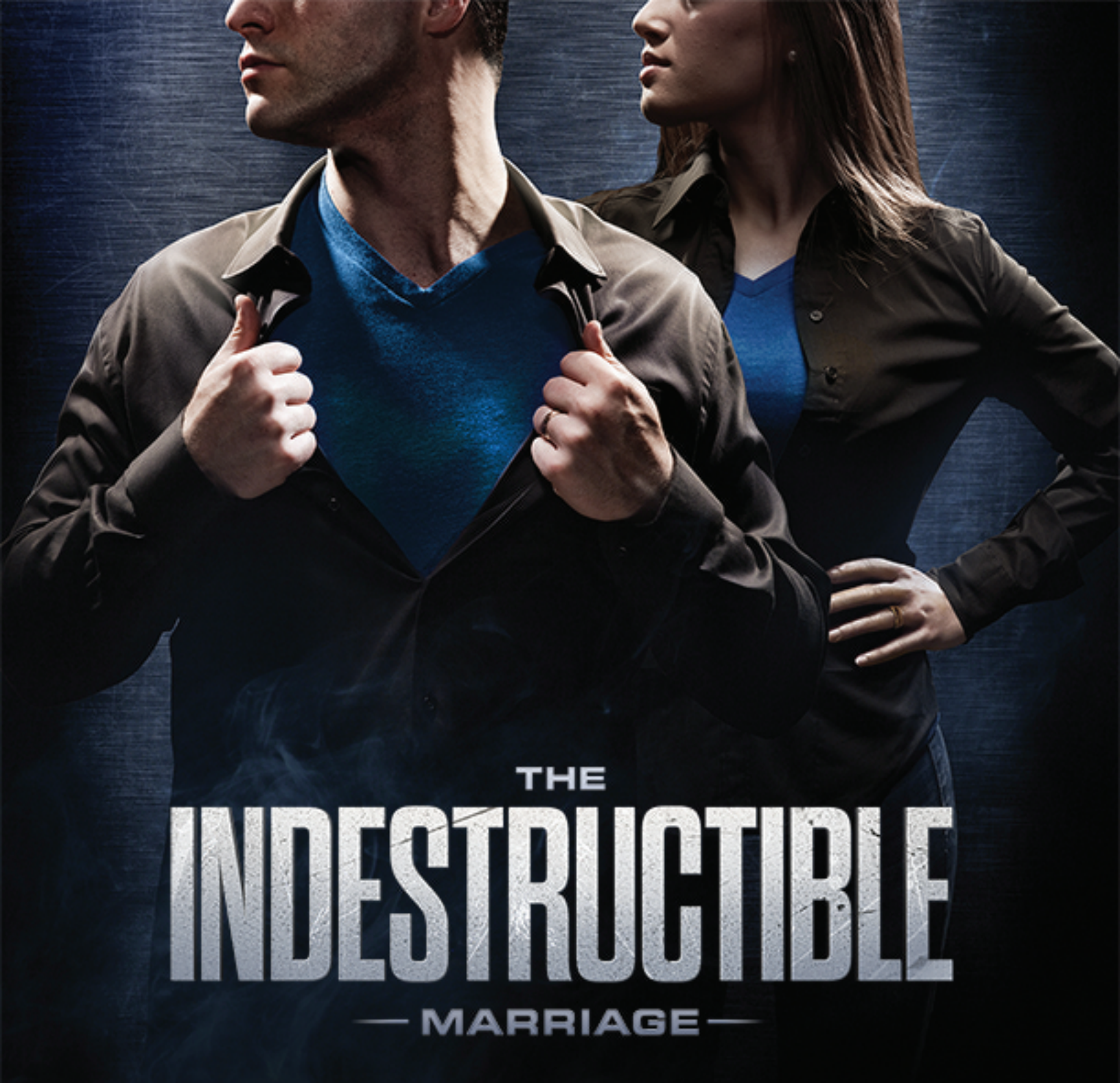

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MARRIAGE

Small Group Workbook

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MARRIAGE

Small Group Workbook

A Guide for Achieving a Lasting and Thriving Relationship

Jimmy Evans

MarriageToday™

The Indestructible Marriage Small Group Workbook

This workbook is based on *The Indestructible Marriage* seminar by Jimmy Evans.
The Indestructible Marriage is available on DVD, CD and small group curriculum.

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A Guide for Achieving a
Lasting and Thriving Relationship

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Thanks to our incredible MarriageToday™ team who work tirelessly to produce our TV show, plan events, create resources and equip churches. Marriages around the world are forever changed due to their efforts for God's glory.

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 a marriage that is indestructible.

May God bless you.

Jimmy Evans

JIMMY EVANS

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 & Karen Evans

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*, *Ten Steps Toward Christ*, *Lifelong Love Affair*, *When Life Hurts,* and his newest book, *The Right One*.

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 an Indestructible Marriage 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 eight weeks, 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:

DVD TEACHING WITH JIMMY EVANS

Each week your small group will watch a new video teaching from *The Indestructible Marriage Curriculum Kit*. Each teaching is approximately 15-20 minutes in length. *The Indestructible Marriage Curriculum Kit* also includes a leader's guide for facilitating a small group.

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

GOD'S INDESTRUCTIBLE PLAN FOR MARRIAGE

Discover the secret to
experiencing fulfillment and passion.

No matter how distant you feel. No matter how much pain you've endured. No matter how dysfunctional your marriage seems, today you can change the course from frustration to fulfillment.

The same God who supernaturally bound you together in the covenant of marriage is longing to help turn your relationship into the love affair He wants it to be. The first step requires embracing the important truth that your marriage is not an accident.

Many couples are so focused on their own pain, their own needs and their own selfish desires that it's impossible for them to see God's bigger picture.

The institution of marriage still works. God created marriage and the Bible is the instruction manual for having a successful relationship.

There is an indestructible plan for 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.

"GOD'S INDESTRUCTIBLE PLAN FOR MARRIAGE"

Related Scriptures: Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:1-6, Genesis 2:18, 1 Corinthians 11:7b, Proverbs 31

God's Perfect Plan

A) God never creates anything to fail or hurt us. The reason that people fail in relationships is because they are not following God's design.

B) God's perfect plan for marriage is in Ephesians 5:21-33. When you follow this plan, your marriage will be successful.

B) Most Christians love what Ephesians 5 says their spouse should do, but they fear doing their part first.

Our Roles Attract Us to Our Spouse

A) How a wife attracts her husband:

1) The number one need of every man is honor. A man is attracted to a respectful and encouraging woman.

2) A wife can change her husband without a word as he observes her respectful behavior. (I Peter 3:1-6)

3) Being submissive means, "I don't have to disrespect or nag you. I believe God can change your heart."

B) How a husband attracts his wife:

1) The number one need of every woman is security. A woman is attracted to a selfless, sacrificial man.

2) A husband can change his wife as he sacrifices and loves her. A woman wants to know that a man cares and will give up anything for her.

3) A woman is sexually attracted to her husband when he is a servant, especially when he is doing housework.

Our Roles Release the Potential in Our Spouse

A) How a husband releases his wife's potential:

1)Husbands should nourish and cherish their wives. Nourish means to feed to maturity and cherish means to protect.

2) Godly character is essential. Men reflect the nature of their God while women reflect the nature of their husband. (1 Corinthians 11:7b)

B) How a wife releases her husband's potential:

1) A wife should be a cheerleader and encourager looking for reasons to praise her husband. Men gravitate to where they receive honor.

2) A wife can say anything she wants to say, but the way she says it is critical.

Our Roles Make Us Sensitive to Our Spouse's Needs

A) A man will naturally meet his wife's needs when he speaks security. For example, "I am sorry for the way I have treated you. To my hurt I will meet your needs. You will not have to nag or say it twice. I am completely committed to you."

