

MARRIAGE ON THE ROCK

A GUIDE FOR DISCOVERING
GOD'S DESIGN FOR YOUR DREAM MARRIAGE

8 SESSION
SMALL GROUP STUDY

+ 4 INCLUDED BONUS SESSIONS



MarriageToday.com

**MARRIAGE ON THE
ROCK**

SMALL GROUP WORKBOOK

A GUIDE FOR

**DISCOVERING GOD'S DESIGN
FOR YOUR DREAM MARRIAGE**

JIMMY EVANS

Marriage on the Rock Small Group Workbook

This workbook is based on the Marriage on the Rock seminar by Jimmy Evans. *Marriage on the Rock* is available on book, DVD, CD and workbooks for couples and small groups.

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To the Board of Directors of MarriageToday™, thank you. Words cannot express the gratitude I feel for your unwavering support and commitment to me and the call of God upon my life. Without your support this book would not have been possible.

Thank you to the elders, staff and congregation of Trinity Fellowship in Amarillo, Texas for supporting us and allowing us to fulfill our ministry to marriages. We are grateful for the love and support we continually receive from each of you.

And most importantly, thank you Karen. You have stood by me and loved me for more than forty years. Even when I didn't believe it was possible, you had faith in us. Because of your prayers, we have built our *Marriage on the Rock*.

May God bless you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jimmy Evans

JIMMY EVANS



*Founder
and CEO of
MarriageToday™*

Jimmy Evans is Founder and CEO of MarriageToday™, a ministry that is devoted to helping couples thrive in strong and fulfilling marriages and families. Jimmy and his wife Karen, co-host *MarriageToday™ with Jimmy & Karen*, a nationally syndicated television program which is broadcast daily into over 110 million homes in America and more than 200 countries worldwide.

Jimmy has served as the senior leader of Trinity Fellowship in Amarillo, Texas for over 30 years. Jimmy has authored more than ten books, among which are his popular works, *Marriage on the Rock*, *Freedom From Your Past*, *Seven Secrets of Successful Families*, *Our Secret Paradise*, *The Right One*, and his newest book, *Blending Families*.

Jimmy and Karen have been married over 40 years and have two married children and five grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the excitement and blessing that comes from participating in a *Marriage on the Rock* small group. This resource has helped thousands of couples recapture the intimacy and passion they believed was long removed from their marriage.

Over the next several months, you will embark on a journey that will dramatically increase the intimacy in your relationship. This workbook will provide you with practical, biblically-based guidelines, insightful discussions and life-changing applications.

As you prepare for the first session, we want to encourage you in three areas:

- **First, be committed.** If you and your spouse are committed to God first and then to each other, your marriage can survive anything and become the marriage of your dreams.
- **Second, be bold.** Some of the discussion questions may challenge you to talk about important issues. It's normal to feel some resistance when you've been hurt or disappointed. However, it's important to let your spouse know what's really going on in your heart and mind.
- **Third, focus on what you can do.** Some discussion questions may present an opportunity to be critical of your spouse. There will be times when you can lovingly say how you feel about important issues. But the key to achieving intimacy is a willingness to focus on what you can do yourself.

The bottom line is that none of us have a perfect marriage. The joy of marriage is learning how to become one and growing together with your spouse as God intended.

USING THIS WORKBOOK

Each session of your workbook will include the following sections.

VIDEO TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Each week your small group will watch a new video teaching from the *Marriage on the Rock Small Group DVD Series*. Each teaching is approximately 15-20 minutes in length. The *Marriage on the Rock Small Group DVD Series* also includes a leader's guide for facilitating a small group. The corresponding small group videos are also available for download at MarriageToday.com.

As you watch each message, you can follow along with the teaching outline in your workbook.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

This section of your workbook features general discussion questions of key points from the message. These questions are designed to help your group begin discussing important issues related to your marriage.

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Before the group meets again, you and your spouse should discuss the "Walk It Out" questions in order to fully apply Jimmy's teaching to your marriage. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best.

Some questions will immediately draw you closer to your spouse. Other questions may even bring some tension or frustration to the surface. This is normal. When needed, take a break and revisit the questions later at an agreed upon time.

Be committed to the process of working through this guide. Trust that the end result will be that you and your spouse will have a thriving marriage greater than you ever thought possible.

God bless you as you begin this journey together.

SESSION 1

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN MARRIAGE

Are you depending on God or your spouse to meet your deepest needs?

It's a fact of life, people are going to let us down and frustrate us. Hurts from our parents, a dating relationship, or even our spouse can leave us feeling rejected and heartbroken. Life's not like a movie. We have to work at our happily ever after.

Marriage was created by God as a spiritual union, not simply a piece of paper. God's desire is to be an integral part of your relationship. In order to find fulfillment and total satisfaction, God needs to be at the center of your life and your marriage.

Today you'll discover the most important issue that will determine if you are going to have the marriage of your dreams...

*If you are struggling,
failing or broken, God
feels compassion
not anger. He is not
angry at you.*

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"The Most Important Issue in Marriage"

Related Scriptures: John 4:5-24, Romans 8:35-39, 1 John 4:18, Psalm 139, Psalm 91, Jeremiah 29:11-14, Galatians 5:22-23

THE STORY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL

- a. Jesus has compassion for those who are struggling or have failed in marriage.
- b. Marriage was created by God and is only successful when it honors His plan and includes His presence.
- c. The most important issue in marriage is whether you have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

OUR FOUR DEEPEST NEEDS

- a. Acceptance – "I am loved and accepted for who I am." (Romans 8:35-39)
 - Most people love us based on what they don't know. God is the only one who knows your every thought and will always love you no matter what.
- b. Identity – "I am special, unique and significant." (Psalm 13)
 - God planned every day of your life before you were born. He is the only one who knows why you were created.
- c. Security – "I am safe and secure from harm." (Psalm 9)
 - When you understand God's security it doesn't matter what is going on around you, because God's security is in you.
- d. Purpose – "I have a significant purpose and there is a reason for my life." (Jeremiah 29:11-14)

- God's purpose for your life will fulfill the desires of your heart. He won't lead you to do something that He hasn't prepared you to do.

THE DANGER OF TRUSTING OTHER PEOPLE

a. The Principle of Transference - If we don't trust Jesus to meet our deepest needs, we will automatically transfer the expectation of those needs to those closest to us, especially our spouse.

b. When you depend on others to meet your deepest needs:

1. You will never be fulfilled.
2. You will become discouraged and cynical.
3. You will become bitter toward people and reject them for not meeting your expectations.

c. When you have a problem, where do you go first?

1. We all have problems, especially relational problems that only God can solve.
2. God will not only heal you, but He will fill you with the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)
3. When you depend on God, He will help change all the relationships in your life.

As a young man in marriage I did not know how to relate to Jesus like I should. I depended too much on Karen. She depended too much on me. We had a dysfunctional marriage.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What struggles did Jimmy and Karen face in the early years of their relationship?

2. The woman at the well had been married five times and had given up on marriage. Even today, why do so many people lose hope and believe that marriage doesn't work any more?

3. We have four basic needs: acceptance, identity, security and purpose. Which of these needs are you seeking most right now in your life?

4. Without realizing it, do you find yourself relying on your spouse to meet your deepest needs? How has that affected your relationship?

5. One of the most impactful disciplines in your marriage is for you and your spouse to pray together. It not only shows that you trust God, but it also opens the door for Him to heal any hurts and build intimacy in your marriage. How can prayer become a greater emphasis in your relationship?

6. Share with the small group an area of your marriage that you would like to see improve over the next few weeks as you go through this workbook together. For example, you might like to communicate more or desire to overcome a specific issue in your relationship.

Group Prayer: *God, thank you for your compassion and understanding for every marriage. Help us put our trust in you to meet our deepest needs. We're sorry for depending on others when we should trust you first. Begin healing any disappointments and frustrations in each relationship as we start this new journey. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give *each* other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. Tell your spouse something that you love about them. It may be something that you haven't said in a long time. (If you can't remember a specific reason, think back to a positive experience when you were dating.)

HIM: Something I love about you is...

HER: Something I love about you is...

There have been times that you transferred the expectations of your life to people and you set them up for failure because they could not be Jesus to you.

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the level of intimacy and satisfaction in your relationship.

HIM: I would rate the intimacy in our marriage as...

No intimacy

Great intimacy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HER: I would rate the intimacy in our marriage as...

No intimacy

Great intimacy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Jimmy shared that if we aren't trusting God to meet our deepest needs then we will usually transfer the responsibility to meet those needs to another person. When have you transferred the expectations of your life to someone other than your spouse?

HIM: I expected another person to meet my needs when...

HER: I expected another person to meet my needs when...

4. Now tell your spouse about a time when you were expecting them to meet your deepest needs instead of God. Talk to your spouse about your mistakes and ask for their forgiveness.

HIM: The result of expecting my wife to meet my deepest needs has been...

When you have a problem where do you go first: a friend, the web, a credit card or a store? It does not matter if you love Jesus. It does not matter if you believe in Jesus. Do you trust Him?

HER: The result of expecting my husband to meet my deepest needs has been...

5. Even if you are a Christian, it doesn't automatically mean you are putting Christ first. In practical terms, place a check mark next to those areas that are currently a part of your regular schedule.

HIM	HER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Participating in a small group or study
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Praying alone
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Praying as a couple
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading scripture
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Memorizing scripture
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading Christian books
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading devotions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attending church
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spending time with God daily
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Serving the needy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Giving of your time or possessions
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentoring or helping others
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

HIM: In the weeks to come, I can make God a bigger part of my life by...

HER: In the weeks to come, I can make God a bigger part of my life by...

When I have been with God I am a different husband than when I have not. Sometimes Karen will say to me when I am not having one of my better days, "Did you pray this morning?"

6. In marriage, we have to learn to stop responding in fear and begin responding in faith. What is a step you can take to begin responding in faith and have a more positive outlook on your relationship? Focus on yourself and how you can change.

HIM: I can have a more positive perspective on our marriage by having the faith that...

HER: I can have a more positive perspective on our marriage by having the faith that...

Couple Prayer: *God, we want you to become part of our marriage. Help us forgive each other for mistakes of the past. Today, we choose to make you the center of our marriage and family. Help us do the right thing first and believe for the best in each other. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Only Jesus can meet our deepest needs for acceptance, identity, security and purpose. Our spouse can never meet these needs, and if we expect them to do so, we'll end up disappointed, frustrated and bitter.

God is the only one who can empower us to relate successfully with others long-term. He is the only one who heals our hurts and fills us with unconditional love.

