning the Super Bowl, which was a huge encouragement for both Tony and Lauren. After the game, both Tony and Lauren were up on the stage, celebrating their accomplishment. What has been the biggest success you and your husband or fiancé celebrated together? How did you feel in that moment?
2. When Eric started receiving threats on his high school football team, Lauren had a hard time trusting God to take care of her child. How hard is it for you to trust God with the important people and factors in your life? Why?

Chapter 15: New Arenas

1. Once Tony left football coaching, Lauren and Tony had much more time to do things as a couple. What activities do you enjoy doing with your husband or fiancé? What things would you like to do more of with him? How can the two of you start to plan those things now?
2. Tony and Lauren are very different, both because of their personalities and because of their upbringings, but they've come to realize that their differences are a blessing. What differences in your marriage are hard to see as blessings? What differences are clearly blessings?

Afterword

1. According to Bill Cosby, "The heart of marriage is memories." As you reflect on Tony and Lauren's story, take a minute to think about your own story. At the beginning of this discussion guide, you considered your story so far. Now, think about the most important lessons you've learned along the way. Where do you want to be in your marriage in five years? What areas do you want to grow in? Share your thoughts with your husband or fiancé this week.



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In Summary

In this section, Tony and Lauren ventured from the heartbreak that came with Jamie's death to the booming excitement of winning the Super Bowl and beyond. They learned how to honor each other's methods of grieving and see their differences as blessings. They are still growing in their marriage, but they've come a long way since their wedding. As you reflect on these chapters, think about the following verses:

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Philippians 2:1-2

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

1 John 4:7

