

A SYSTEM, NOT A SERMON

The Godly Husband Field Guide

Seven decisions, each with a time attached and a written way to tell when it slipped.

Most men do not need to be told to love their wife better. They need to be told what that looks like on a Tuesday at 6:40pm, and how they would know if it stopped happening. That is the whole difference between a goal and a system, and it is the only thing this guide is about.

- Seven decisions, each with a WHEN, an ACTION and an EVIDENCE line
- A written failure condition for every one, so a bad day does not cost a month
- A self-audit you can run in nine minutes
- A thirty-day tracking grid, plus a spreadsheet that does the arithmetic
- One page on what to do with the week you miss - because you will

Print it. Write on it. It is not finished until it has been marked up.

Break the cycle. Build the system. Be the man.

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For personal and small-group use.

Read this part first.

A goal says what. A system says when.

"I want to be a better husband" is a goal. It has no time, no trigger and no way to fail, which means it cannot be kept and it cannot be broken - it can only be felt, and feelings about it will track your mood rather than your marriage. Six months in, you will have no idea whether anything changed, and neither will she.

A system says: Thursday, 8:15pm, phone in the drawer, thirty minutes, and if I miss two Thursdays in a row I have to say so out loud on the third. That can be kept. It can also be broken, on the record, which is the part that makes it worth anything.

THE FOUR THINGS EVERY DECISION IN HERE CARRIES

- A WHEN. A time, or a trigger. Nothing exists until it has one.
- An ACTION. One thing, specific enough that a stranger could tell whether you did it.
- An EVIDENCE line. What gets written down, and where. Numbers as numbers, not stories.
- A FAILURE CONDITION, written in advance. The point at which this system is broken and needs rebuilding rather than more resolve. Written before you are emotional about it, because that is the only time you will write it honestly.

The one that makes the difference

Under every decision there is a line called HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING. That line is the actual product. A man can run all seven of these privately and change nothing in his house, because the thing his wife is measuring is not your intention - it is whether her week got easier without her having to manage you into it.

She has heard the promise before. That is not cynicism on her part, it is data. So none of this asks her to believe anything. It asks you to make the change visible enough that belief is not required.

What this guide will not do

It will not fix a marriage on its own, and it does not replace counselling, a pastor, or a man who can tell you no. If there is abuse, addiction or betrayal in your house, a printable is not the right size of tool - get a person involved this week.

It also will not make you a finished man. I am running these seven in my own house and two of them are unreliable in any given month. Decision 6 is the one I lose first when work gets heavy, and I have lost it more than once this year. You are getting a system that is being run, not a report from the far side of the problem.

The seven decisions

Each one is a full decision, not a value. Read all seven, then go to page 8 before you try to install any of them - installing seven at once is the most common way this fails.

1 GO FIRST

You start the prayer, the apology, and the hard conversation. Not because you are more spiritual, and not because you were more wrong. Because somebody has to move first and waiting to see if she will is a strategy for staying stuck.

WHEN	One fixed hour a week, same slot, plus any moment it goes wrong.
ACTION	Open it yourself. Say the first sentence. Do not wait for the temperature to drop.
EVIDENCE	What you started, and the day. One line.
FAILS AT	<i>two weeks running where she opened it both times.</i>

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

She stops rehearsing how to bring things up. The conversation starts before she has to decide whether it is worth the fight.

2 BE REACHABLE

The answer is now, or a specific time today. Never "later." Later is not a time, it is a way of ending a conversation while sounding like you are agreeing to have it.

WHEN	Nightly, phone in the drawer, from a fixed hour until bed.
ACTION	When she starts something, either take it now or name the hour you will.
EVIDENCE	Nights it held, out of seven.
FAILS AT	<i>three unnamed "laters" in one week.</i>

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

She stops timing her approach. She brings you something at 7pm on a Wednesday without first working out what kind of mood you are in.

3 SAY THE NUMBER

Money, schedule, whereabouts. She hears it from you, unprompted, before she has to ask. A wife who has to audit her husband is doing a second job she did not apply for.

WHEN	Money on the same date each month. Schedule every Sunday. Whereabouts same day, every time it changes.
ACTION	Say the actual figure and the actual time. Not "it's handled." The number.
EVIDENCE	What you told her before she asked, and the date.
FAILS AT	<i>she learns a number from a statement, an app or a third party instead of from you.</i>

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

She stops checking. Not because she decided to trust you, but because checking stopped producing anything she did not already know.

4 NAME THE FAILURE

You say the miss out loud before it gets raised. Every system in this guide has a written way to fail, and this is the decision that makes the others survivable - a named miss costs an evening, an unnamed one costs a month.

WHEN	Five minutes, end of the week, same slot.
ACTION	Say the thing you did not do, without the explanation attached to it.
EVIDENCE	The miss you named, and the date.
FAILS AT	<i>a month with nothing named. That is not a clean month, that is a man who stopped looking.</i>

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

She hears the bad news from you first. Every time it goes the other way, the next good news you bring gets discounted.

5 CARRY ONE THING WHOLE

One domain of the household owned end to end - decided, scheduled, paid for and followed up without a single reminder. Not "helping." Helping means she still owns it and you are staff.