When we admit our mistakes and share our weaknesses, we are drawn closer together. Our mate becomes the "completer" in our relationship as God intended.

SESSION 2

THE LAWS OF PRIORITY AND PURSUIT

Marriage works when you do it God's way.

While many people desperately want a marriage that succeeds, fewer and fewer really believe that it can happen for them. It's difficult to find successful marriages when there are so many casualties in relationships.

You've probably asked yourself, "How can I know that we are going to make it? I want to succeed, not end up as another divorce statistic."

No one gets married just to see their relationship fail a few years later. We marry in order to spend our lives with someone, not to experience a mediocre marriage or the devastation of divorce.

Few realize that God created marriage based on four foundational laws. When you obey these laws, you can know that your marriage will succeed...

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"The Laws of Priority and Pursuit"

Related Scriptures: Genesis 2:24-25, Exodus 34:14, Revelation 3:3

LAW #1 – THE LAW OF PRIORITY

- a. Marriage is designed to operate as the top priority, except for your personal relationship with God. If marriage is not your top priority, it does not work.
- b. Legitimate jealousy is a protective warning when something else becomes more important than your relationship.
- c. After several years of marriage, men typically focus on their career and women focus on the home and children. These are all good, but they aren't more important than the marriage.
- d. How to establish and maintain right priorities in your marriage:
 1. Priorities must be proven in real terms, not just words.
 - Four ways we prove priorities:
 1. **Sacrifice** – "I will give this up for you."
 2. **Time** – "I will spend quality time with you."
 3. **Energy** – "I will meet your needs."
 4. **Attitude** – "I want to be with you."
 2. Priorities must be constantly protected from good things out of priority.
 - The proper order of priorities is: God, marriage, children, church, extended family and friends, work, hobbies and interests.

You can have a 100% percent chance of success in marriage if you do it God's way.

LAW #2 – THE LAW OF PURSUIT

a. Marriage is work. You have to work at your relationship. We work hard at pursuing each other when we are dating, but after years of marriage, we often stop working at the relationship.

b. Four common misconceptions about love and romance

1. The Misconception - "If I marry the right person, the emotions will happen naturally and effortlessly throughout our marriage."

- The Truth - The best relationships are when two very different people go through hard times and stay together.

2. The Misconception - "If my emotions change toward my spouse, I must have married the wrong person."

- The Truth - Your emotions will always be changing, but you are always in control of your will. God's love is based on a decision not an emotion.

3. The Misconception - "Positive events, experiences and actions should fuel the relationship and our emotions long term."

- The Truth - Marriage requires work every day. Men often think they have to "score points" to make their wife happy not realizing that all points evaporate at midnight.

4. The Misconception - "When we have no emotions or have fallen out of love, there is no way to get the love back."

- The Truth - Your love can return if you:
 1. Remember when you pursued each other.
 2. Ask your spouse for forgiveness.
 3. Do what you did at the beginning.

You can't just say, "You're first in my life." You have to prove that your spouse is first.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Jimmy shared some of his memories of dating and pursuing Karen. Briefly share with the group how you met your spouse and pursued each other while dating.

2. What are some ways you can actively pursue your spouse today?

3. Is lasting love a decision or an emotion? Why or why not?

4. Jimmy discussed the issue of legitimate jealousy and that Karen was jealous of the time and energy he gave to golf. Remembering that the small group is a safe place, when do you begin to have feelings of jealousy?

5. We prove priority by sacrifice, time, energy and attitude. How do you like your spouse to show sacrifice, time, energy or attitude in your relationship?

6. A couple must make each other a priority and pursue each other in real terms. What do you need more from your spouse: sacrifice, time, energy or attitude? Be specific.

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you for loving us and giving us laws to ensure that we succeed in marriage. Continue to reveal how our priorities have become out of order. Help us remember how we prioritized and pursued our spouse when we were dating, so that we can experience that closeness and love again. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. Think back to when you and your spouse were dating. Share three ways that your spouse prioritized and pursued you before marriage. Listen to each other and discuss.

HIM: When we were dating, my wife pursued me by...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: When we were dating, my husband pursued me by...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Review the list your spouse wrote. If you are still pursuing your spouse the way they listed, put a check by that number. If it's something you are not currently doing, then draw a circle around that number.

2. Lovingly, tell your spouse how you would like them to pursue you in your relationship today.

HIM: I would love it if my wife would pursue me by...

HER: I would love it if my husband would pursue me by...

3. How have your priorities changed since the beginning of your marriage?

HIM: When we married, I was focused on...

HER: When we married, I was focused on...

The best marriages are two very different people who roll up their sleeves and go through lots of trouble. But they stay together and work it out and come out as best friends.

4. If you allow anything or anyone, no matter how good or important, to take the time and energy that rightfully belongs to your spouse you are violating God's design for marriage.

HIM: When do you feel legitimately jealous of something or someone in your wife's life?

HER: When do you feel legitimately jealous of something or someone in your husband's life?

5. Choose one of the four areas of priority: sacrifice, time, energy and attitude. Which one does your spouse do best? Which area would you like to see improve?

HIM: My wife shows me priority most by...

I would like my wife to make me a bigger priority by giving more...

HER: My husband shows me priority most by...

I would like my husband to make me a bigger priority by giving more...

6. Now that you've heard what your spouse needs from you, how can you make your spouse a greater priority in your life?

HIM: I will make my wife a greater priority by...

For her, I am willing to sacrifice...

When the grass looks greener on the other side, it's time to water your own yard.

HER: I will make my husband a greater priority by...

For him, I am willing to sacrifice...

When Karen and I fell out of love, the way we fell back in love was very simple. We began to pursue each other.

Couple Prayer: *God, we thank you for the happy times in our marriage and the wonderful memories of dating. Give us your wisdom as we prioritize and pursue each other. Help us talk about our feelings of jealousy as we make sacrifices in our relationship. We believe that even better days are ahead. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Listen carefully to the warning signs from your spouse about other things or people invading your priorities. As you commit to establishing and protecting priorities, the passion and intimacy will be renewed in your relationship.

Pursuing your spouse isn't just for special occasions, it's a daily decision that you are going to work on the relationship so that your marriage gets better year-after-year. True intimacy comes from two people creating an atmosphere where they can share everything and admit that they need each other.

SESSION 3

THE LAWS OF POSSESSION AND PURITY

Becoming one is the key to the greatest intimacy.

One is the most profound word for intimacy.

Think about it. Two shall become one. It means that a couple has become so intimate and so intertwined that they act as one in the relationship.

Marriage should be a partnership where we share everything together. Unfortunately when we are selfish, we may act like two kids fighting each other trying to get our own way.

When we can share any possession, any fear and any thought, we're on the road to discovering what it truly means to become one...

*If you are struggling,
failing or broken, God
feels compassion
not anger. He is not
angry at you.*

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"The Laws of Possession and Purity"

Related Scriptures: Genesis 2:24-25, 1 Corinthians 7:3-4

THE LAW OF POSSESSION

- a. God created marriage for you and your spouse to share everything. Everything that you owned before marriage, you now share together.
- b. Common ways we violate the law of possession:
 1. Dominance – "If you don't agree, you'll pay a price."
 - Disproportionate control of the marriage (money, children, sex, possessions, relationships, spiritual life and atmosphere of the home).
 - Men and women are total equals, but both can be dominant.
 - We dominate through our personality, intimidation and manipulation.
 2. Independence – "I'll do my own thing."
 - The use of the words "mine" and "yours" can destroy relationships.
 - Some couples spend more time alone in their home than together.
 - Selfishness destroys relationships. Selflessness builds marriage.
 3. Protection – "I don't trust you in some areas."
 - When a spouse is out of control or passive in an area, it is common for the other spouse to take control and react to the opposite extreme.
 - Some people use their children, money or sex as a controlling aspect of the relationship.

- c. How to establish the law of possession in your marriage:
1. Ask your spouse to give you input concerning the issues of your life and the decisions of the family.
 2. Never make an important decision without the input and agreement of your spouse.

LAW #4 – THE LAW OF PURITY

- a. God designed marriage to function in an atmosphere of total nakedness: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.
- b. When you have purity in your relationship, you can trust each other with your differences and the most sensitive areas of your life.
- c. Your spouse should be your safe place. You should be able to talk about any issue together without giving each other any shame.

- d. How to create an atmosphere of purity:

1. We must be careful what we say and do.
2. We must take responsibility for our own mistakes.
 - Learn to quickly say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"
 - The most healing words in marriage are the words, "I'm sorry."

It doesn't matter if you have kids in common. It doesn't matter if you share the same house. It doesn't matter if you share a checkbook. You share a life.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. When has your spouse ever used the words "mine" or "yours"?

2. Who is the more dominant spouse in your relationship especially in common areas like money, children, housework or sex?

3. If you are less dominant, how can you play a bigger role in your relationship? For those who are more dominant, how can you give your spouse more of a say in your marriage?

4. Creating an atmosphere of purity is based on having total openness physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Which area is easiest for you to share with your spouse? Which area needs improvement?

5. Jimmy says that we should be our spouse's safe place and lovingly talk about any issue together in marriage. What do you need from your spouse in order to share openly?

Ask your spouse's input on every decision and never make a decision without your spouse.

6. Some of the most healing words in a relationship are when we say "I'm sorry" and take responsibility for our mistakes. As this session comes to a close, take a few minutes and talk privately with your spouse. Admit where you have violated some of the laws of marriage and ask for their forgiveness.

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you for designing marriage so that we can share everything and be one in an honest atmosphere. Help us eliminate the words "mine" and "yours" from our vocabulary. Give us the strength to take responsibility for our mistakes so that we can be closer than ever. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. Think about some of the key ways you divide responsibilities in your home. Men, put an X on each of the lines below to indicate how dominant you are in each of the areas. Ladies, please put a check on each of the lines to indicate your level of dominance.

MONEY Not Dominant _____ Very Dominant

PARENTING Not Dominant _____ Very Dominant

BIG DECISIONS Not Dominant _____ Very Dominant

CHORES Not Dominant _____ Very Dominant

SEX Not Dominant _____ Very Dominant

2. How can you adjust your roles so that you share more equally in your relationship?

HIM: I can share more equally with my wife by...

HER: I can share more equally with my husband by...

If you feel ready, apologize to your spouse for mistakes that you've made. Make listening to your spouse's feelings a bigger priority in your relationship.

3. Jimmy says that we should never make a "significant" decision without our spouse.

HIM: I like when my wife includes me when she makes decisions about...

I trust her to make a decision without me concerning...

The word "my" destroys marriages. It's our children, our schedule, our home and our money.