B) A woman will naturally meet her husband's needs when she speaks honor to him. For example, "I am sorry for the way I have disrespected you. I did not understand how my words and tone hurt you. God put you in my life for a reason and I need you."

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

Jimmy says that a man's most important need is for honor and respect. Men, how do you need your wife to honor you? When your wife is honoring, how does that help you throughout your day?

1 Peter 3:1-2 says that a wife can change her husband without a word as he observes her respectful behavior. The challenge for a wife is trusting God to change a man's heart instead of her forcing the issue. Ladies, how do you feel about this approach?

> YOU HAVE A ONE HUNDRED PERCENT CHANCE OF SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE, BUT YOU HAVE TO DO IT GOD'S WAY.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

A woman's most important need is for security and love. Men, what are the challenges of making your wife feel secure? For example, discuss why it is sometimes hard to love your wife more than yourself.

Ladies, how do you need your husband to show security and love to you? When you feel secure, how does that heal and make you whole?

Men reflect the nature of their God while women reflect the nature of their husband. Men, what were your first thoughts when you heard this statement? What are you reflecting in your relationship?

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 perfect plan for marriage. Begin to open the lines of communication as we focus on meeting the needs of each other in our relationship. Help each wife give her husband the honor and respect that he needs most. Teach every husband how to be a loving servant to his wife and meet her need for security and love. 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.

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…

> THE MEGA-NEED OF MEN IS THE NEED FOR HONOR. JUST THE SLIGHTEST TONE OF DISRESPECT AFFECTS MEN MORE THAN WE COULD EVER TELL OUR WIVES.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

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

The most important need for every man is honor and respect. The most important need for every woman is security and love. God made us different by design so that we would depend upon Him and each other.

HIM: I like it when my wife meets my need for honor and respect by…

1.

2.

3.

HER: I like it when my husband meets my need for security and love by…

1.

2.

3.

Discuss the above lists with your spouse. Put a check beside each of your spouse's requests that you'd be willing to work on in the weeks to come.

According to Ephesians 5, men should love their wives in the same way that Christ loves the church. For the husband, consider the following issues. Are you patient with your wife? Are you positive in your communication with her? Are you gentle? Are you the leader of your home? Do you treat your wife as an equal?

HIM: Going forward, these are some ways that I can better fulfill my role as a husband…

1.

2.

3.

HER: In response, I can honor my husband by…

1.

2.

3.

According to Ephesians 5, women should respectfully submit to their husbands like they would the Lord. Men and women are still equals. For the wife, consider the following issues. Are your words positive with your husband? Are you his cheerleader or his critic? Do you trust God to change your husband's heart when needed?

HER: Going forward, these are some ways that I can better fulfill my role as a wife…

1.

2.

3.

HIM: In response, I can love my wife by…

1.

2.

3.

Some of the most healing words in a relationship are when we say "I'm sorry" and take responsibility for our mistakes. Take a few minutes and talk with your spouse. Admit where you have made mistakes and ask for their forgiveness.

HIM: Concerning our marriage, please forgive me for…

HER: Concerning our marriage, please forgive me for…

> IF YOU ARE NOT COMMITTED TO EPHESIANS 5, A LOT OF TIMES YOU ARE TELLING EACH OTHER WHAT YOU NEED BUT YOU ARE NOT LISTENING.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Couple Prayer: *God, we want you to become a greater part of our marriage. Help us forgive one other for mistakes of the past. Today, we choose to honor your plan for marriage as we give honor and security to each other. Help us do the right thing first and believe for the best in each other. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

When a husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church, he listens to her. He meets her needs and serves her without having to be nagged. He is committed to putting her first.

A wife who submits to her husband respects him and understands that her words and actions are meaningful. She begins to value the things that are valuable to him. She is committed to putting him first.

When we respect God's plan we are not just fulfilling our roles, we are making ourselves more attractive to our spouse. That attraction isn't just physical or sexual. When we fulfill the roles in Ephesians 5, we experience deeper intimacy and we're following the path to an indestructible marriage

Session 2

INDESTRUCTIBLE COMMUNICATION

Communication is essential in every great relationship.

When a couple begins dating, they usually have long conversations about their lives and their future. They want to understand each other and affirm what the other person has to say. It's no wonder they fall in love.

Fast forward into the marriage when communication often begins to break down and you'll find a different story. The lack of meaningful time together, combined with sarcasm and negative responses will soon devastate a relationship.

When you and your spouse were dating, communication happened naturally. When you are married, successful communication becomes intentional. It requires work.

If your marriage is going to thrive, your spouse needs to feel safe enough to share their thoughts and feelings with you. That will only take place if you learn to have indestructible communication...

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.

"INDESTRUCTIBLE COMMUNICATION"

Related Scriptures: Amos 3:3, Ephesians 4:15, John 1:14, Proverbs 18:20-21, James 3:1-12

The Right Tone

A) Tone communicates that you care. It is impossible to communicate with a person who does not care.

B) Your tone is either going to upset your spouse or comfort your spouse.

Enough Time

A) Three types of communication:

1) Proactive Communication - Talking before a fight so you do not have disagreements. Dedicate 3-5 days a year to go on a Vision Retreat.

2) Personal Communication - Daily discussing relationships and the issues in your life. Dedicate at least 30-60 minutes a day without interruption.

3) Intimate Communication - Verbally and physically show affection. Dedicate at least 5-10 minutes a day giving encouragement and affection.

B) How to overcome challenges:

1) Train your children to respect your relationship.

2) Change your priorities. Give something up if needed.

3) Eliminate distractions and plan communication.

An Atmosphere of Trust

A) You have to give your spouse the freedom to complain. Your spouse will not trust you unless they know they can complain without paying a price.

B) Confidentiality means personal information stays in this marriage and is not used against each other in conflict.

An Atmosphere of Truth

A) Relationships without conflict are not as satisfying as relationships that have learned to overcome conflict.

B) Much of the truth that must be spoken in marriage isn't absolute truth. Often we need to express how we feel and what is real to us.

C) All trust has to be proceeded by grace. The first three minutes of a conversation will determine the outcome.

A Team Spirit

A) A team spirit is created by valuing your spouse's differences and admitting your need for each other.

B) There is an old saying, "If both of you are the same, then one of you is unnecessary."

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

It's impossible to communicate with a person who does not care. Ladies, how do you like your husband to show you he cares. Men, how do you like your wife to show you she cares?

Share with the group your daily communication routine in your marriage, including when you talk and how you communicate with each other.

> *TONE COMMUNICATES CARE. IF YOU DO NOT CARE IT IS GAME, SET AND MATCH.*
>
> *-JIMMY EVANS*

Being honest and giving your spouse the freedom to complain is critical for resolving conflict. Describe the negative effects when a spouse rejects the complaints of their mate. If this happens repeatedly in the marriage over months and years, what damage will it do to the relationship?

Jimmy says relationships without conflict are not as satisfying as relationships that have learned to overcome conflict. What conflicts have you resolved in your relationship? (If you need ideas, think about the challenges when you were first married or when you went through a season of transition.)

Much of the truth that must be spoken in marriage isn't absolute truth. Often we need to express how we feel and what is real to us. Ladies, when you are expressing your feelings, what do you typically need from your husband? Men, when you are sharing your perspective, what do you typically need from your wife?

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 as our needs are different, we also communicate differently. We pray that you will help each of us in the way we listen and respond to our spouse. Give us discernment to know when is the best time to talk with one another. Help us give our spouse the freedom to complain and express their feelings. Above all else, show us how to communicate care in all circumstances. 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.

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…

Praise reminds us 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 the family.

HIM: I praise my wife for…

1.

2.

3.

> YOU ARE EITHER GOING TO BE PROACTIVE OR REACTIVE. WHEN YOU ARE NOT COMMUNICATING PROACTIVELY, YOU WILL REACT BECAUSE YOU NEVER AGREED.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

HER: I praise my husband for…

1.