WHEN	Pick the domain once. Then on its own recurring schedule, forever.
ACTION	Own it completely, including the remembering. The remembering is the whole job.
EVIDENCE	The domain, and the date it last ran.
FAILS AT	<i>she reminds you about it twice in one month. Two reminders means you own the task and she owns the tracking, which is the thing you were trying to take off her.</i>

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

Something disappears off her list and does not come back. She notices the absence of a worry, which is quieter and worth more than the thing itself.

6 GUARD THE HALF HOUR

A fixed window that belongs to the marriage and outranks work, phone and church. Not a date night once a month. A short window most days, which is harder and worth more.

WHEN Same time most nights. Ours is 8:15. Yours needs a number, not a description.

ACTION Both phones down, in another room. Nothing scheduled over it.

EVIDENCE Nights it held, out of seven.

FAILS AT *two weeks running under four nights. That is not a busy season, that is the window quietly closing.*

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

She stops asking whether you have time. The window exists whether or not the week was good, which is the only version of it that means anything.

7 STAY UNDER SOMETHING

One man who can tell you no and be listened to. Not a friend who agrees with you, and not a group you attend. A specific man with your actual numbers and permission to use them.

WHEN Same slot monthly, minimum. Booked ahead, not arranged when things are bad.

ACTION Give him the real numbers from this guide, including the ones you would rather round up.

EVIDENCE The date, and the one thing he pushed back on.

FAILS AT *two months where you met and nothing was corrected. That is not a good run, that is a man being managed instead of held.*

HOW SHE CAN TELL WITHOUT ASKING

She stops being your only accountability. A wife who is also the enforcement mechanism cannot be a wife at the same time, and every man who has done that to his marriage found out late.

The nine-minute audit

Score each decision as it actually ran over the last thirty days. Not as you intend it to run. If you cannot remember, that is a 0 - a system you cannot recall is a system that was not running.

0 = did not happen. 1 = happened, unreliably. 2 = ran on its schedule.

THE DECISION	0-2	WHAT IT ACTUALLY LOOKED LIKE
1 Go first		
2 Be reachable		
3 Say the number		
4 Name the failure		
5 Carry one thing whole		
6 Guard the half hour		
7 Stay under something		

YOUR NUMBER

Total _____ / 14 Adherence _____ % (total divided by 14)

The 70% line

Ten out of fourteen is 71%. That is the line, and it is not arbitrary - it is the point below which a system is not being run, it is being remembered fondly. Below ten, do not add resolve. Cut something and rebuild it smaller.

Four straight quarters above the line is what proves this held. One good month proves you can have a good month, which you already knew.

Install two. Not seven.

Seven at once is the most reliable way to end up running none of them by February. Pick the two with the lowest scores that you can attach to a time this week, and leave the other five alone until these two have run for a month without you thinking about them.

DECISION I AM INSTALLING FIRST

ITS WHEN - A TIME OR A TRIGGER, NOT A DESCRIPTION

IT FAILS AT

DECISION I AM INSTALLING SECOND

ITS WHEN

IT FAILS AT

The sentence you say out loud, to her, this week

Not a promise about the man you are going to be. A statement of two specific things with times attached, and what she should expect to see. Write it here first so you say it once instead of drafting it at her.

Say it once. Then stop talking about it and let the thirty days do the arguing. A man who keeps announcing his system is still asking to be believed, which is the thing you are trying to stop needing.

Thirty days

One mark a day, on the day. Not from memory on Sunday night - that is a story, not evidence. Mark only the two you installed. The rest stay blank on purpose.

DAY	DECISION ONE	DECISION TWO	THE ONE THING I GOT WRONG TODAY
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

Thirty days, continued

DAY	DECISION ONE	DECISION TWO	THE ONE THING I GOT WRONG TODAY
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			

AT THE END OF THIRTY DAYS

Count the marks. Divide by sixty. If it is above 70%, add one more decision - one, not four. If it is below, do not add anything. Make the two you have smaller until they hold.

The week you miss it

You will miss it. Not as a possibility to be managed - as a scheduled event that has already been priced in. Every system in this guide has a written failure condition precisely because the alternative is a man who runs it well for nineteen days, blows a week, and quietly decides the whole thing was another false start.

What a bad week is not

- It is not evidence the system is wrong. One missed week inside a quarter is noise. Two consecutive weeks is a signal, and that is exactly what your failure conditions are set at.
- It is not a reason to start over on Monday with a bigger version. The bigger version is how men avoid the smaller one that was working.
- It is not something to confess at length. Name it in one sentence under Decision 4 and go back to the schedule. A long apology is another way of making her manage your feelings about the miss.

What to actually do

- Say the miss out loud, once, without the explanation attached.
- Check whether you crossed a written failure condition. If you did, that decision gets rebuilt smaller - not renewed with more resolve.
- Resume on the next scheduled slot. Not tomorrow, not "from now on." The next slot that already exists.

Rebuilding one smaller

Smaller means less surface, not less seriousness. Guard the half hour becomes guard fifteen minutes, four nights. Carry one thing whole becomes carry a smaller thing whole. A system running at 80% of a reduced scope beats one running at 30% of an impressive one, and your wife is measuring reliability, not ambition.

THE DECISION THAT BROKE _____

ITS SMALLER VERSION, WITH A TIME _____

DATE I RESTART IT _____

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