HER: I like when my husband includes me when he makes decisions about...

I trust him to make a decision without me concerning...

4. Having purity in your marriage means that your spouse has the freedom to confront or talk about any issue. If your spouse doesn't feel comfortable to talk about something, this will limit the level of purity in your marriage. Is there an area of your life that is difficult to talk about? If so, lovingly admit that area to your spouse.

HIM: In order to talk openly, I need from my wife...

HER: In order to talk openly, I need from my husband...

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the quality of your sex life. Consider how the level of openness and trust affects intimacy.

HIM: I would rate the quality of our sex life as...

No intimacy

Great intimacy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

HER: I would rate the quality of our sex life as...

No intimacy

Great intimacy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When you're living your marriage in purity, you can expose your differences and talk about all the sensitive areas of your marriage.

6. Share with your spouse one change they can make that will create more purity in your relationship whether that's physical, emotional, mental or spiritual. Listen to what your spouse has to say and if you feel ready, make it a priority to change in this area.

HIM: A change my wife can make to create more purity in our relationship is...

HER: A change my husband can make to create more purity in our relationship is...

Couple Prayer: *God, help us share everything and give ourselves to each other as Christ gave Himself for us. Make us so united that there is no "his" or "hers" in our relationship. Remind us to be quick to apologize when we have hurt each other. Help us listen and talk about any issue together. Amen.*

When the Lord began to change my heart, I went to Karen and I asked for her forgiveness and she forgave me.

WRAP IT UP

Marriage is not about hiding areas of your life from each other. Marriage is about you and your spouse learning to become one. Even though you may be convinced that your spouse has most of the problems, you cannot change your spouse, you can only change you.

True intimacy comes from two people creating an atmosphere where they can share everything and admit that they need one another.

SESSION 4

A MAN'S NEEDS

Our different needs can bring us together.

When a spouse is fulfilled and happy in their marriage it is usually because their needs are being met. Whereas when someone is frustrated and disillusioned, it's almost always because some of their needs are being neglected.

When a man expresses a legitimate need for sex, he's actually asking his wife to understand him in a way that no one else does. Rejecting him because his needs are different ruins an opportunity for you both to experience intimacy.

Every man has four basic needs. When a wife understands what he needs most, she has found the key to her husband's heart...

Men gravitate to the place where they get honor and respect and they run from any place they may be disrespected.

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"A Man's Needs"

Related Scriptures: Ephesians 5:22-24, I Peter 3:1-5, Proverbs 31, 1 Corinthians 7:4

HIS #1 NEED – HONOR

- a. *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.* - Ephesians 5:22, NET
- b. Men gravitate to where they get the most honor, whether it's at home, work or somewhere else. Men will naturally avoid disrespect.
- c. How to give your husband honor:
 - 1. Allow him to make mistakes or fail (unless it's self-destructive behavior).
 - 2. Confront in love, but let God be the enforcer.
 - 3. Honor him where you want him to be, not where he is. (Proverbs 31)
 - 4. Cover his faults and focus on his strengths. Honor always encourages.

HIS #2 NEED – SEX

- a. Men give affection to get sex. Women give sex to get affection.
- b. How to meet your husband's need for sex:
 - 1. Communicate to your husband that you accept his sexual needs and that you are committed to meeting them.

Beyond what he's doing right now, what do you see in your husband? What did you see in him when you were dating? You honor him at that level. He rises to that level of honor.

2. Men are visually and physically stimulated. Men want to see their wife's body while most women are uncomfortable with their bodies.
3. Be more sexual than you feel and be creative. Men have the need for sex and women have the gift of sex. Your spouse's needs won't always match your desires.

HIS #3 NEED – FUN AND FRIENDSHIP

- a. Your husband will be open with you to the extent that you are having fun together.
- b. How to establish friendship:
 1. Be his friend and his wife, don't mother him.
 2. Find something in common that you both enjoy. Even if it's not your favorite activity, do something that he enjoys.

Be more sexual than you feel. Most sex happens by meeting a need in your spouse that you don't have.

HIS #4 NEED – SUPPORT AT HOME

- a. Men need to do their equal share of the chores in the home, especially if both spouses work. A husband should give his best at his job and at home.
- b. How to support your husband at home:
 1. Women have the gift of nesting. A man needs his wife to create and maintain an atmosphere in their home that causes him to want to be there.
 2. Women need to be domestically centered and diligent including meals, housekeeping and homemaking.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM TODAY'S TEACHING

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Men, how do you like your wife to show you honor and respect?

2. Women, what are the challenges of honoring your husband? For example, why is it difficult to focus on his strengths and allow him to fail or make mistakes?

3. Jimmy says to honor your husband by lovingly confronting him when you disagree, but to trust God to change his heart instead of trying to force the issue. How do you feel about this approach?

4. Women, what are the challenges of meeting your husband's desire for sex, especially when you don't feel "in the mood"?

5. Ladies, how can your husband help you more with the other areas in your life in order to make his sexual needs a greater priority? Men, are you willing to try what your wife suggests?

6. Men, which of your major needs (honor, sex, fun or support at home), would you like your wife to work on for you before the group meets again?

Group Prayer: *God, thank you for designing men and women with different needs. Begin to open the lines of communication as we focus on meeting the needs of each other in our marriage. Help each wife give her husband the honor and respect that he needs most. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Work on these questions separately and then discuss your answers with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

WIVES

1. What potential did you see in your husband while you were dating? What are some of the best qualities you see in him today?

2. Just like the Proverbs 31 wife honored her husband even when he didn't deserve it, how can you honor your husband?

Men want their wives to be their best friends. Come out of your world into his world.

3. Remember a truly romantic experience the two of you had together. What did you do to show that you cared about your husband's sexual needs? How could you express that to him again?

4. How did you and your husband have fun at the beginning of your relationship? What activities make your husband happy today?

5. As a wife, what is the biggest challenge around the home: meals, housekeeping or homemaking? How would you like your husband to support you more in these areas?

HUSBANDS

1. Men, how did your wife honor and respect you early in your relationship?

2. Men, list some ways that you like your wife to show you honor and respect.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

3. Remember a romantic experience you had together that truly met your sexual needs. What did your wife do for you? How could you help your wife recreate that type of experience?

When a man gets home, his job just started. But women have the gift of nesting and turning a house into a home.

4. How did you and your wife have fun at the beginning of your relationship? How do you and your wife have fun together today? Is there something new you would like your wife to do with you?

5. What, if anything, could your wife do to make your home a more inviting place for you?

Couple Prayer: Ladies take the lead with prayer this week. Hold hands with your husband and pray a prayer similar to this: *"God, I recognize and accept my responsibility to meet my husband's needs for honor, sex, fun and friendship and support at home. Help me follow through on the areas where I can improve. I want to praise and honor him in public and in private. Amen."*

WRAP IT UP

When a woman gives her husband honor and meets his needs, it fills his world and draws him back to his wife.

Many women are waiting to honor their husbands until they see change in his heart. This is backwards from what God says. Only the Lord can change your husband, but you can be the agent of that change by praising him for what he does right.

SESSION 5

A WOMAN'S NEEDS

Most spouses spend their energy trying to change each other.

It's no accident that men and women have totally different needs. It's part of God's design. The question is: "Are you willing to meet your spouse's different needs or will you find yourself in a battle to change each other?"

When we try to change our spouse, we will ultimately end up disillusioned and frustrated because we are going against God's plan for marriage. However, when we begin to focus on meeting our spouse's different needs, fulfillment and harmony enters the relationship.

Every woman has four basic needs. When a husband understands what she needs most, he'll awaken the passion and fulfillment he's been longing for...

The standard for women is to respect your husband like you would Jesus. The standard for men is to give your life for her. Love her more than yourself.

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"A Woman's Needs"

Related Scriptures: Ephesians 5:25-33

HER #1 NEED – SECURITY

- a. *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.* - Ephesians 5:25, NASB
- b. Women feel most secure when they are married to a sacrificial, sensitive man. Women are most insecure when they are married to a selfish, detached man.
- c. How to meet a woman's need for security:
 - 1. Communicate your commitment to sacrifice and meet her needs.
 - 2. Be sensitive to your wife's needs and don't make her ask or beg to get her needs and desires met.
 - 3. Be a faithful provider and money manager.

Security to a woman just simply means, "You come before me. You'll never have to nag or beg. I will sacrifice to meet your needs."

HER #2 NEED – NON-SEXUAL AFFECTION

- a. Men give affection to get sex. Women give sex to get affection.
- b. The more soft, non-sexual affection women receive the more sexual they become. This is very difficult for men to understand, but it's true.
- c. How to meet your wife's need for non-sexual affection:

1. Be physically affectionate. She needs her husband to hold her hand, put his arm around her gently, hold her and cuddle her.
2. Listen to her when she tells you how she wants to be held.
3. Be gentle and patient. If a man is rough and aggressive, she will feel devalued.

HER #3 NEED – OPEN AND HONEST COMMUNICATION

- a. Men give short headline answers, but a woman wants detailed answers. Just like men connect through fun and sex, she connects by sharing thoughts and feelings.
- b. How to meet your wife's need for communication:
 1. Plan regular scheduled time to talk alone with your wife.
 2. Be a good listener without distractions.
 3. Answer questions fully and speak from your heart.

HER #4 NEED – LEADERSHIP

- a. Leadership means being the loving initiator without dominating the family.
- b. How to meet your wife's need for leadership:
 1. Lead the children with consistent, loving discipline.
 2. Lead with romance. Make your wife feel special and loved.
 3. Lead with finances. Oversee the finances and do not overspend.
 4. Lead spiritually by attending church as a family and praying together.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM TODAY'S TEACHING

Karen was sitting across the room one day folding clothes, and the Lord just impressed upon me. "Walk over and put your arm around her and nothing beyond that." I'd never done that before.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Women, how do you need your husband to show you security and sacrificial love? Be specific.

2. Men, what are the challenges of making your wife feel secure? For example, why is it sometimes hard to love your wife more than yourself?

3. Ladies, what specific kinds of non-sexual affection do you need from your husband? How do you feel when your husband gently caresses you without expecting anything in return?

4. Men, why is it difficult to meet your wife's deep need for communication? If she is willing to be more energetic in meeting your sexual needs, are you willing to give her more uninterrupted talk time?

5. Jimmy says that men should lead in four areas: children, romance, finances and spiritually. Ladies, how can your husband be the loving initiator for you?

6. Women, which of your major needs (security, non-sexual affection, communication or leadership), would you like your husband to work on before the group meets again?