2.

3.

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: For me, communication might improve if we began to…

HER: For me, communication might improve if we began to…

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.

Anger and unresolved conflict can be very damaging to your relationship. You can begin to diffuse anger by giving your spouse the freedom to complain.

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.

> YOU CAN FIGHT ABOUT IT, YOU CAN ACCUSE EACH OTHER, YOU CAN REJECT EACH OTHER OR YOU CAN BE A TEAM.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

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…

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…

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. 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 is the essential element to every great marriage. Getting to know another human being requires talking. It's how we fall in love. It's how we understand another person's heart. It's how we resolve problems and discuss needs. It's so important.

Whether you are a man or a woman, communication is central to a good marriage. Speak kindness and positive words to each other and watch how God will draw you closer than ever before.

Your tone, giving your spouse the freedom to complain and a commitment to speaking the truth in love will create indestructible communication.

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 and Karen will walk you step-by-step through having a retreat and developing a vision that will revolutionize your marriage.

Session 3

INDESTRUCTIBLE LOVE

Lasting love is more than your feelings for one another.

Marriage can be mutually fulfilling as long as the husband and wife are pouring their energy into the relationship. But many of us believe love happens effortlessly because of compatibility and chemistry.

For example, there is a misconception that if we marry the right person, loving emotions will always occur easily throughout our marriage. Another misconception is that once we've fallen out of love, we can't get the love back.

Regardless of your emotions, you can experience an indestructible love for one another.

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.

"INDESTRUCTIBLE LOVE"

Related Scriptures: John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13:7, Hebrews 13:5b, 1 Peter 2:21-3:7

The Definition of God's Love

A) Agape love is "unconditional love; love by choice and by an act of the will. The word denotes unconquerable benevolence and undefeatable goodwill. It will never seek anything but the highest good for another person. It does not need a chemistry, an affinity, or a feeling. It is a love that endures through any circumstance or difficulty. Agape is a love that exclusively belongs to God and God's people."

B) People marry because they love each other. However, for many their love will not endure. Their definition of "love" is not stable enough to last a lifetime.

The Difference Between God's Love and Other Kinds of Love

A) Important questions: Do you love your spouse? If yes, what do you mean by that? If the answer is no, what do you mean by that?

B) In English, we have one word to define all kinds of love. However, when the New Testament was written in Greek, five different words were used to describe various types of love.

C) Five Kinds of Love:

1) Epithumia - A passionate love

2) Eros - A sexual love

3) Phileo - A brotherly love

4) Storge - A family love

5) Agape - Unconditional love

D) Agape love is the only kind of love that doesn't require an emotion.

E) More important questions: Are you measuring your love primarily by an emotion or a decision? With what type of love do you want to be loved?

The Difference Agape Love Makes in Marriage

A) Agape love is consistent. Emotions are inconsistent.

B) You are one hundred percent in control of your will. You can decide at any time regardless of your emotions to love your spouse.

C) If the thermostat of your love is based on agape which is a decision, then your love will be set on high and last for the rest of your life. If the thermostat of your love is based on emotion, then it will be high and low based on your feelings. Your love is unpredictable.

D) *For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'* - Hebrews 13:5b, NKJV

E) The greatest marriages are built when you go through hard times and stay together. Agape love produces the deepest intimacy and the deepest bond.

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

What does society tell us about emotions and being in love? Likewise, what does society tell us our about emotions and being out of love?

God created us to love one another with agape love. The Greek word agape means to make an unconditional decision to love even above your feelings or emotions. Why can this be so difficult to do?

There will be times in your marriage that you don't feel passionately in love. Men, when you are going through a challenging time in your marriage what do you need to hear from your wife? Ladies, likewise what do you need to hear from your husband?

In Hebrews 13:5, what promises does God make to us? When you married your spouse and said your wedding vows, what promises did you make to each other? Is an emotion involved in either of these commitments?

Jimmy says, you are one hundred percent in control of your will. You can decide at any time regardless of your emotions to love your spouse. In practical terms, how can you love your spouse if you have no feelings for the relationship?

Jimmy believes that the greatest marriages happen when two committed believers come together and fight through their issues and stay together. What have you learned about loving your spouse even in difficult seasons?

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you that you made men and women so very different. You designed us so we would complement each other, not so we would compete with each other. We realize that there have been times when we based our love solely on emotions or desire. Help us love our spouse with unconditional agape love in the days and weeks ahead. Amen.*

> I DO NOT HAVE TO LIKE YOU TO LOVE YOU THE WAY GOD DOES. I DO NOT HAVE TO AGREE WITH YOU. GOD'S LOVE IS THE ONLY LOVE THAT DOES NOT REQUIRE AN EMOTION.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

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.

Think back to your wedding day. Whether you were excited or nervous, you had optimism for marriage because of your love for each other.

HIM: I fell in love with my wife because…

1.

2.

3.

HER: I fell in love with my husband because…

1.

2.

3.

The type of love that many people experience when they meet, date and decide to marry is usually very different than agape love. Often we base our marriage on a love other than unconditional agape.

Check the boxes below to indicate which definition of love you have based your marriage upon.

HIM: I have based our marriage on…

- ☐ An emotional, passionate love (epithumia)
- ☐ A sexual, attraction love (eros)
- ☐ A brotherly, friendship love (phileo)
- ☐ A family love (storge)
- ☐ An unconditional love (agape)

HER: I have based our marriage on…

- ☐ An emotional, passionate love (epithumia)
- ☐ A sexual, attraction love (eros)
- ☐ A brotherly, friendship love (phileo)
- ☐ A family love (storge)
- ☐ An unconditional love (agape)

What does agape love mean to you? Write down your own definition and tell your spouse in your own words.

HIM: To me, loving my wife with agape love means…

HER: To me, loving my husband with agape love means…

> THE MORE YOU BASE YOUR LOVE ON EMOTION, THE LESS LOVE YOU HAVE. WHEN AGAPE LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR MARRIAGE, EVERY OTHER KIND OF LOVE FLOURISHES.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Loving your spouse with agape love doesn't give you permission to be mistreated or abused. Agape means you have the ability to love your spouse even when they are unlovable, sick or depressed. When you are not "getting" as much as you're "giving" in marriage, God's agape love keeps you committed to the relationship.

We naturally don't have the love within us to love our spouse long-term. We have to depend upon the Lord to fill us with His love.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. - Galatians 5:22-23a, NASB

Which of the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 does your spouse show you regularly? Check the boxes below to indicate which fruits of the spirit you see in your spouse.

HIM: I see in my wife...

- ☐ Love
- ☐ Joy
- ☐ Peace
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Kindness
- ☐ Goodness
- ☐ Faithfulness
- ☐ Gentleness
- ☐ Self-Control

HER: I see in my husband...

- ☐ Love
- ☐ Joy
- ☐ Peace
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Kindness
- ☐ Goodness
- ☐ Faithfulness
- ☐ Gentleness
- ☐ Self-Control

Now look at yourself. Which fruit(s) of the spirit do you need to improve upon in your own life? Take this issue to the Lord daily and ask Him to fill you with His love. Encourage your spouse as you see improvement and change.

HIM: I need God to give me these fruits of the spirit in my life…

HER: I need God to give me these fruits of the spirit in my life…

Don't believe the misconception that when there is no emotion or you have fallen out of love that there is no way to get the love back.

Jimmy says, your passion for your spouse can return if you:

A) Remember when you pursued each other.

B) Ask your spouse for forgiveness.

C) Do what you did at the beginning.

