

WHY MARRIAGE MATTERS

Introduction • Based on *The First Few Years of Marriage* by Jim Burns and Doug Fields

THE ARC OF THIS SESSION

From a **marriage left to drift on autopilot** → to a **marriage built with intentional course corrections**

In One Paragraph

Most marriages don't end in a single dramatic crisis. They drift — slowly, quietly — through busyness, distraction, and the assumption that love will sustain itself by doing what comes naturally. Jim Burns and Doug Fields open *The First Few Years of Marriage* with a different vision: marriage is a covenant journey that requires intentional course corrections from day one. Session 1 invites couples to step out of the autopilot mindset, to honor the foundational years for what they are — the soil that will shape the next fifty — and to begin building the small, deliberate habits that keep a marriage on course long after the honeymoon ends.

Anchor Scriptures

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV)

"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Mark 10:8-9 (NIV)

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Four Core Shifts

From	To
Doing "what comes naturally"	Building skill through intentional habits
Drifting through busyness and distraction	Making regular course corrections
"Trial run" thinking — simulating marriage	Covenant commitment — both private and public
Marriage on autopilot	Marriage as a 50-year voyage with a destination

Key Language You'll Hear Jim and Doug Use

"The drift." The silent current that pulls every marriage off course — not through any big betrayal, but through busyness and distraction.

"Course corrections." Small, intentional adjustments that keep the voyage on track. The work isn't huge — but it has to be steady.

"Marriage cannot be simulated." Gary Chapman's foreword: a covenant relationship offers a security a trial run cannot. The public, exclusive promise is the point.

"Doing what comes naturally doesn't build a great marriage." A thriving marriage is a learned skill. The couples who go the distance are the ones who treat it that way.

"Foundational years." What you build now shapes the next fifty. The first few years aren't a warm-up — they're the soil.

A picture of what the drift looks like in practice — and the simple, intentional moves that hold a marriage steady.

The Drift and the Course Correction

A picture of what the drift looks like in practice — and the simple, intentional moves that hold a marriage steady.

The Drift (Watch For)	The Course Correction (Do This)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drifting through busyness and distraction • Treating marriage as a partnership to manage • Doing "what comes naturally" and hoping it works • Living parallel lives in the same house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naming small drifts before they become big ones • Treating marriage as a covenant God joined • Building intentional habits and skills • Showing up together — even fifteen minutes at a time

Story Snapshot: The Garcias

Two years in, Marcus and Jenna Garcia were sleeping in the same bed but living parallel lives — different shifts, separate phones, weekends on opposite ends of the same couch. It wasn't a crisis. It was an absence. One Tuesday, Jenna asked, "When did we stop having coffee in the morning?" They made a deal that night: fifteen minutes together every morning before either of them touched a phone. By month two, Marcus said, "I feel like I have a wife again." Why it matters: nothing about their schedules changed. They just started showing up. That's a course correction.

Why This Session Matters

Most couples don't arrive at a counselor's office because of one big thing. They arrive because of a thousand small drifts they never named. Session 1 is the invitation to name them now — while the marriage is still young, while the habits are still being formed, while the fifty-year voyage is still ahead. It's a session of hope: the same small choices that lead to drift can lead to a marriage that goes the distance. The work is small. The stakes are not.

| Notice the drift. Make the course correction. Keep the promise. The voyage is worth it.