Group Prayer: *God, you made men and women very different. Help us stop trying to change each other and accept each other's different needs. Teach every husband how to be a loving servant to his wife and meet her deep needs, most of all for security and love. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Work on these questions separately and then discuss your answers with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

WIVES

1. How did your husband sacrifice and show you love early in your relationship?

2. How does your husband show you love and security today? What additional expressions of romance and sacrifice would you like to see from your husband?

3. What kinds of non-sexual affection do you like to receive from your husband? (If he doesn't know exactly what you need, lovingly tell him.) How do you communicate to your husband when you need non-sexual affection without it leading to sex?

Women need to be more sexual than they feel and meet their husband's need for sex. Likewise, men need to communicate more than they feel.

4. Do you need your husband to communicate more about his thoughts and feelings?
How could you create a safe atmosphere for him to share with you?

5. In what area of leadership would you like your husband to either take a more active role (or a less dominate role) in your marriage: children, romance, finances or spiritual matters? Be specific.

HUSBANDS

1. What potential did you see in your wife when you were dating? What are some of the best qualities you see in her today?

2. Jimmy says that creating security requires sacrifice. What are you currently sacrificing for her? Is there something you could sacrifice that you aren't currently doing?

She doesn't just want the events, she wants the feelings. I'd tell her something and she'd say, "Well how did you feel about that?" And I'd say, "Feel? I don't feel anything."

3. Can you relate with Jimmy's story of the first time he showed Karen non-sexual affection? Whether cuddling, holding hands or putting your arm around her, when could you give your wife non-sexual affection?

4. When do you and your wife usually talk? What times of the week could you set aside for more quality communication without interruptions?

5. Men are supposed to be the loving, sacrificial leaders in the home. Everyone should come before you. How can you lead more (or be less dominant) concerning children, romance, finances or spiritual matters? What could you change to be the loving initiator in any of the above areas?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Couple Prayer: Men take the lead with prayer this week. Hold hands with your wife and pray a prayer similar to this: *God, I recognize and accept my responsibility to meet my wife's needs for security, non-sexual affection, communication and leadership. Help me follow through and make changes in my life. Above all, help me love her as Christ loves us. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Just like men need their wives to be honoring and fun, women need men to sacrificially love them. By following Christ's example to be a servant leader, men can fulfill their wife's desires and reignite the passion in their relationship.

For a man, meeting your wife's needs is not just a matter of responsibility, it is the basis for romance and spiritual connection in your relationship.

Women want their husband to be a leader, a loving initiator of the home in four important areas: children, romance, finances and spiritual matters.

SESSION 6

THE POWER OF POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Good marriages are always based on positive words.

Your relationship likely began with good communication. You got to know each other by spending a lot of time talking.

If you are going to have a good marriage, it is always based on a lot of positive words. If there are not many positive words being spoken, your marriage may be on the wrong path. The good news is, it's never too late to change.

Communication is literally the essential element in every great relationship. You simply cannot get to know another human being unless you make the effort to have successful communication...

When you are fighting an enemy, they want to cut your communication lines because they can confuse you and defeat you. In marriage, the enemy does not want us to communicate.

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"The Power of Positive Communication"

Related Scriptures: Proverbs 18:20-21, Matthew 12:36-37, Matthew 12:33-35, Psalm 100:4, Proverbs 3:3, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 3:4

MEN AND WOMEN COMMUNICATE DIFFERENTLY

- a. Women need detailed communication much more than men.
 1. A woman needs communication as much as a man needs sex.
 2. The key to a husband getting his needs met is through meeting his wife's emotional needs.
- b. When we talk, men are usually emotionally modest, but women are emotionally immodest. It's the opposite of sex where women are modest and men are immodest.
 1. Men like to talk about surface subjects like cars, sports, electronics and jobs. Women talk about relationships and feelings.
 2. Men need a private and honoring atmosphere in order to talk. He needs to know that his wife will respect his privacy and not repeat what he shares.
- c. We hear through our different needs.
 1. A woman hears through her primary need for security and love.
 - A woman needs to feel secure in her relationship.
 - She needs to hear, "I care and I'm tuned in. I'll do whatever it takes. My heart is turned toward you. I'll say no to anything else."
 - When a woman senses that you are disconnected and tuned out, she is hearing insecurity because your heart is not with her.

2. A man hears through his primary need for honor and respect.
 - For a man to open up and talk, he has to feel honor and esteem.
 - He needs to hear, "I believe in you. You are a good man. I love you. You are the best. I respect you."
 - When a woman makes a man feel like he's a bad man or she's very critical, it jams his communication signals. He won't hear you.

FIVE STANDARDS OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

a. **Care** - You can't communicate with a person who doesn't care.

- You communicate care by:
 1. Body language, countenance and tone of voice.
 2. Being a good listener.
 3. Giving a kind and appropriate response.

When I came home from work I thought she was nosey. She would ask, "Where did you go? What did they say? How did you feel about that?" I was like, "This is a boundary violation."

b. **Praise** - We have to begin with a positive tone.

1. We enter into each other's heart with praise. (Psalm 100:4)
2. Say negative things in a positive way. Negativity destroys marriages.

c. **Truth** - Honesty is an essential foundation of intimacy and trust.

1. We need mercy and truth. (Proverbs 3:3)
2. Speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15)

d. **Faith** - Believe that God is able to enforce the truth in your spouse's heart.

- Women can change their husbands without a word.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is most important when you and your spouse talk, their words or their tone?

2. A husband must understand his wife's need for deep, detailed communication. Ladies, let's say your husband comes home from a busy day at work. What details do you like to hear about his day?

3. Likewise, a man needs a safe environment where he is respected and honored for him to openly share. Men, when and where is the best time for you to talk with your wife? When is not a good time?

4. What do you like to hear from your spouse when you talk? What sets you off?
How could you both say negative words in a more positive way?

5. Jimmy discussed how hurtful it is when a wife shares personal information from her husband with family and friends. Men, what kind of information is ok for your wife to share? What kind of information would you prefer she keep private?

6. When we talk, we show that we care by our: (1) body language, countenance, tone of voice, (2) being a good listener and (3) giving a kind and appropriate response. Which of these areas would you like your spouse to work on for you?

Group Prayer: *God, just like we have unique needs we also communicate differently. We pray that you will help each of us have a new understanding in how we listen and respond to one another. Help us replace any negative words with uplifting positive speech in our relationship. Give us discernment of when is the best time to talk with our spouse. Help us make communication a greater priority. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. What are some words from your spouse that encourage and uplift you?

HIM: Words I love to hear from my wife are...

HER: Words I love to hear from my husband are...

Karen knows if I am speaking security or not. Here is what she wants to hear, "I care. I am tuned in and I will do whatever it takes. My heart is turned toward you and our family. I will say no to anything else."

2. What are some words from your spouse that bring you down and discourage you?

HIM: Words that make me feel discouraged are...

HER: Words that make me feel discouraged are...

I have said this to Karen, "The way you say it, is more important to me than what you are saying."

3. Praise reminds us of what is good and right in our spouse. Praise your spouse for three things that they have done in the past week for you or for your family.

HIM: I praise my wife for...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HER: I praise my husband for...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. When your spouse comes home what is your typical routine? Do you talk with each other about the details of your day immediately, later or not much at all? Talk about your routine and anything you could maybe do differently.

HIM: When I see you, I like it when...

HER: When I see you, I like it when...

5. Do either of you feel frustrated because your spouse doesn't talk to you enough? If so, how could improvement be made in this area?

HIM: Communication might improve in our relationship if we began to...

HER: Communication might improve in our relationship if we began to...

6. Do you have any unresolved conflict in your marriage right now? If so, talk about the issue from your perspective.

HIM: For me, an unresolved conflict I'm dealing with is...

HER: For me, an unresolved conflict I'm dealing with is...

If you thought of an area of conflict in your marriage, take some time to discuss the situation. Listen to each other patiently until you understand the other's point of view. Then begin to work toward an agreement that is mutually acceptable. Forgive one another as needed. If you can't agree after several discussions, it may be a good idea to seek wise Christian counsel.

7. Do you and your spouse have a consistent, regular time set aside for talking about your relationship and family? If not, consider how you might fit such a time into your schedule. For example, set aside time to talk without interruptions when the kids have gone to bed. If you do have a regular time for communication, discuss whether there is anything you can do to make it more productive.

We commit to having an uninterrupted time to talk

each _____ at _____ o'clock.

HIS SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

HER SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Couple Prayer: *God, give us understanding and patience as we try to lovingly listen and respond to each other. Forgive us when we have been selfish. Together, we give you control over our mouths. May our words fulfill our spouse's needs for honor and security. We commit to you and each other that we will regularly meet at our scheduled communication time to talk about important issues. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Communication will always be a defining factor of your marriage. That is why you need to remember that you are married to someone who is different than you and has different needs than you.

Whether its honor or security, learn to encrypt everything you say with words that affirm your spouse's deepest need. Effective communication is the secret of how you fall in love and how you stay in love.

Your body language tells your spouse if you care or not. Your countenance, the way you look at them when they are communicating. If you are rolling your eyes, if you are turning your head away that is not good.

SESSION 7

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN MARRIAGE

Your financial perspective brings balance to your relationship.

Marriage is usually good for a couple's financial well-being. Because we share our resources and are more likely to make long-term financial decisions, marriage is generally better than being single for our bottom line.

However, finances are one of the greatest areas of tension in a relationship. In fact, a majority of people who divorce list unresolved financial conflict as the primary reason for their separation.

Therefore, it's critical that we understand each other's financial perspective and how we can manage money so that it's a blessing to our marriage...

Jesus is saying you do not have to worry like other people that do not have God. You have a Father that knows everything about you and cares.

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"Financial Management in Marriage"

Related Scriptures: Matthew 6:19-34, Mark 4:19, Luke 6:38, Malachi 3:11, Proverbs 10:22, Luke 11:17b, Amos 3:3, Proverbs 29:18a

DANGER #1 – DISREGARDING THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS IN YOUR FINANCES

- a. *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* – Matthew 6:33, NKJV
- b. If Jesus is Lord of your finances then:
 1. You pray about decisions and don't make them without His blessing.
 2. You honor God through giving to your local church and others in need.

I said, "Karen you are one of those women who are going to die with all your money in your mattress and nobody will like you." And she said, "You will not have the money to get a mattress."