HIM: Next time I feel out of love, I'm going to…

HER: Next time I feel out of love, I'm going to…

Couple Prayer: *God, thank you for my wonderful spouse that completes me. We remember why we fell in love. We are sorry for any times that we have loved each other with conditions, based solely on our inconsistent feelings and emotions. Even if our passion feels far away, we believe that it can return. Help us love each other with agape love from this day forward. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

You cannot build a lasting love around emotions, because emotions are unpredictable. Passion wavers. Sexual desire comes and goes. Even friendships can be unstable. But agape love is consistent. It is God's love.

Love by choice is the basis for marriages that last for a lifetime. This kind of love doesn't need chemistry or emotions. It endures through any circumstances or difficulty.

Agape love is based on a decision. You can decide at any time, regardless of how you feel, to treat your spouse right and love the way Christ would. Make up your mind once and for all, your love is a decision.

Session 4

REAL SEXUAL INTIMACY AND FULFILLMENT

Realistic sexual expectations will lead to success and fulfillment.

In marriage, sex is the only experience that we have together that we do not share with anyone else. We talk and socialize with other people, we make financial decisions with other people, but sex is the only unique feature of marriage.

Soon after getting married, many couples realize their sexual desires are not quite in sync. The majority of men find that they are more sexual than their wives. While many women discover they are more emotional than their husbands.

In spite of your differences, you will discover a greater level of freedom and satisfaction when sex is an open subject between you, your spouse and God.

You can experience real sexual intimacy and fulfillment in 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.

"REAL SEXUAL INTIMACY AND FULFILLMENT"

Related Scriptures: Genesis 2:15, Genesis 3:7, Genesis 4:1, 1 Corinthians 7:4-5, Hebrews 13:4

Real Inhibitions and Misconceptions about God

A) God created sex and said it is very good.

B) God puts parameters on sex by prohibiting: adultery, fornication, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, rape, pornography and fantasy lust.

C) Each person has to decide whether God's parameters are a fence to keep you safe or a fence to keep you from having fun.

D) How to decide what is sexually permissible:

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: Do we both agree? Is it safe? Does it enhance the relationship?

Real Temptations and Deceptions about Sexuality

A) Sex Lies Men Believe

1) The Temptation - Men are visually stimulated and male pornography provides an outlet for him.

2) The Lie - Male pornography under emotionalizes and hyper-sexualizes women. Men think, "I wish my wife was sexual like that."

3) The Truth - She becomes sexual through her emotions. A woman needs his care and help all day long. Then once he has been a good husband she begins to feel romantic and sexual.

B) Sex Lies Women Believe

1) The Temptation - Women are emotionally stimulated and female pornography (romance novels, chick flicks and soap operas) provides an outlet for her.

2) The Lie - Female pornography under sexualizes and hyper-emotionalizes men. Women think, "I wish my husband talked to me like that."

3) The Truth - He becomes emotional through sex. A man can be emotional, but he is the exact opposite of a woman. Meet his sexual needs and then talk to him about his emotions.

Real Expectations about Sex in Marriage

A) Every couple is unique and has their own sexual style.

B) If your expectations are wrong concerning sex, then you're set up for sexual dysfunction.

C) Reasonable Expectations for Sex in Marriage:

1) The average couple has sex six times a month. Of those encounters: one will be great, three times will be good, one will be fair and one will be bad.

2) You and your spouse will rarely have the same desire at the same time. To have great sex in marriage you need to have a servant spirit.

3) Plan special sexual encounters on a regular basis when you have the most energy and time. Schedule sex, so that you both know what to expect. Have "his" or "her" nights.

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

_____

_____

_____

_____

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

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?

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

Men are visually stimulated and male pornography provides an unhealthy outlet for him. Ladies, how can you better fulfill this need in your husband? What might be the payoff for you if you meet his needs first?

Women are emotionally stimulated and female pornography can be unhealthy for her. Men, how can you make changes to meet your wife's emotional needs? What might be the payoff if you become a servant and meet her needs first?

> *WE HAVE TO MAKE UP OUR MINDS. ARE THE PARAMETERS THAT GOD PUT ON SEX A FENCE TO KEEP US SAFE OR A FENCE TO KEEP US FROM HAVING FUN?*
>
> *-JIMMY EVANS*

Rarely do our sexual needs match in marriage. Consequently, sex can become frustrating. Jimmy says that the secret to sexual fulfillment is a servant's spirit. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What is the world's perspective of sexual fulfillment for men and women?

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? The key to better sex is often reducing the stress in your spouse's life.

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you that you created sex and that you made it wonderful. We believe that the parameters you put on sex are for our good. Help us recommit to our spouse so that we will meet each other's different sexual needs and desires. Create sexual purity in each marriage so that we will not reject our spouse, 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.

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:

a) More often
b) Less often
c) At our current pace

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

a) More often
b) Less often
c) At our current pace

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.

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…

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…

> A WOMAN BECOMES SEXUAL THROUGH HER EMOTIONS. THE MORE YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY TUNED IN, THE MORE SEXUAL SHE IS GOING TO BECOME.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Jimmy recommends scheduling sex on a regular basis. When can you and your spouse plan to have sexual encounters? Even if this seems non-spontaneous it actually builds excitement and gives you both something to look forward to together.

We plan on "being together" regularly on _____ at _____ o'clock.

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.

> A MAN WHO IS WILLING TO LOVE HIS WIFE SACRIFICIALLY IS GOING TO FIND OUT HOW SEXUAL SHE IS.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

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. I'll plan and prepare to give my best to you.

Couple Prayer: *God, we realize that rarely will our sexual desires match in marriage. We decide today that it doesn't matter. Help us continue to talk about our sexual needs with each other. Give us understanding when our spouse's desires are different than our own. We don't want our passion to diminish with age. We want to experience fulfilling intimacy for the rest of our lives. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Soon after getting married, many couples find out their sexual desires are not quite in sync. Rarely are you both going to experience fireworks at the same time. Approaching sex with a servant spirit means you choose to meet your spouse's sexual and emotional needs, regardless of whether they line up with your own.

Your spouse's needs are important. Listen to your spouse and validate what they are telling you. Work hard to meet their needs even if you don't have the same need or understand it completely.

God is concerned about the overall health of the relationship. He designed sexual intimacy to reach its full potential only when genuine care and sensitivity are present.

Session 5

RUST-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE

Romance is meeting a need before it's even spoken.

You have probably seen many well-intentioned, Bible-believing, couples that have lost their fire. It's like they're covered with rust. They've lost that loving feeling.

The moment you forsake your first love, it is like trading pure gold for a rusty piece of scrap metal. The secret to rust-proofing your marriage is one word, romance.

Many couples don't take romance seriously. They give up on it or think it is only for young lovers. But think about it. If you celebrated your marriage every month instead of just Valentine's Day, wouldn't your relationship improve?

The passion can return if you rust-proof 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.

"RUST-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE"

Related Scriptures: Revelation 2:1-5, Ephesians 5:22-33

Understanding Romance

A) Romance is one of the least understood issues in marriage. It renews and protects your relationship.

B) Romance is not a feeling. It's a behavior that you control.

C) Romance is not just for women. Every person needs romance.

D) Romance is more than a seasonal extra for Valentine's Day or an anniversary. It's an essential daily element in a successful marriage.

Element #1 - Meeting an Unspoken Need or Desire

A) Romance only happens when you are doing something proactively.

1) Romance says, "I don't have to think about you, I get to think about you."

2) Romance communicates, "I am paying attention, I am studying you." Romance should improve the longer you've been married.

3) The core issue is that men and women need to be desired.

B) We fall in love because:

1) We admire and desire the person we're dating.

2) That person makes us feel good about ourselves.

Element #2 - Speaking Love in your Spouse's Language

A) Men and women have different needs:

1) Men primarily need: honor, sex, friendship and support at home.

2) Women primarily need: security, communication, non-sexual affection and leadership.

B) Men and women see romance differently through their needs:

1) For him, romance is sex and fun. It's a short road.

