

WHY MARRIAGE MATTERS

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

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ARC OF THIS SESSION

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

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)

How to Use This Guide

This study guide is designed for small groups walking through the First Few Years of Marriage book and video series together. Each session includes Scripture for reflection, real-life stories that illustrate the principles, and questions for group conversation.

For best results: Read the Introduction of the book, then watch Session 1 together. Open your Bibles. Then work through this guide using the group discussion questions. Close with the prayer and invite couples to choose one practice to try this week.

Each session contains five parts. Each section is clearly marked to help guide the small group leader.

 **Opening Comments for Facilitator/Leader**

 **Video**

 **Group Discussion Questions**

 **Practical Activity Assignment**

 **Closing Prayer**

Opening Comments for Facilitator/Leader (10-15 Minutes)

Welcome the couples warmly. Whether they're newly engaged, just-married, or a few years in, every couple in the room is at the start of something — and what they build in these first few years will shape the next fifty.

Jim Burns and Doug Fields open the book with a simple image: marriage is a sea voyage that naturally drifts. Not from any dramatic storm. Just from the small, quiet currents of busyness and distraction. Session 1 is the invitation to notice the currents now — and to start building the small, intentional course corrections that keep a marriage on track.

Before we dive in, take a moment to settle in. Let's invite God into this time.

Prayer

Let's start with one honest sentence about where each couple is in their marriage today.

To begin:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how connected do you feel as a couple right now? How intentional do you feel about your marriage? (It's okay for the numbers to be different.)

Scripture Foundation

Before we talk about what to do, we start with what is true. These three passages anchor everything in Session 1. Read each one slowly — out loud and together if you can.

"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)

Solomon doesn't romanticize marriage. He notices what we forget: two people are better off when they're actually together — close enough to catch each other when one falls.

"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."
Mark 10:8-9 (NIV)


Jesus describes marriage as something God himself does. The covenant isn't something you manage. It's something he joins — and asks you to honor.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."
Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

A drift always starts in the heart before it shows up in the calendar. Solomon's wisdom: watch what flows in, because what flows in is what flows out.

Reflect Questions

- Which of these three verses speaks most directly to where your marriage is today? Why that one?
- Jim and Doug say marriage takes intentional course corrections — it doesn't happen by doing what comes naturally. Where in your marriage have you been relying on what comes naturally?

 **Video (15-20 Minutes)**

Play Session 1 Video

In Session 1, Jim Burns and Doug Fields introduce the central image of the book — marriage as a sea voyage that drifts off course. They share personal stories from their own early marriages, name the most common drifts couples experience, and invite each couple to think about what they want their marriage to look like at year fifty.

 **Group Discussion Questions (30 Minutes)**

These questions are designed for small groups. Take your time. Listen more than you speak. Remember that every couple in the room is at a different point in the journey.

1. Jim and Doug describe the drift — the silent current that pulls marriages off course through busyness and distraction, not through any big betrayal. Where have you already noticed the drift in your own marriage, even subtly?
2. Go around the circle: what drew you to your spouse when you first started dating? What about that do you most want to protect five, ten, fifty years from now?
3. Gary Chapman says marriage cannot be simulated — it is a covenant relationship, made privately and publicly. How is treating marriage as a covenant different from treating it as a partnership or a contract? Where does that difference show up in your daily life?
4. Jim and Doug write that the first few years are foundational years — what you build now shapes the next fifty. What's one habit you'd love to be sharing together at year fifty? What would it take to start building it now?
5. What's one thing on your calendar right now that's quietly squeezing out your marriage? Name it out loud — then talk about what it would look like to push back on it together this week.
6. If you're comfortable, share one line of your wedding vow that still feels most alive. Most challenging. Why?

 **Practical Activity Assignment (5 Minutes)**

THIS WEEK: A PRACTICE TO TRY

Remember Your Vows. Find a Mentor Couple.

Jim and Doug say the first course correction is the easiest to overlook: remember what you promised, and don't walk this alone. This week, do three small things:

1. **Remember.** Find your wedding vows (or whatever you can remember of them) and read them out loud to each other. If you can't find them, write down what you remember. Notice which line feels most alive right now — and which one feels most challenging.
2. **Name one small course correction.** What's your fifteen minutes of coffee? Put one small, specific habit on the calendar this week — a daily check-in, a phones-down dinner, a Saturday morning walk.
3. **Pray for a mentor couple.** Jim and Doug strongly encourage every young couple to find a marriage mentor couple — an older, wiser pair a few steps ahead. Pray this week that God would bring one to mind, and have the conversation about asking them.

 **Closing Prayer**

Prayer Suggestion

God of every beginning, You designed marriage and You meant it. Thank You for each couple in this room — for the story You have already written and the story You are still writing. Help us notice the small drifts now. Help us build the small habits that will hold us in the storms we haven't seen. Make us couples who laugh together, fight well together, and keep the promises we made on our wedding days. We trust You with these marriages. Amen.