DANGER #2 – DISRESPECTING YOUR SPOUSE'S FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE AND INPUT

- a. **The "Driver" Money Language**
 - Strength - For the driver, money means success. The driver may have an over dependence on money for self-esteem, confidence and security.
 - Weakness - Rather than trusting God for identity and purpose, they allow money to meet their needs, thereby making money their God.
 - Communicates love by showing (house, car, possessions).

b. The "Amiable" Money Language

- Strength - For the amiable, money means love. Relationships are the focus of their financial desires. Lack of money means losing the ability to express love.
- Weakness - The amiable may be kind and generous, but can be a poor money manager who is unprepared for the long term.
- Communicates love by sharing ("what's mine is yours", likes to have fun).

c. The "Analytic" Money Language

- Strength - For the analytic, money means security. Money keeps away chaos and problems. Analytics are well structured and good planners.
- Weakness - The analytic, though well structured, may be insensitive to the needs of people and the voice of God. May be legalistic and unyielding.
- Communicates love by saving (plans for long term goals, invests wisely).

d. The "Expressive" Money Language

- Strength - For the expressive, money means acceptance and respect from desirable people. Money provides a basis for relationships.
- Weakness - An expressive may use money the way some people use alcohol to hide their fears and deal with their pain.
- Communicates love by spending (shopaholic, lives in financial denial).

DANGER #3 – DOMINANCE OF MONEY AND FINANCIAL DECISIONS

- a. It is common for there to be a disproportionate control of the money.
- b. Whether man or woman, it is important to be equal partners even if one spouse manages paying the bills.

DANGER #4 – DISAGREEMENT ABOUT FINANCIAL DECISIONS, PRIORITIES AND VALUES

- a. It is impossible to disagree and succeed. (Luke 11:17b) Most couples fight about finances because they haven't agreed. (Amos 3:3)
 - The purpose of creating a budget is so you will have a pro-active conversation in advance. Budgeting forces you to agree beforehand on values.
- b. Have an annual vision retreat to talk and pray. (Proverbs 29:18a)

Jesus said, "A house divided against itself falls." It is impossible to disagree and succeed. When you have chronic disagreement within a relationship it will not succeed. That is why unity is essential.

DANGER #5 – DEBT

- a. Only consider borrowing for essential items like a home or car.
- b. Save money and live within your means. Save for emergencies.
- c. Pay cash for purchases. Only use credit cards if you pay them off monthly.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM TODAY'S TEACHING

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Who typically manages the money on a day-to-day basis in your relationship?
How is this arrangement working for you and your spouse?

2. Jimmy says that making Jesus Lord of your finances is through praying about financial decisions and also giving to your local church and those in need. Why is it sometimes a challenge to “seek God first” through praying and giving?

3. Review the four kinds of money languages. Are you primarily a driver (money means success), amiable (money means love), analytic (money means security) or expressive (money means acceptance and respect)?

4. Now that you've discovered your spouse's money language, what insight does that provide about how you see money and why you sometimes disagree?

5. Share with the group your current process of budgeting. Does it work well for you and your spouse? What financial changes would you like to implement?

6. How do each of you view saving and debt? Are you aggressively saving or paying off debt or do you tend to be in survival mode from paycheck-to-paycheck? How does this affect your marriage?

Group Prayer: *God, thank you for being our provider. We choose to seek you first and believe that you will take care of all our needs. We pray that the conversations started here in this group will be loving and positive for every couple in the days ahead. Lord, we thank you that our spouse has a different financial perspective than us. Help us appreciate each other's differences as we talk about managing money together. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

Budgeting is critical not because of numbers but because of values. Budgeting is talking in advance.

1. What is your first reaction to the following sentence? Share your memories with your spouse.

HIM: When I think about good times we've had together without spending money, I think about...

HER: When I think about good times we've had together without spending money, I think about...

2. Making the choice to give financially to church and those in need is a key way that we make Jesus Lord of our finances. Usually it is easier for one spouse to more naturally be the financial "giver" in your relationship. Who tends to give money first and how does this impact your relationship?

HIM: Who gives first, you or your wife? How does this impact your marriage?

HER: Who gives first, you or your husband? How does this impact your marriage?

If you are not saving money you are not living within your means.

3. Review the money languages and their strengths and weaknesses from Jimmy's teaching. Which of the languages best describes how you view money? What do you see as the strength and weakness of your particular money language?

HIM: My money language is a(n) _____.

My financial strengths are:

My financial weaknesses are:

HER: My money language is a(n) _____.

My financial strengths are:

My financial weaknesses are::

4. If you have a budget, first of all, congratulate yourselves, you're already ahead. Take this time to review your budget. Does it still express your current values? As you discuss these issues, keep in mind your spouse's money language and that you both bring strengths and weaknesses to the relationship.

HIM: In general terms, concerning our spending I would like to adjust our budget by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: In general terms, concerning our spending I would like to adjust our budget by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If you don't have a budget, schedule a time to begin working on one. Begin by taking inventory of where your money is going and what that reflects about each of your values. After you have your list of expenses, prioritize them in order of importance. Talk about your different perspectives and as needed, how you can compromise with your spouse.

We commit to having an uninterrupted time to work on our budget on

each _____ at _____ o'clock.

HIS SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

HER SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

5. Gather information to determine how much debt you presently owe. What's your mortgage balance? How much do you owe on your credit cards? What loans are you paying off? Draw up a summary below so that you know exactly how much you owe and what interest rates you are paying on these debts.

DEBT	INTEREST	REMAINING	PAYOFF DATE

6. What are you and your spouse saving for on a regular basis? (If you're not saving currently, that's ok. Go on to the next question.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

7. What would you like to be saving for that you are currently not doing? When could you start saving for these items?

HIM: I would like us to start saving for...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

HER: I would like us to start saving for...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Couple Prayer: *God, give us your wisdom on how to manage our money together. Thank you for our differences in how we see money. Help us financially work together and not against each other. May any resentment or tension over money dissipate and be replaced with blessing and peace in our marriage. Help us give, save and spend so that we bring honor to you and are prepared for the future. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Managing money can be one of the greatest blessings because it builds trust in the relationship. When we lovingly communicate our financial perspective, peace enters the financial picture.

As you agree on spending, you can have a plan to give, pay off debt and save for your goals. It takes effort and compromise to come into each other's world and realize that we make the best financial decisions together.

Karen and I had credit card debt early in our marriage and it was just choking us because of all the interest that we owed. Get out of that kind of debt. Pay cash as much as you possibly can.

** In this teaching Jimmy Evans talked about the importance of having a Vision Retreat with your spouse. A Vision Retreat is the best way for you and your spouse to come into agreement for every area of your marriage for the upcoming year. If you'd like more information on how to have a Vision Retreat, visit MarriageToday.com for the MarriageToday Vision Retreat journal *The Mountaintop of Marriage*. In this guidebook, Jimmy will walk you step-by-step through having a retreat and developing a vision that will revolutionize your marriage.*

SESSION 8

SEXUAL FULFILLMENT IN MARRIAGE

God's design for sex is a lifetime of pleasure and delight.

Sex should be something we enjoy and look forward to in marriage. In a healthy relationship, there is effort and forethought given towards sex to make it fun and pleasurable.

However, Satan's ultimate goal is that we will be ashamed of our sexuality so that we won't talk about sex with our spouse. The good news is, you don't have to live a life full of frustration, shame and rejection.

Through talking about important issues, we can overcome any obstacles preventing us from experiencing sex in marriage. God's plan for sexual fulfillment works...

God wants you to enjoy sex in marriage and to have that enjoyment for the rest of your married life. It's very, very important.

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"Sexual Fulfillment in Marriage"

Related Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

TRUE SEXUAL FULFILLMENT

- a. God created sex for pleasure and lifelong enjoyment in marriage.
 1. God is fun and He wants you to enjoy sex.
 2. The devil wants us to believe that we have to go to his side to enjoy sex.
- b. The parameters that God put on sex are for our protection.
 1. If the Bible doesn't prohibit an intimate act, then it's up to your personal choice and consciousness.
 2. Questions to ask each other: Is it consensual? Is it safe? Does it enhance the relationship?
- c. God created our sexual differences to make our relationship more fulfilling.
 1. Men are in tune with their emotions after sex. Women need to be emotionally in tune with their husbands to feel sexual.
 2. Men are visually responsive. Women are relationally responsive.
 3. Men turn on instantly. Women warm up gradually.
 4. Men are compartmental. Women are inclusive.

*So you're asking,
"What can we do in
sex in marriage?"
A bunch! You can
do a whole lot. You
should have a big
time having sex in
marriage.*

THE FIVE INGREDIENTS TO SEXUAL FULFILLMENT

- a. Commit to meeting your spouse's sexual needs in a committed and faithful manner.
 - 1. Our bodies belong to each other. We should never use our body to punish or withdraw from each other. (I Corinthians 7:3-5)
 - 2. We usually have different sexual needs. Twenty percent of women are more sexual than their husbands.
- b. Communicate your sexual needs and allow your spouse to communicate.
 - 1. Talk in a positive and clear way and not through negatives. ("Yes, I like this." "Try this instead.")
 - 2. Communication should take place before, during and after sex.
- c. Commit to sexual purity to protect the integrity of the marriage.
 - 1. Don't allow fantasy or lust in your relationship. The only way to overcome temptation is to replace those thoughts with greater thoughts.
 - 2. Don't develop inappropriate emotional or sexual relationships. Share everything in your lives, especially your phones and passwords.
 - 3. Don't turn to sin. Give your unmet needs to God when your spouse is not meeting your needs.
 - 4. Don't hide your temptations. Be honest and accountable. Attraction is inevitable, but you decide how to respond.
 - 5. Don't have friends who are violating the covenant of their marriage.
- d. Create an atmosphere of sexual pleasure.
 - 1. Romance outside of the bedroom. Meet an unspoken need in your spouse that will please them. Every week have a date night.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What do you think of God's plan for sex in marriage? Have you ever believed that the Christian life limits your fun in sex? Do you still feel this way?

2. Do you and your spouse talk about sex? Why is sex a difficult subject to sometimes discuss?

3. When one of you doesn't want to have sex, how do you respond to each other? What would you like to hear from your spouse when they're not in the mood?

4. How do the differences between you and your spouse impact your sex life? How are your differences positive for your relationship?

5. Sex is God's subject and we need to bring our issues into the light. Review the notes on the five steps to sexual purity. Which of these steps can you work on for your marriage?

6. Men, how do you like your wife to create an atmosphere of sexual pleasure for you? Ladies, how do you like your husband to create an atmosphere of sexual pleasure for you?

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you that you created sex and that you made sex wonderful. We pray that you will heal us of any sexual mistakes that we have made in the past. Help us recommit to our spouse so that we will meet each other's different sexual needs. Create sexual purity in each marriage so that we will not reject each other, but lovingly serve one another. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. Knowing that you and your spouse will have different desires at different times, answer the following question together.