2) For her, romance is communication and affection. It's a long road.

C) Romance happens when you naturally learn to speak your spouse's language. Men need to think women and women need to think men.

Element #3 - Communicating Unique Value

A) Value says, "There is no one like you. You have a place in my life that no one else has."

B) How we communicate value:

1) Verbally through praise and encouragement.

2) Comparatively through sacrifice and giving our best.

3) Creatively with mental and emotional energy.

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

Briefly share with the group how you met your spouse and the romantic things you did for each other while dating.

Ladies, what are some ways you like your husband to be romantic with you now in your relationship? Guys, what about you?

Jimmy believes we should be more romantic after ten years of marriage than when we first got married because we know more about each other. Why is it that romance often dissipates over time? How can a couple reverse this trend?

Men and women see romance differently through our needs. For him, romance is often sex and fun. For her, romance is often communication and non-sexual affection. How have you seen this dynamic play out in your own relationship?

Jimmy suggests that a man should eventually try to think like his wife. Likewise, a woman should have the goal of thinking like her husband. Ladies, how could your husband's thoughts be more like your own? Men, how could your wife begin thinking more like you?

We communicate value in three ways: (1) verbally through praise and encouragement, (2) comparatively through sacrifice and giving and (3) creatively with mental and emotional energy. Which of these areas are most important to you in your relationship?

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you that the romance and passion can return. It's so easy to drift and pursue other passions instead of our spouse. Remind us of all the romantic things we used to do for each other: the phone calls, the notes, the sacrifices and how we would go to great lengths just to be together. Regardless of how we feel right now, renew the romance in every marriage. 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.

We typically fall in love for two reasons. (1) We admire and desire the person we're dating. (2) That person makes us feel good about ourselves.

HIM: When we were dating I admired and desired you because…

You made me feel good about myself when…

HER: When we were dating I admired and desired you because…

You made me feel good about myself when…

What does romance mean to you? Write down your own definition and tell your spouse in your own words.

HIM: For me, romance is…

HER: For me, romance is…

> ROMANCE MEANS, "I DO NOT HAVE TO THINK ABOUT YOU, I GET TO THINK ABOUT YOU. WHEN I AM WITH MY FRIENDS, YOU ARE ON MY HEART. WHEN I AM AT WORK, YOU ARE ON MY HEART."
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Review your major needs listed below.

Men's Needs: honor, sex, friendship and support at home

Women's Needs: security, communication, non-sexual affection and leadership

Remember from Session 1 that a man's mega-need is for honor and respect. Usually men like to hear that they are a good provider, a good father or a good lover. Men often seek encouragement about what they do.

Women are the opposite. Remember a woman's mega-need is for security and love. She needs to know internally that her husband will take care of her. She needs to be loved and reassured of her inner beauty and that her husband would marry her all over again.

HIM: Concerning my four needs, I'd love my wife to give me more…

- ☐ Honor
- ☐ Sex
- ☐ Friendship
- ☐ Support at Home

HER: Concerning my four needs, I'd love my husband to give me more…

- ☐ Security
- ☐ Non-sexual Affection
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Leadership

Jimmy says that men and women see romance differently through our needs. Discuss some specific ways you like your spouse to be romantic with you.

HIM: I love it when my wife shows romance by…

1.

2.

3.

HER: I love it when my husband shows romance by…

1.

2.

3.

We communicate value in three ways: (1) verbally through praise and encouragement, (2) comparatively through sacrifice and giving and (3) creatively with mental and emotional energy.

HIM: You communicate value to me the most when you…

HER: You communicate value to me the most when you…

Brainstorm some ideas for an upcoming date night. What would you like to do? Where would you like to go? Listen to your spouse's perspective and try to plan a romantic date night for the upcoming week. Think about how you can pursue your spouse even before the date begins.

HIM: For me, a nice date night with my wife includes…

1.

2.

3.

HER: For me, a nice date night with my husband includes…

1.

2.

3.

Couple Prayer: *God, we remember the excitement and romance of the early days of our marriage. We believe that those feelings of passion are going to come back stronger than ever as we begin to do the right thing. We choose to make our spouse a priority and pursue each other again. Help us do what we did at first and renew the passion that we have for one other. Bless our upcoming date night that we'll have together. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Our different definitions of romance set us up for high expectations and likely disappointment. To succeed, we have to step outside of our world and come into our spouse's world.

He may not need long romantic dinners, but she does. She may not need a surprise sexual escapade, but he does. Romance is meeting your spouse's needs without them having to ask or beg repeatedly. Romance always happens on purpose.

The more you romance your spouse, the more passionate and healthy your marriage will become. Romance doesn't have to fade over time. It can get better year after year.

Session 6

DIVORCE-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE

Look for the warning signs and get a "tune up" for your marriage.

Divorce is devastating. Regardless of how frequently it occurs or how common it may be, divorce is mentally, emotionally and financially devastating.

Many ask, "Can marriage really work today?" and "Is it really possible to insure success and divorce-proof a relationship?" The answer is yes. In fact, more than 85% of divorces are for non-severe circumstances. Divorce can usually be prevented.

When the "warning light" in your car alerts you to a problem, you fix it if you want to drive anywhere. Likewise, we have to learn the warning signs of divorce and how to deal with them when an issue presents itself in our marriage.

You can divorce-proof your relationship.

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.

"DIVORCE-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE"

Related Scriptures: John 4:5-24, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 18:20-22, Ephesians 4:26-27, 1 Peter 3:1-6, Matthew 19:3-9, I Corinthians 7:10-15

Warning #1 - A Lack of Pre-Marriage Preparation

A) Pre-marriage counseling helps you understand what to expect.

B) It helps you understand the inherent differences in your spouse.

Warning #2 - Coming from a Broken Home or Divorce

A) Children of divorce have more anxiety related to conflict.

B) Every time you divorce your chances of divorce increase 10%.

Warning #3 - Living Together before Marriage

A) The divorce rate for first-time marriages is between 40%-50%. The divorce rate for people who live together before marriage is 70%.

B) A woman lives with a man to secure him and then marry. A man lives with a woman to get all the benefits of marriage without a commitment.

Warning #4 - Weak Spiritual Foundations

A) Only God can meet our deepest needs for acceptance, identity, security and purpose.

B) When we do not trust God to meet our deepest needs, we transfer the expectation to the people closest around us, especially our spouse.

Warning #5 - Poor Relational Support

A) *Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."* - I Corinthians 15:33, NKJV

B) Adultery and divorce run in groups. Be careful of unhealthy relationships.

Warning #6 - Chronic Criticism and Negativity

A) Complaining vs. Criticizing - Complaining is about my feelings, criticism is about you.

B) Follow the 10 to 1 rule. For every complaint that you offer your spouse, you ought to offer ten compliments.

Warning #7 - Chronic Anger and Unresolved Conflict

A) The number one predictor of divorce is chronic anger and unresolved conflict.

B) *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.* - Ephesians 4:26-27, NKJV

Warning #8 - Blame Transfer and Defensiveness

A) Very rarely is your spouse the entire problem. Even if you're only 15% of the problem, accept responsibility.

B) If you love your spouse when they're doing wrong, God will change their heart as you become His partner in redemptive love. (1 Peter 3:1-6)

Warning #9 - A Non-Committed, Shopper's Mentality

A) A shopper's mentality says, "If you don't please me, then I'll keep shopping and find someone better."

B) A covenant commitment says, "You are my final choice and it will be death that separates us."

Warning #10 - A Secular Worldview of Marriage and Divorce

A) There are three severe circumstances when a person can consider divorce: adultery, abandonment and abuse. (Matthew 19:8-9, I Corinthians 7:10-15)

B) Marriage is sacred. Marriage is not just a piece of paper. It is an act of the spirit of God.

