

RECOGNIZING THE DRIFT

Chapters 1 & 2 • Based on *The First Few Years of Marriage* by Jim Burns and Doug Fields

THE ARC OF THIS SESSION

From a **marriage drifting unaware on autopilot** → to a **marriage making intentional course corrections daily**

In One Paragraph

Most marriages don't end in a single dramatic crisis — they drift. Through busyness, distraction, and a quiet undercurrent of apathy, couples slowly move away from the very habits and promises that drew them together. Session 2 names the drift for what it is and offers three practical anchors against it: the recognition that forty percent of marital happiness is genuinely under your control, the discipline of working on yourself rather than your spouse, and the daily practice of being a "servant lover" — someone who looks for ordinary, repeatable ways to serve. The good news is in the math: NASA learned that a space flight is on course only three percent of the time, and the other ninety-seven percent is course corrections. A great marriage works the same way.

Anchor Scriptures

"We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."
Hebrews 2:1 (NIV)

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."
Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."
Galatians 6:7 (NIV)

Four Core Shifts

From	To
Drifting unaware on autopilot	Paying the most careful attention
The "If Only" game (changing your spouse)	100% responsible for your own response
Waiting to feel grateful	Practicing gratitude as a daily discipline
Love as a feeling that comes and goes	Love as the daily routine of a servant lover

Key Language You'll Hear Jim and Doug Use

"The drift." A deceptive, gradual movement away from the marriage you intended — fueled by busyness and distraction, not malice. It sneaks up. It has no demographic bias.

"The one-degree principle." Being just one degree off course feels like nothing on day one. Over a fifty-year voyage, it means missing the destination entirely.

"The 97% rule." NASA learned that a mission is on course only three percent of the time. The other ninety-seven percent is course corrections. Marriage works the same way.

"The "If Only" game." The running fantasy that your marriage would be better if only your spouse would change. A game no one ever wins.

"The servant lover." Someone who treats love as a discipline, not a mood — looking for ordinary, daily ways to serve without demanding a reason or payback.

The Happiness Pie

Jim and Doug introduce a model from positive psychology that has direct implications for marriage: where does your happiness actually come from?

50% Genetic	40% In Your Hands	10% Situational
The biological set point. Personality, temperament, family history.	Your choices, your attention, your habits. This is where the work is.	What life throws at you. Often outside your control.

The headline: forty percent of your marital happiness is rooted in choices, habits, and attention that are entirely up to you. The drift convinces you your marriage is at the mercy of circumstance. The data says otherwise.

Story Snapshot: The Mendoza Inventory

Two-and-a-half years in, David and Sara Mendoza didn't realize they had drifted until a friend at dinner asked if they still cooked together on Friday nights — a ritual they had loved and quietly abandoned a year earlier. Back home that night, Sara made a list titled "things we used to do." Twelve items. They were doing two. Nothing dramatic had happened. No fight. No betrayal. They had just stopped, one habit at a time, without noticing. They didn't try to fix everything. They circled one item — walks after dinner — and committed to it for a month. By week three, Sara said, "I feel like I have you back." David said, "I didn't know I was gone." Why it matters: the drift is rarely loud. The first course correction is just noticing.

Why This Session Matters

The first few years of marriage are not a warm-up — they are the soil. The habits you build now, the gratitude you practice now, the attention you train now, will compound for fifty years. Session 2 is the wake-up call before the wake-up call. It names the drift while it's still small enough to correct, hands couples a discipline of attention to combat it, and reframes love itself as a daily choice rather than a passing feeling. The work is small. The stakes are not.

| Notice the drift. Make the course correction. Plant the seed today that you want to harvest in fifty years.