HIM: For me, I would like to have sex:

- More often
- Less often
- At our current pace

HER: For me, I would like to have sex:

- More often
- Less often
- At our current pace

We talked about the things I like and don't like. We talked about the things she likes and dislikes. It was the greatest discussion we ever had and it changed our sex life.

2. Remembering that sex is God's subject, ask your spouse, "What do I do to you before, during or after sex that you really like?"

HIM: I really like it when you...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: I really like it when you...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. God made sex to be fun and exciting. Is there anything that you would like to try sexually? Talk about this with your spouse. (Remember the three questions: Is it consensual? Is it safe? Does it enhance the relationship?)

HIM: I would really like to try...

HER: I would really like to try...

4. We need to be willing to talk openly about our sexual problems together, especially as we grow older and our desires change. Most everyone is going to experience sexual challenges at some point in their marriage. When this happens what will you do? (If you and your spouse have already dealt with this, then talk about the issue with each other.)

HIM: When I have a sexual problem I will...

HER: When I have a sexual problem I will...

The only way you can overcome sexual temptation is to take control of your thoughts. You can't take thoughts out of your mind. You can only replace them with greater thoughts.

5. Jimmy recommends scheduling sex on a regular basis. Even if this seems non-spontaneous it actually builds excitement and gives you both something to look forward to together. Discuss Jimmy's suggestion and when you could try scheduling sex in the near future.

Jimmy talked about creating an atmosphere of sexual pleasure in your marriage. (It doesn't just happen, you have to make it happen!)

HIM: For me, a "his night" would include...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: For me, a "her night" would include...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now make plans for an upcoming very special evening together. Maybe plan a romantic night out on the town: dinner, dancing, whatever you like. Then extend

the romance with a night of sexual fun at home or at a hotel room. Here's the key: pick a date in the near future to actually carry out your plan for your very special night.

We plan on having a "very special night" on

_____ at _____ o'clock.

HIS SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

HER SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Couple Prayer: *God, we want to have a sex life that honors our marriage and honors you. Help us continue to talk about our sexual needs and desires with each other. Give us understanding when our spouse's needs are different than our own. We don't want our passion to diminish with age, but rather we want to experience intimacy for the rest of our lives. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Sex is special and a gift from God that is sacred to marriage. We are different by God's design and when we respect and serve each other sexually, we complete each other and our marriage becomes fulfilling for both of us.

We have to work at creating a pure sexual atmosphere in our marriage where we can communicate, pursue each other and meet each others needs. We have to be committed to working out problems promptly when they arise and as our sexual needs change throughout life.

BONUS SESSION I

DESTRUCTIVE HUSBANDS AND WIVES

You can disarm destructive behaviors in your relationship.

We are all human. We have pain from our past. We have faults and have made mistakes. Even when we have the best intentions, we can deeply hurt each other in marriage.

What makes destructive behavior even more dangerous is that it is usually justified with our reasoning. We rationalize with our excuses. "I'm doing this because of what you are doing wrong." Or even "You have wrong expectations of me." If blaming our spouse doesn't work, we may even say, "This is just the way I am. Deal with it."

Regardless of how we justify our actions, half of all marriages are destroyed from within, while many more suffer needlessly. To achieve your dreams of having a secure and satisfying marriage, you have to deal with any negative tendencies you may have.

You can become an overcomer...

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"Destructive Husbands and Wives"

Related Scriptures: Hosea 4:6a, Luke 6:28, I Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 18:21-22, Hebrews 13:4-5

THE FOUR REASONS WE BECOME DESTRUCTIVE

a. **Ignorance** – We don't know any better.

1. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* - Hosea 4:6a, NKJV
2. Successful people don't hide their weaknesses, they admit them.

b. **Past Hurts** – We all have pain from our past that shapes us. Parental hurts, romantic hurts and life hurts are especially damaging.

1. Be honest about your hurts. Bring everything into the light.
2. Admit your issues. Focus on yourself and take responsibility.
3. Forgive those who have hurt you.

c. **Bad Friends and Negative Influences** – Your friends predict your future.

1. Adultery, divorce and destructive behavior run in groups.
2. Church is not a place for people who do not have issues. Church should be a place where people are dealing with their issues.

d. **Defensiveness** – Giving your spouse the freedom to complain will diffuse defensiveness.

1. When you are defensive, you don't allow your spouse to process problems.

2. If you and your spouse don't agree, it's difficult to validate or acknowledge their concerns and feelings.
3. It's easier to blame your spouse than admit that some of the problem may be you.

THE FOUR MAIN DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS IN MARRIAGE

a. **Criticism** – It's the number one predictor of divorce

1. Complaining ("I feel _____") vs. Criticism ("You did _____")
2. How to deal with criticism:
 - Follow the 10 to 1 rule. "I will praise you ten times for every time I complain. I will never become critical."
 - "I will take responsibility to build your self-esteem. I take responsibility for my language and will never blame you or anyone else for it."

b. **Control and Dominance** – Satisfaction drops when there is control.

1. God created marriage as an equal partnership and that's how it works best.
2. How to deal with control and dominance:
 - Make all decisions together. Never make your spouse pay a price for disagreeing. Ask for their input.
 - If you are dominant, sit down. If you are more passive, stand up.

c. **Checking Out** – Marriage is a lifelong covenant.

1. *I will never leave you nor forsake you.* – Hebrews 13:5, NKJV
2. How to deal with checking out:

The truth is most people didn't come out of a happy home. In fact, many people came out of a broken home where there was a single parent, so they didn't see a marriage or they saw a failed marriage.

- Commit to never leaving or turning your heart away.
 - Make marriage your number one priority.
- d. **Cruelty and Abuse** - We all suffer because of each other.
1. Suffering means discomfort. Abuse means damage with intent.
 2. How to deal with abusive behavior:
 - Stand up and don't allow it. The first time you are a victim. The second time, you are a volunteer.
 - Seek help immediately from your church, a professional Christian counselor and stable friends and family.
 - If necessary, temporarily separate and communicate your desire for reconciliation if your spouse gets help and demonstrates change.

It doesn't matter who you're mad at from your past, you're going to take it out on your spouse the most. Even if you're not mad at your spouse, they're going to get the worst of it.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM TODAY'S TEACHING

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is a significant past hurt that you've experienced in life? How has this pain influenced your marriage?

2. Jimmy says that an indicator of defensiveness is how our families dealt with problems growing up. How did your parents handle conflict? How does this influence how you talk about issues in your relationship?

3. Is there a connection to your past hurts and how you seek to control (or avoid control) in certain areas of your marriage? Seeking control or giving up control is usually in response to pain and a desire to not go down the same road again.

4. Hebrews 13:5 says that God “will never leave you nor forsake you.” We’re supposed to treat our spouse the same way. Forsake means “turn your heart away.” You can turn your heart away and still be physically present. Going forward, how can your spouse keep their heart turned toward you?

5. We can always change negative behavior to positive behavior. Of the destructive behaviors in marriage, which of these can you work on for your spouse before the group meets again?

Group Prayer: *God, all of us are destructive sometimes in our relationships. Whether its criticism, dominance, ignorance or the pain from our past, Lord you know everything that has happened in our lives. Help us overcome the destructive behavior in our marriages so that each couple can have a fulfilling relationship together. Give us the strength to talk about issues with our spouse and bring every destructive behavior into the light. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. In the teaching, Jimmy challenged every couple to read a marriage book together. (If you don't like to read try an audio book.) What marriage topics would you like to learn more about with your spouse (money, sex, parenting, conflict, etc.)? If your ideas differ, the husband can choose a book for you each to read on "his" topic of choice and then you both can read a book on "her" chosen topic.

HIM: Concerning marriage, I'd like to learn more about...

HER: Concerning marriage, I'd like to learn more about...

2. Everyone has hurts from life. If you still feel pain or disappointment over an event then it needs to be discussed and brought into the light. What are some hurtful or traumatic experiences from your past? Talk about your experiences and feelings with your spouse. (If you need some ideas, remember there are three kinds of hurts: parental hurts, romantic hurts and life hurts.)

HIM: The major hurts in my life are...

*What I thought is
if I ever show her
weakness, the world
is going to crumble.
When I showed her
weakness is when the
world came together.*

HER: The major hurts in my life are...

You're going to be like your friends. I want a group of friends that encourage me to do the right thing.

3. Unforgiveness is one of the biggest destructive behaviors in marriage because we usually take bitterness and hurts out on our spouse. Even if it's yourself, your spouse, your parents or friends, who do you need to forgive and why?

HIM: God, these people have hurt me. I choose to forgive and pray that you will bless them...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: God, these people have hurt me. I choose to forgive and pray that you will bless them...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Long term criticism is the number one predictor of divorce. Criticism is really the absence of praise and honor. Jimmy suggests saying ten positive things about your spouse every time you say anything negative. You should become intentional about praising your spouse.

HIM: Ten positive things about my wife are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

HER: Ten positive things about my husband are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

5. Criticism can be very damaging to your relationship. You can reverse criticism by giving your spouse the freedom to complain before it becomes contempt. Criticism often implies that you "always" or "never" do something. Whereas a complaint is usually focused on one particular event.

Choose a minor frustration that you have with your spouse. Talk about the issue. Listen to the complaint with an open heart and without getting defensive or frustrated.

HIM: Thank you for giving me the freedom to complain. My minor complaint is...

HER: Thank you for giving me the freedom to complain. My minor complaint is...

6. Now that you've heard your spouse's perspective on the issue, what could you begin to do to make them feel better? Even if you don't agree, acknowledge that their feelings are real and that you want to hear about any complaints that they have

HIM: Concerning my wife's complaint, I can try to make a difference by...

HER: Concerning my husband's complaint, I can try to make a difference by...

When you won't let your spouse complain, the problems don't go away, they accumulate.

7. It's so easy to point the finger at others in our hurt and frustration. What are some things that you could be doing differently to promote health in your marriage? Write down the issues that you see in your own life and give them to the Lord.

HIM: I can better promote health in my marriage by...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: I can better promote health in my marriage by...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Couple Prayer: *God, we choose to make our marriage a greater priority. We trust you to change our hearts toward one another and towards the people that have hurt us. We forgive and pray blessings over them. Help us eliminate the destructive behaviors in our marriage and replace them with positive words and actions. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Whether control, criticism or unforgiveness, we can all be destructive in our behavior. We have to realize that we can't change our spouse, but we can take responsibility for ourselves.