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

Everyone struggles in marriage. The goal of this session is to make you more aware of the warning signs of potential heartache and how it can be prevented.

Which of these warning signs are issues that you have experienced either in the past or the present?

Children of divorce have more anxiety and stress related to conflict because of the fear that conflict could lead to another casualty. There can be higher expectations and less trust. If you or your family has a history of divorce, how have you found this to be true?

Without realizing it, do you find yourself relying on your spouse to meet your deepest needs for acceptance, identity, security and purpose? How has that affected your relationship?

Long term criticism is the number one predictor of divorce. Criticism is really the absence of praise and honor. For so many marriages, why is it so easy to criticize each other but so hard to regularly praise one another?

The key to dealing with your anger is to create an atmosphere of daily communication. What are some techniques or steps you can take each day to improve your communication so that anger in the marriage does not get out of hand?

A profound way to begin divorce-proofing your marriage is to make a commitment to simply remove the word "divorce" or other threats of leaving from your vocabulary. Even saying "This marriage was a mistake!" in the heat of battle can be incredibly damaging. Would you be willing to remove the word "divorce" from your relationship?

> ALL OF US GO THROUGH PROBLEMS, BUT WHEN WE GO THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES WE NEED THE RIGHT PEOPLE AROUND US.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Group Prayer: *God, you desire that every marriage is successful. You hate divorce and the pain and destruction it causes for generations. May each spouse continue to evaluate their relationship and make improvements where needed. Help us remove the word "divorce" and other harsh accusations from our vocabulary. Forgive us of our mistakes and strengthen every marriage. 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.

An unrealistic expectation of marriage is that our spouse will meet all of our needs. The reality is we should be depending upon God to meet our deepest needs and our spouse for our primary needs.

Our deepest needs are acceptance, identity, security and purpose. Which of these needs are you seeking most right now in your life?

HIM: Of my four deepest needs, I'm seeking…

HER: Of my four deepest needs, I'm seeking…

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

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

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

Ask for forgiveness from your spouse for having put any unrealistic expectation upon them.

What are some new realistic expectations you and your spouse can establish in order to divorce-proof your marriage?

For example: Reassure your spouse that you are committed to the relationship no matter what challenges or hardship you may go through.

Another example: Make a decision to never bring up the word "divorce" again. Take the word divorce and other threats out of your vocabulary. It will create stability and hope for your future.

HIM: I commit to these new expectations for our relationship…

1.

2.

3.

HER: I commit to these new expectations for our relationship…

1.

2.

3.

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.

Write down the first ten positive things that come to your mind about 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.

> MAKE THIS COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER: WE ARE NOT GOING TO GO TO BED ANGRY. WE ARE GOING TO STAY UP UNTIL WE GET THIS THING WORKED OUT.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Look over your spouse's list. Put a check beside several of their praises that mean the most to you.

Jimmy discussed how we should calmly communicate our complaints and feelings without forcing them on our spouse. Here are some guidelines for saying negative things in a positive way:

(1) It's ok to complain. (Use statements like "I feel _____ when you _____.").

(2) Minimize criticism ("You did _____.") and minimize contempt. ("You always (or never) _____.")

(3) Use specific complaints instead of global complaints.

Specific: "You told me you would take out the trash and you didn't. I get stressed when you don't take out the trash."
Global: "You never do anything around here. All of the responsibility is on me and you just take advantage of me all the time."

Discuss with your spouse how you could change your communication so complaints would be said in a more positive way.

HIM: When you complain to me, it may not be your intention but I sometimes hear…

HER: When you complain to me, it may not be your intention but I sometimes hear…

When a conflict arises in your relationship, how do you and your spouse usually respond? Put a check beside the statement that indicates how you often respond to conflict.

HIM	HER	
☐	☐	"I'm ready to go, let's talk and fight it out if needed. I may be furious today, but I'll barely remember it tomorrow."
☐	☐	"I'll talk for awhile, but I'd rather avoid the heated conflict and confrontation."
☐	☐	"I like to get my thoughts in order before we discuss a contentious issue even if it means delaying the conflict."
☐	☐	"I try not to raise my voice. But if you really make me mad, you'll pay a price for days until you understand my perspective."

HIM: When my wife and I disagree or have a conflict, maybe deep down I have a fear that…

HER: When my husband and I disagree or have a conflict, maybe deep down I have a fear that…

Now that you have a greater understanding of your spouse's fears, give them an extra

dose of grace next time you find yourself in a conflict and see if it helps resolve the situation.

Jimmy often challenges couples to read a marriage book together at least once a year. (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…

1.
2.
3.

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

1.
2.
3.

> ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WE DO IS BUILD EACH OTHER'S SELF-ESTEEM. IT IS WHY GOD PUT US IN EACH OTHER'S LIFE. YOUR MOUTH CAN EITHER BUILD A PERSON UP OR TEAR A PERSON DOWN.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Couple Prayer: *God, thank you for your compassion and understanding when we struggle in marriage. We put our trust in you to meet our deepest needs. Whether conflict, criticism or anger, partner with us to overcome our issues. Help us praise each other more in our relationship. We want to continue learning about marriage. Heal the pain from our past so we can have a great future. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

You've probably heard this cliché: *A chain is only as strong as its weakest link*. In the same way, marriages become stronger when both partners focus on their weaknesses with a teachable spirit.

Is your weakest area understanding each other? Are you weak when it comes to communication or in the area of finances? If so, seek wise counsel. Listen to marriage-related teaching. Read books together on the subjects where improvement is needed.

The most successful marriages aren't necessarily the ones that started with intense pre-marital preparation. The most successful marriages are two teachable individuals working together to strengthen their weaknesses. That is the secret to having a divorce-proof marriage.

Session 7

AFFAIR-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE PART I

Do not turn your heart away when hard times come.

One of the most devastating experiences that can happen in marriage is an affair. Research has shown that more than one-third of couples will be affected by an affair at some point in their relationship.

Many people convince themselves that as long as there's no sex, it's not an affair. But it is. An affair really has to do with secrecy and deception.

Women seldom have affairs because of sex. They have affairs because they find a man who will communicate with them in a sensitive, open manner, making them feel special.

Whether you've experienced infidelity or would like to prevent it from happening, affair-proofing your marriage is essential for every couple...

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.

"AFFAIR-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE PART I"

Related Scriptures: Exodus 34:14, Genesis 2:24-25, Hebrews 13:4-5, Deuteronomy 5:21, Proverbs 10:9

Understanding Adultery

A) Between one-third and one-half of all marriages will be affected by infidelity.

B) In marriage, jealousy is a protective warning when someone or something else becomes more important than your relationship.

C) 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.

D) An affair is taking the most sacred expressions of intimacy and giving them to someone other than your spouse. Affairs begin on an emotional level.

Building a Strong Emotional Foundation

A) Secret #1 - Make a covenant decision to never turn your heart away from your spouse.

1) Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' - Hebrews 13:4-5, NKJV

2) Forsake means turn your heart away. It is possible to turn your heart away from someone right beside you.

3) Just like God has a covenant relationship with us, we have a covenant with our spouse. Regardless of any reasons we may find, a covenant says we will never leave or forsake our spouse.

B) How to recognize an emotional affair:

1) Most meetings and conversations are kept secret from your partner.

2) You say and do things with someone you never would in front of your spouse.

3) You arrange private talk time with them.

4) You share things with them that you don't with your partner. ("Walls and Windows")

C) How to end an emotional affair:

1) Stop flirting.

2) Stay out of high risk places when you'll be alone.

3) Break off the relationship.

4) Turn your heart back to your spouse.

D) Secret #2 - Be sensitive to your spouse's emotional needs and meet them.

1) Remember the major needs of men and women:

a) Men primarily need: honor, sex, friendship and support at home.

b) Women primarily need: security, communication, non-sexual affection and leadership.

2) How do affairs happen?

a) A selfish man and a dishonoring woman offend each other and hurt each other. They do not meet each other's needs.

b) Because the couple is now wounded, they turn their hearts away and are vulnerable to someone else meeting their unmet needs.

3) How do you keep affairs from happening?

a) Love your spouse and meet their emotional needs.

b) Do not turn your heart away even if you're going through difficult times.

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

Briefly share with the group how you've seen an affair affect your life or someone close to you.

Jimmy said that you can have an affair without having sex. Is this a new concept for you? Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

In Hebrews 13:5, God promises that He will never physically leave us and that He will never turn his heart away. What does God's covenant promise mean to you?

> MARRIAGE HAS TO COME BEFORE YOUR CHILDREN, BEFORE WORK, BEFORE CHURCH, BEFORE EVERYTHING EXCEPT GOD OR IT DOES NOT WORK.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Everyone who's married can relate with the temptation of turning your heart away from your spouse. Ladies, what are some warning signs that you might be forsaking your husband? Men, what are some warning signs that you might be turning your heart away from your wife?

Remember, turning your heart back to your spouse can happen just as easily as you turn your heart away. It is a choice. In practical terms, how can you turn your heart back to your spouse?

Jimmy says that the door for a potential affair is wide open whenever you neglect meeting your spouse's needs over a prolonged period of time. How can you keep this from happening in your marriage?

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you for your amazing example. Even on the worst day of our lives, you promise to always be thinking of us and that you will never leave. Regardless of how we feel, help us never turn our heart away from you or our spouse. If we are being tempted to forsake our marriage, give us the strength to bring the issue to the light. Help us recommit to meeting each other's different needs. We want to shut the door on emotional affairs. 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.

Discuss what faithfulness means to you in your relationship.

HIM: For me, I love it when my wife shows me faithfulness by…

HER: For me, I love it when my husband shows me faithfulness by…

In marriage, jealousy is a protective warning when someone or something else becomes more important than your relationship. If you allow anything or anyone to take the time and energy that rightfully belongs to your spouse you are violating God's design for marriage.

> YOU CAN HAVE AN AFFAIR ON AN EMOTIONAL LEVEL WITHOUT HAVING SEX. IT IS GIVING WHAT BELONGS ONLY TO YOUR SPOUSE TO SOMEONE ELSE.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Lovingly, share with your spouse any times that you've had jealous feelings. (Jealousy doesn't have to involve another person. You can be jealous when your spouse is devoted to a hobby or overtime at a job.) Focus on you. Remember what you learned in the previous session about complaining vs. criticizing. (Use statements like "I feel _____ when you _____.").

HIM: I have had feelings of jealousy when you…

HER: I have had feelings of jealousy when you…

Acknowledge that your spouse's feelings are real. In many cases, we have good reasons for our behavior, however, it doesn't change that our spouse should be the most important person in our life.

Now that you've heard when your spouse sometimes has feelings of jealousy, discuss how you can make your partner a greater priority in your life.

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

For her, I am willing to sacrifice…

HER: I will make my husband a greater priority by…
For him, I am willing to sacrifice…

Regardless of who you are, everyone will be tempted with an outside relationship at some point in the marriage. We must be on guard in order to affair-proof our marriage.

Jimmy says that the biggest issue is a covenant decision to never forsake your spouse. We have to follow God's example in Hebrews 13:5. We have to choose and confess that we will never turn our heart away from each other.

HIM: To me, "not turning my heart away" means…

HER: To me, "not turning my heart away" means…

A key to affair-proofing your marriage is to accept and understand your spouse's different needs and nature. Rejection is very dangerous in marriage because we can usually find reasons to justify why we're ignoring our spouse. However, we must follow God's example. He never turns away from us. Therefore we must not reject and turn away from our spouse.

In your own words, tell your spouse what you've learned about meeting their needs throughout this small group study.

HIM: Concerning your needs, I have learned…

HER: Concerning your needs, I have learned…

Everyone will be tempted at some point in their relationship. The question is, what are you going to do when that happens? Discuss some healthy boundaries you can enforce in order to keep emotional affairs from happening.

In order to keep emotional affairs from happening, we can…

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

> COVENANT MEANS: "I AM PERMANENTLY COMMITTED REGARDLESS OF WHAT CHANGES. THIS IS AN ALL-IN COMMITMENT."
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Couple Prayer: *God, thank you for showing us true faithfulness. In response, help us be faithful to each other. Give us the freedom to share when we feel legitimately jealous of something or someone in our spouse's life. We choose to focus our time and energy on each other. We never want to turn our heart away again. Help us enforce healthy boundaries for keeping emotional affairs from our marriage. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

It's important that every couple understand that long before an affair becomes physical, it's first emotional. Preventing affairs requires a dedication to faithfulness and a refusal to turn your heart away.

Does your spouse stress you out or irritate you when they talk about their needs? If so, then your heart may be turning away. Even if you are frustrated and say, "I don't care any more." Your heart has turned away.

Hard times come to everyone. Decide now, when challenging times arrive you will keep your heart turned toward your spouse and meet their needs. Do the right thing

first and the passion will return.

Session 8

AFFAIR-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE PART 2

Winning the war for your thoughts.

If you've struggled with thoughts of lust, worry or despair, you're not alone. Everyone has issues. Our battles are revealed through our actions, but they don't begin there. The war begins in our minds.

Whether it's television, computers, movies or an attractive person walking down the street, our minds are being deluged with images that have the potential of destroying our lives. When temptations come we need to have the right response to keep our marriage healthy and thriving.

Winning the war for your thoughts is the key to affair-proofing 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.

"AFFAIR-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE PART 2"

Related Scriptures: Romans 6:23, John 8:34, Proverbs 5:7-14, Psalm 1, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, John 8:31, Proverbs 5:15-19, Psalm 107:20, Galatians 5:22-23, John 4:5-24, Matthew 18:19, Hebrews 10:24-25

Building a Strong Mental Foundation

A) Recognize the truth about yourself. We are all tempted and any of us could fail morally. We have to be careful what we do.

B) Recognize the truth about sin. It is death. (Romans 6:23) No matter how good it sounds or feels, death will be the outcome.

1) Lies people say to justify an affair or sin:

a) "I deserve to be happy."

b) "Another man or woman will make me happy."

c) "I married the wrong person so I deserve to start over."

d) "It will spice up my marriage. Everyone does it."

2) Meditating on scripture is the only way to overcome temptation, lust, worry or fear.

a) *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses….taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.* - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, NASB

b) Any thought you do not take captive will take you captive. Long before sin occurs, the thought is in our minds.

C) Recognize the truth about your spouse. Love is a choice.

1) Rejoice in the wife of your youth, not find a younger wife. (Proverbs 5:18)

2) Be captivated by her love. (Proverbs 5:19)

Building a Strong Physical Foundation

A) Integrity - Wedding rings are not for when you are together. A wedding ring is for when you are apart. It says, "I belong to someone else."

B) Accountability - The windows are open. Share all your passwords, electronics and financial records. "You can see anything I have done."

C) Intimacy - Marriage is work. In Genesis 2:24, God says man "shall cleave unto his wife." The word "cleave" means energy. It takes work and effort in order to be intimate with another person.

Building a Strong Spiritual Foundation

A) God - Your personal relationship with Jesus Christ is most important. Seek God individually so He will meet your deepest needs. (John 4:5-24)

B) Pray and Worship - Get your eyes off your problems and each other. Put your eyes on God and you'll see miracles. (Matthew 18:19)

C) Christian Friends - Your friends predict your future. We all need friends that are committed to Christ and will help us grow. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Additional Notes from Today's Teaching

TALK IT OUT - GROUP DISCUSSION

Have you ever believed any of these common lies to justify sin?