Freedom happens when we admit our destructive behaviors to God and each other. Commit to building up your spouse with praise and positive actions. As you do your part, God will heal the destructive areas of your marriage.

Criticizing means I'm pointing the finger at you, and this is all about you. Complaining means I'm telling you how I feel. You can tell your spouse how you feel without being critical.

BONUS SESSION 2

PARENTS: PAST AND PRESENT

Every thing we do affects our family for generations.

Have you ever heard the saying, "An apple doesn't fall far from the tree?" The reality is, we are more like those around us than we often want to admit.

More than any other factor in life, parents have the greatest impact on us. If your parents had a good influence on your life and then you get married, you carry that influence into your relationship.

But the problem is any negative influence that you saw from your parents, you also brought into marriage. You may not remember everything your parents said, but you do remember the example they modeled for you.

We have all been greatly influenced by our families. The good news is, we can overcome any negative behaviors in our lives so that future generations live in freedom and blessing...

Karen and I both had to break iniquities and inner vows from our past. We have wonderful parents and in-laws, but all parents are imperfect..

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"Parents: Past and Present"

Related Scriptures: Exodus 34:7, Deuteronomy 5:10, Matthew 5:33-37, James 4:13-17, Proverbs 22:15

OVERCOMING INIQUITIES

- a. Everything we say and do affects our children and our grandchildren for four generations. (Exodus 34:7)
- b. The Hebrew word for iniquities is "avon" which means a sin or a problem created in you because of the same issue being modeled in your parent's life.
- c. Like a tree that is blown by the wind over and over, it becomes bent in the direction that it is blown. So a child is bent in the direction that he observes his parents.
- d. Examples of iniquities include: anger, substance abuse, chauvinism and sexism, racism, physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, bigotry, immorality, negativity, perfectionism, conditional love, pride, unforgiveness, gossip, etc.
- e. **Questions to ask yourself:**
 1. While growing up, were the things I was exposed to Biblically sound and morally correct?
 - How did your family resolve conflict?
 - How did your family see money?
 - How did your parents treat each other?
 2. Do I practice the same things I didn't like about my parents?

3. Have I ever dealt properly with the things I viewed as wrong?

f. **How to break family iniquities:**

1. Recognize the problem. Call it what it is, a sin.
2. Take responsibility for your behavior. Don't blame your parents.
3. Forgive your parents, whether they're alive or dead.
4. Make Jesus the Lord over that area of your life.

OVERCOMING INNER VOWS

a. An inner vow is a self-directed promise resulting from difficulty or pain. Many inner vows happen in childhood, but they can occur at any age.

b. Examples of inner vows:

- "I'll never treat my children like that."
- "I'll never be poor again."
- "No one is ever going to hurt me again."
- "I'll never _____."
- "I'll always _____."
- "When I grow up _____."

An iniquity just means you grew up under a certain negative influence and you developed a bent. What they do, we tend to do.

c. **The problems with inner vows:**

1. Inner vows are unscriptural. (Matthew 5:33-37)
2. When you vow something, it is not of God. (James 4:13-17)
3. Inner vows prohibit learning and growth and cause extremes.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In order to understand iniquities we must consider our parents and their example we saw growing up. What experiences with your family had the biggest influence on you? (Even if your parents were absent, their absence still had an impact.)

2. Do you believe you are like your parents or do you think you are different? What iniquities have been passed down to you?

3. Jimmy talked about the importance of giving your parents grace for their mistakes. Think back to how your parents were raised. How did they respond to the pain in their lives? Did they lash out, withdraw or medicate their pain? Is there a correlation between how you respond or react to issues?

4. Forgiveness is an act of our will. Our feelings will follow our obedience, but the choice to forgive always comes first. Are there any areas where you need to forgive your parents? If not, then discuss a time when you've had to forgive.

5. An inner vow is a promise that we make that our life is going to be different. When have you ever found yourself saying any of the following phrases? "I'll never _____." "I'll always _____." Or "When I grow up _____."

6. As Jimmy said, have inner vows made you a little crazy or unteachable? How could your spouse help to provide balance in this area?

Group Prayer: *God, give us new insight with our parent relationships and the iniquities and inner vows in our lives. We want to break every iniquity and inner vow so that every generation from this point forward will walk in your blessing. Help each couple talk openly with their spouse about how they can overcome their iniquities and inner vows together. Amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. The following is a list of some family iniquities. Check any trait that is strongly present in your family.

HIM	HER	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Anger
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Arrogance
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Argumentativeness
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Critical spirit
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Selfishness
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chauvinism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Racism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Perfectionism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Materialism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sexism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Physical abuse

When you make yourself a promise, you become God in that area. I'm taking my life over. I'm saying, "I am God of my finances and right now I'm never going to be poor again."

- Verbal abuse
- Substance abuse
- Gossip
- Bitterness
- Lying
- Rebellion
- Perfectionism
- Unforgiveness
- Negativity
- Other _____
- Other _____

It doesn't matter how old you are. In just a few minutes you can break the iniquities of your past off your life.

2. From the list above, what undesirable behaviors or attitudes from your upbringing do you repeat as an adult? What effects are these iniquities having on your marriage?

HIM: I repeat these iniquities in my own life...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: I repeat these iniquities in my own life...

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

3. For the significant iniquities you identified, choose a counter-balancing blessing to pass on to your spouse and children from this point forward. (For example, if you inherited a tendency to be cold-hearted toward the suffering, you may choose to pass on a blessing of compassion.) In what practical ways can you model this "blessing" to your spouse and children?

HIM: I will change my behavior and pass on a blessing by:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HER: I will change my behavior and pass on a blessing by:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. In order to help identify some inner vows, how would you answer the following question?

HIM: In the past I have thought, "I will never _____."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

In the past I have thought, "When I grow up, I will _____."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HER: In the past I have thought, "I will never _____."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

In the past I have thought, "When I grow up, I will _____."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5. Ask your spouse, "Are there any other iniquities or inner vows that you see in my life?" Sometimes it can be difficult to see our own issues and we need the help of someone close to us.

HIM: Here are the iniquities and inner vows my wife sees in me...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

HER: Here are the iniquities and inner vows my husband sees in me...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

6. How have your parents and in-laws been a blessing to you and your marriage?
How can you love them more or create healthy boundaries where needed in the years to come?

HIM: My parents and in-laws have been a blessing by...

I can love my parents and in-laws more by...

You have to forgive your mother and father. It's the biggest issue in being free from your past.

HER: My parents and in-laws have been a blessing by...

I can love my parents and in-laws more by...

Couple Prayer: *Father, in the name of Jesus, we confess the sin of our parents and grandparents. By the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ, we break the power of every iniquity that we have inherited and learned from our families. We also repent for the inner vows and promises we have made. Change our behavior and our thinking so that we are more like you. Today, we choose blessing for us and for future generations. Whether now or in the future, help us become the parents, grandparents and in-laws that honor you and bring you glory. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Parents have the greatest influence of showing their children what God is like and what marriage is like. More than friends, more than teachers, more than church, parents have the greatest influence.

We all want to have a positive impact on the people in our lives. As you continue to recognize and break iniquities and inner vows, you will experience amazing blessings that will continue for years to come.

BONUS SESSION 3

RAISING GREAT CHILDREN AS YOU BUILD A GREAT MARRIAGE

How will your children succeed if you don't show them how?

Children are one of the greatest gifts in life. Raising children is also one of the greatest responsibilities. We are entrusted with kids for a season, but our marriage remains long after they're gone.

Children are also our greatest challenge. Parenting is a full time job that requires effort on every level: physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially. Even though it's hard work, you can maximize the joys of raising great children as you build a great marriage...

If in your mind you think "Nothing is as important to me as my children", you are wrong. There are two things more important than your children, God and your marriage.

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"Raising Great Children as You Build a Great Marriage"

Related Scriptures: Genesis 2:24, Mark 3:25, Proverbs 22:6

PRINCIPLE #1 – MARRIAGE PRECEDES CHILDREN IN PRIORITY

- a. Your marriage must be a higher priority than your children.
 1. It's damaging to believe "Nothing is important as our kids."
 2. Our relationship with God and our spouse takes priority over our children.
- b. Prioritizing your marriage above your children is critical because:
 1. Marriage only works when it's most important. God's law of priority is inviolable. (Genesis 2:24) When it is violated, marriage suffers.
 2. Our relationship with God and our spouse enables us to be good parents.
 3. Your children's security and happiness comes from you having a positive relationship with God and your spouse.
 4. Raising children is a temporary task. Marriage is for a lifetime.
 - You should say, "I want my child's marriage to be just like ours." If you can't say "yes" to that statement then you need to evaluate what changes need to be made.

PRINCIPLE #2 – UNITY IS ESSENTIAL

- a. *If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.* – Mark 3:25, NIV
- b. **Four essential practices for promoting unity:**

1. Always present a united front to your children.
 - Disagree, discuss and come to a point of agreement in private.
 - Don't make significant parenting decisions without your spouse.
2. Always honor each other in front of your children and make your children honor your spouse.
 - Don't make your spouse defend themselves to your children.
 - Unity means, "What happens to you is happening to me because we are a team."
3. Never allow a significant difference to develop in how you express love or enforce punishment.
 - The danger of a "good cop-bad cop" mentality is it creates extremes where you and your spouse are opposites.
 - Children do not develop properly if both parents are not expressing affection and enforcing discipline.
4. Go outside of your marriage for counseling and input.
 - Nearly every couple will need to go to an outside source for counsel and wisdom because your own emotions will be too involved.
 - Every couple should have an emergency plan for outside counsel for when they reach an impasse.

When you are struggling in your relationship, and I am talking long-term because we all have issues from time to time, your children's security comes from you being secure.

PRINCIPLE #3 – PARENTING TAKES FAITH

- a. Parenting takes faith because it is a process and many of the desired results cannot be produced immediately.
- b. *Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.* - Proverbs 22:6, NKJV
- c. Training doesn't mean talking, it means showing them how to live successfully. Then when they face challenges, you have faith that they will return to your example one day

ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM TODAY'S TEACHING

If you do not want your children to be just like you, you do not understand parenting, because it is more caught than taught. Your life speaks louder than your lips.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What was your first reaction when hearing the principle that parents should consider their children secondary to their marriage?

2. Our relationship with God and our spouse creates happiness and security for our children. How have you seen this in your own family?

3. When parents speak with one united voice to their children, it makes all the difference. By nature, children will try to divide their parents. When do your children try to divide you?

4. Why is it difficult to always present a united front to your children? How do you respond to a child when you and your spouse don't agree?

5. Have you ever had to seek outside counsel for your children like Jimmy and Karen? If so, what happened? If not, where would you go when you need help?

6. What challenges are you currently experiencing with your children? How can you have faith that your kids will turn out all right in your current circumstances? Listen and respond to each other in the group.

What Karen and I would do is we would go in our room by ourselves and sometimes we would argue. They did not know anything about the conversation. The only thing they knew is mom and dad were a two-headed monster.

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you so much for our children. Relating to kids helps us understand how you relate and love us. Show each spouse how to make their marriage a greater priority, even above their children. Help every couple discuss how they can become more united and honoring to each other. Above all else God, we put our trust and faith in you as we show our children the way that they should go. In Jesus name, amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. Think about the last few weeks. Which currently ranks higher, your kids or your marriage? Discuss occasions when you might have given too much energy to the kids and not enough to your relationship.

HIM: From my perspective, the kids have come before our marriage when...

HER: From my perspective, the kids have come before our marriage when...

2. Do you and your spouse get enough time alone together to protect your marriage? If not, how can you arrange your schedule so that you have more time? (If you need ideas, look back on Session 2 on "The Laws of Priority and Pursuit.") A good start is a regular communication time, a date night and a couple's weekend away from the kids.

We can make more alone time by planning...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Jimmy recommends that you tell your kids, "When mom and dad go in the bedroom, don't knock on the door unless something is a real emergency." In what ways do you allow your kids too much access that it hurts your marriage? How can you set more appropriate boundaries to protect your couple time?

We can set more appropriate rules and boundaries by...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. When have you ever contradicted your spouse in front of the children? When have you ever spoken negatively of your spouse in front of your kids? Lovingly, talk about these issues together and share your feelings with each other.

HIM: I'm sorry whenever I have not honored you in front of the children concerning...

HER: I'm sorry whenever I have not honored you in front of the children concerning...

5. What parenting challenges are you facing right now? For parents, a big issue is often agreeing on discipline. For children, it is common to push boundaries, and as they grow older those boundaries involve friends, clothes, television and electronics.

Begin discussing how you could become more united on these issues. (If you can't resolve a situation right now, that's ok. What's important is that you each lovingly share your perspective and get the discussion going.)

THE ISSUE	OUR UNITED RESPONSE

6. Nearly every couple at some point in their marriage will need to go to an outside source for counsel and wisdom because your own emotions will be too involved in the situation.

Whether now or in the future, where can we go for an outside perspective on parenting when we need help?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When you reach an impasse, do not let it destroy your marriage. Do not let it take you out. As parents, everyone is going to come to times that you cannot solve the problem on your own.

7. Jimmy says that training doesn't mean talking, it means showing your children how to live successfully. Before the next session, ask your children, "What do you learn about marriage from us? What do you learn about conflict? What do you learn about money?" Their response may inspire you to make some further adjustments in your parenting style.

By watching us, our children said they learned that marriage...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

After talking with our children, we need to change...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Couple Prayer: *God, help us prioritize our marriage first and foremost in front of our children so that we can show them how to love their future spouse. God, we repent to each other and to you for when we have not been united in front of our kids. Give us patience and faith to be the parents that you desire from this day forward. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Three powerful principles will determine the future of your marriage and children. When you make your marriage a higher priority than your children, present a united front, and have faith during the hard times, you'll build a great marriage and raise great children.

Maintaining a marriage and raising kids is hard work, but it is possible to succeed at both simultaneously. Ultimately, a child's happiness and security is a reflection of the quality of your relationship together.

BONUS SESSION 4

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL BLENDED FAMILIES

Marriage is permanent. Parenting is temporary.

The past is an issue in all of our lives that affects our marriages and families. However, blended families have special dynamics that often immediately set up serious challenges.

Blended families are defined as a marriage where one or both spouses bring children with them from a previous marriage or relationship. And no matter how "blended" the families are, there are always additional complexities.

Even though blended families have special challenges, they also have special joys...

A lot of people in blended families feel like they did something wrong or they kind of feel guilty. Aren't you glad that God loves us all the same?

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Below is an outline of today's teaching. Feel free to take additional notes in the space provided as you listen to Jimmy share biblical truths on having a successful marriage.

"Foundations for Successful Blended Families"

Related Scriptures: Ephesians 4:30-32, Genesis 2:24-25, Proverbs 22:6

DYNAMIC #1 - UNRESOLVED FEELINGS FROM A PRIOR RELATIONSHIP

- a. Ten years after divorce 50% of people still have feelings of love for their ex-spouse. Marriage (and sexual intimacy) joins our soul together with another person.
- b. Satan either perverts our memories or poisons them to ruin our future.
 - 1. When we're married, Satan is the accuser of our spouse.
 - 2. When we divorce, he reminds us of what was right.
 - 3. Thank God for any good in the prior relationship. Then decide, "I leave it behind and I'm focused on the person I'm with right now."

DYNAMIC #2 - LOWER TRUST AND HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

- a. Lower Trust: "I have less good will and am more suspicious of your motives and actions. I'm not getting my heart broken again."
- b. Higher Expectations: "I expect more of you because of my previous disappointments. I expect you will not make the same mistakes my ex made."
- c. How to establish trust in your current relationship:
 - 1. Before and after marriage, date to establish trust.
 - 2. Disassociate the past from the present. Forgive and go on.
 - 3. Dream new dreams. Set goals for your marriage. Have an annual vision retreat.

DYNAMIC #3 - NON-BIOLOGICAL PARENTING

- a. If you are the biological parent, don't let your protective instincts keep your child away from the stepparent.
 1. The biological parent should enforce discipline, but both parents have authority and stand as a united front.
 2. The non-biological parent should always honor the child's parent and never try to replace them.
 3. You should trust each other with decisions related to the children or stepchildren. There is no place for favoritism or the attitude, "You don't love them like I love them."
- b. Natural sexual barriers may be missing. Wear appropriate clothing around non-biological children, especially teenagers and young adults.
- c. Child support needs to be paid with a good attitude. (Remember the Law of Possession, marriage is sharing. "Your debts are my debts.")
- d. Visitation can be a source of conflict and stress.
 1. Let the adults communicate and don't use the children as messengers.
 2. Every time the children leave your home, pray over them that God will protect their minds, hearts and sexuality.
 3. Thank God for every day that you have with them. Be fun and fair, but have righteous standards in your home.
 4. Have faith and trust God to do what you can't. (Proverbs 22:6)

Thank God for any good that was in the prior relationship and put it in the past. When the devil comes to you in bad times and he brings back memories from the past, stop it.

TALK IT OUT – GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Ten years after divorce, Jimmy says that 50% of ex-spouses still have feelings for the person in the previous relationship. Have you found this to be true?

2. Whether it was a marriage or a previous relationship, discuss how your past hurts influence how you see your spouse today. Do you have a tendency towards lower trust and higher expectations?

3. We naturally come into a blended family suspicious of a person's motives and actions. We have to re-establish trust and expectations of our marriage. Women, what do you need from your husband in order to trust him? Men, what do you need from your wife in order to trust her?

4. If you were raised in a blended family or if you are in a blended family now, how have you seen discipline and visitation with children handled? How about relationships with ex-spouses?

5. Discuss the role of a stepparent. How does society view stepparents? What do you believe is God's perspective?.

6. It can be difficult to understand that marriage must come first in a blended family. Biological parents tend to be over protective because they do not want their children to be hurt again. If the children are first, why will the blended family inevitably struggle?

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you that every family can succeed. More than anyone Jesus understands what it's like to live in a blended family. Help every spouse deal with their previous relationships whether they have feelings of love or regret. We pray that you will bless every parent with wisdom on how to love and discipline biological and non-biological children. Help every spouse make marriage the greatest priority in their family. In Jesus name, amen.*

WALK IT OUT – COUPLE HOME DISCUSSION

Please discuss these questions with your spouse during the upcoming week. You will want to find a time that is good for both of you to talk so that you can give each other your best. This may be during a planned communication time or while on a date night.

1. Whether it was a previous marriage or relationship, talk with your spouse about your feelings of the past. Bring it into the light, so that you both can have a fresh start. Without realizing it, often we have our guard up concerning our past hurts that we bring into marriage.

HIM: I've been hurt by relationships when...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: I've been hurt by relationships when...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. Make a decision together that each of your past relationships are just that, they are past history. Appreciate the good in your past, but focus on the present with your spouse and family.

HIM: Why is it so important for a married couple to live in the present?

HER: Why is it so important for a married couple to live in the present?

3. Jimmy says that you need to set goals together for your marriage. What are some goals that you would like to accomplish together in the future? If they are family goals, discuss how your children could become part of the process as well.

Our goals for the next 5, 10 or 20 years are...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

4. Discuss how you and your spouse currently handle discipline and your relationships with the children. Remember, what's most important is that even though you are a blended family that you both present a united front to the kids.

HIM: From my perspective, concerning parenting and discipline, we are united concerning...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HER: From my perspective, concerning parenting and discipline, we are united concerning...

Many times children undermine the new marriage because they see it as an end of the hope of their parents getting back together. Even though you and your spouse fell in love, it can take many years for children in a blended family to feel like they fit in. (Think of a blended family as a crock pot, it takes a lot of time.) Remember, you may have moved on from your previous relationship but a child will have a relationship with the biological parent for the rest of their life.

Your emotions may be actually working against you because of what you have been through. The objectivity of the non-biological parent may be the best gift that God has ever given you.

5. Discuss what you are teaching your kids about marriage. Brainstorm ideas together of how you can better show them that marriage is a priority in your relationship.

We are teaching our kids that marriage is...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Going forward as a family, we want our kids to see that marriage is...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. As a blended family, what did this session confirm that you are doing right in your relationship?

Jimmy confirmed that we are doing right...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

7. Where is improvement needed to have a more successful blended family?

In our blended family, we need to work on...

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Concerning visitation, do not communicate through the children. You communicate directly with your ex-spouse and their spouse and do not use those children as messengers.

Couple Prayer: *God, thank you so much that you have brought our family together. You are a God of restoration and you can make all things new. We decide that our past is in the past and we trust that you have a great future for our family. Help us lovingly discipline our children and stepchildren in a way that honors you and each other. Above all, we commit to making our marriage first and to provide a positive example of a successful marriage for generations. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Blended families have special challenges, but they also have special joys. Whether it's your marriage relationship or the challenge of raising children, together commit to dealing with any issues that you may be facing. Have faith and trust God to do what you cannot.

Most marriages start with the relationship, and then children arrive later. In a blended family, children are present when the relationship begins. Marriage must come first in importance. It is of higher significance than the children. Children are a wonderful temporary assignment, but marriage is for life.