"I deserve to be happy."

"Another man or woman will make me happy."

"I married the wrong person so I deserve to start over."

"It will spice up my marriage. Everyone does it."

In this message, Jimmy shared how he became exposed to pornography. It was only through biblical meditation that he learned to overcome this temptation. Even if it's not in the area of sex, can you relate with Jimmy's struggle of wanting to change but not being able to do so?

Related to sexual bondage, many people think the issue is primarily physical or hormonal, but sexual sin can take the best people down. Jimmy said the real problem is the way you think. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

To understand sexual freedom or any other kind of freedom, the truth of the matter is until our minds are set free, we're not free. Meditation is just simply reflecting on God and helpful scriptures. The most important times to do this are to start your day or when you are being tempted. What are some practical ways you've focused on scripture in your daily life?

Concerning building a strong physical foundation, Jimmy said that marriage is work. Your dedication to complete this workbook shows that you are committed to working on your relationship. Even though this small group is ending, how will you continue working on your marriage?

One of the most impactful spiritual disciplines 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 does it make you feel when you hear your spouse pray for you?

> ADULTERY ALWAYS HAPPENS IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF DARKNESS AND DECEPTION. THERE ARE ALWAYS WRONG THOUGHTS THAT PRECEDE THE ADULTERY.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Group Prayer: *God, we thank you for showing us how to build mental, physical and spiritual foundations. Give us the strength to be honest about our own issues so that we can overcome. We realize that long before sin occurs, the thought is in our minds. We take our thoughts captive today. Even though this group is concluding, help every couple continue to work on their marriage in the weeks and months ahead. 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.

We are all dealing with something in our lives. None of us have arrived. Be honest with yourself and your spouse. Identify a behavior you'd like to overcome. It might be lust

or immorality like Jimmy discussed in the teaching. Or it could be worry, fear, anger, unforgiveness or another issue. Encourage your spouse as they share openly with you.

HIM: A behavior or sin I'm trying to overcome is…

HER: A behavior or sin I'm trying to overcome is…

> WE ARE ALL TEMPTED. AT SOME POINT ALL OF US COULD FAIL MORALLY. WE HAVE TO WORK ON OUR MARRIAGE AND KEEP OUR HEART AND MIND PURE.
>
> -JIMMY EVANS

Whether its worry, fear, lust, discouragement or any other temptation, many people try and fail when it comes to changing a behavior or stopping a sin. They rely solely on their will instead of their minds.

If you try to overcome on your own, the more you try to stop thinking about the temptation, the more these thoughts occur. You cannot take thoughts out of your mind, but you can crowd them out with more powerful thoughts.

Write down some scriptures that relate to your issue. If you need ideas for some verses, please see the "Scriptures for Biblical Meditation" list following this session.

HIM: Some scriptures I'm going to meditate upon when I feel tempted are…

HER: Some scriptures I'm going to meditate upon when I feel tempted are…

Now that you've identified some helpful scriptures for your issue, make a decision right now. The next time a bad thought comes into your mind, sexual or otherwise, you are going to replace it with God's Word.

Meditation is simply reflecting on a scripture or on God. It may begin in the morning as you think about a verse or text. Throughout your day, especially in the quiet moments spend some time bringing the scripture to mind. Consider keeping the verse with you, so you can see it regularly. The main issue is that God and His Word are occupying the focus of your mind and attention.

Discuss with your spouse your ideas or concerns about meditating on the verses you selected.

HIM: I'm going to try biblical meditation at these times each day…

HER: I'm going to try biblical meditation at these times each day…

Psalm 1:3 issues an awesome promise for the person who meditates on God's Word. The promise is success in everything he does. This simply means if you put God's Word in your mind and regularly reflect on it, you will be transformed.

Have you and your spouse given each other the freedom to hold each other accountable in all areas of your life? Your spouse should have the freedom to ask you any question and you should honestly respond.

In what areas of your relationship are you accountable to each other? How would you like to be more accountable with your spouse?

We are currently holding each other accountable with…

1.

2.

3.

We will begin holding each other accountable with…

1.

2.

3.

In the couple home activity from the first session, you each rated the level of intimacy and oneness in your relationship on a scale of 1 to 10 (see page number). What level is the intimacy now in your marriage?

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

In the weeks ahead, what are a few things you can improve upon in order to continue building an indestructible marriage?

HIM: I need to continue working on…

1.

2.

3.

> *I WAS FAITHFUL TO KAREN. I NEVER CHEATED ON KAREN, BUT IN MY HEART AND MIND I DID.*
>
> *-JIMMY EVANS*

HER: I need to continue working on…

1.

2.

3.

Couple Prayer: *God, thank you for giving us scripture so we can overcome any mental bondage in our lives. We recognize that the battle is not in our will, it's in our mind. Help us keep each other accountable without rejecting one another. We thank you for the renewed intimacy in our marriage. May the truths from this small group reap a harvest in our marriage for years to come. Amen.*

WRAP IT UP

Affairs don't simply occur in the physical which is most obvious. They occur on four different and important levels. By addressing these areas and building strong foundations, not only do we prevent affairs, we build a strong and satisfying marriage.

Regardless of the temptation or the addictive behavior, the answer is the same. That answer is biblical meditation. When you learn to replace your thoughts with the highest thoughts of all, God's Word, you'll have the wisdom to overcome any issue.

It really is possible to have a marriage that lasts and thrives. The secret to falling in love and staying in love is realizing what it means to become one with another person. When a sacrificial man loves and cherishes his wife and an honoring woman respects her husband, you'll truly have an indestructible marriage.

In this teaching Jimmy Evans talked about the importance of biblical meditation and how to overcome mental strongholds like lust, worry, fear and discouragement. If you'd like more information on the process of biblical meditation, visit MarriageToday.com for the MarriageToday resource A Mind Set Free. In this mini-book, Jimmy will guide you step-by-step through understanding why our greatest battles are in our mind and why biblical meditation is the only way to overcome the strongest bondages we encounter in life.

SCRIPTURES FOR BIBLICAL MEDITATION

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.
- I Corinthians 10:13, NLT

In Session 8, Jimmy discussed the importance of using biblical meditation to overcome any addictive behavior, whether that's sexual temptation, worry, fear or discouragement. In the couple home activity for that session is an overview of how to meditate on scripture.

Here is a list of some suggested verses you can meditate on dealing with specific issues you may face. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. There are hundreds of verses that will equip you for victory in every area of life. This list of scripture will give you a starting point in some of the common areas most of us struggle.

We encourage you to continue to study the Bible. There are thousands of promises in God's Word for any circumstances that you may be facing. We pray that you are blessed on your journey to becoming an overcomer!

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES

FOR YOUR AREA OF NEED

LUST / IMMORALITY

Psalm 101; 1 Corinthians 6:13-20
Proverbs 5:15-21; Proverbs 6:20-7:27

WORRY/ANXIETY

Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:24-34
Matthew 11:28-30; Isaiah 40:31

FEAR

2 Timothy 1:7; Psalm 91; Isaiah 26:3

ANGER/UNFORGIVENESS

Ephesians 4:26-27; Matthew 18:21-35
Proverbs 14:17; Proverbs 15:1
1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22-23

DISCOURAGEMENT

Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 12
Romans 5:3-5; Joshua 1:8-9

CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1-4; 1 John 1:9
Revelation 12:10-11; Psalm 103:8-14
Ephesians 2:4-8; 2 Corinthians 12:9

INSECURITY

Philippians 4:13; Psalm 46:1-3

MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Peter 3:1-12

PRIDE

James 4:6-10; Mark 9:35
Matthew 23:11-12

FINANCIAL ISSUES

1 Timothy 6:6-12; Luke 12:13-21
Matthew 6:19-24; Proverbs 10:22
Malachi 3:8-12; Psalm 37