

# PLAY, DATE, SLOW DOWN

Chapters 3 & 4 • Based on *The First Few Years of Marriage* by Jim Burns and Doug Fields

## THE ARC OF THIS SESSION

From a **marriage running on a breathless, joyless pace** → to a **marriage that protects play, presence, and pace**

### In One Paragraph

A healthy marriage is not a static state — it is a relationship that has to be actively protected against two quiet enemies: the loss of fun and the breathless pace of busyness. Session 3 offers three concrete course corrections. Play, because laughter is medicine and connection (not conversation) is what unlocks honest communication. Date, because one percent of your week — one hour and forty minutes — keeps a marriage off the rocks. Slow down, because busyness is a heart issue, not a time issue, and presence requires the strength to say no to the noisy intruders. The goal is not just survival but joy: to build, over a lifetime, a museum of memories worth keeping.

### Anchor Scriptures

*"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."*  
Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)

*"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens ... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance."*  
Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 (NIV)

*"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"*  
Mark 6:31 (NIV)

### Four Core Shifts

From	To
Too serious, too efficient	Playful — laughter as medicine
Marriage as a club you stop dating in	A weekly date, your 1% of the week
Busyness as an unavoidable fact	Busyness as a heart choice you can change
Knee to knee, but not eye to eye	Phones away, fully present

### Key Language You'll Hear Jim and Doug Use

**"The fun drift."** The gradual slide from being "fun and funny" to being "too serious" as life's pressures crowd out play.

**"Connection leads to communication."** Not the reverse. Fun builds the bond; the honest words follow. You play your way back, not talk your way back.

**"The 1% Rule."** One percent of your week — 1 hour, 40 minutes — invested in a weekly date. Plus a daily 1%: fifteen minutes, face to face.

**"Technoference."** Technology interfering with intimacy — couples "knee to knee but not eye to eye." The remedy is a media jail.

**"The no muscle."** The strength to say no to good things to protect the best thing. Busyness is often a hidden drive for affirmation.

### The 1% Rule

Jim and Doug refuse to accept "too busy" as an excuse. The math makes the point:

$$1,440 \text{ minutes/day} \times 7 \text{ days} = 10,080 \text{ minutes/week}$$

$$1\% \text{ of your week} = \mathbf{1 \text{ hour, 40 minutes} = \text{one weekly date}}$$

### Warning Lights of an Unsustainable Pace

Jim and Doug name six indicators that a couple's pace has become dangerous to the marriage. How many are blinking on your dashboard right now?

<p>Constant clutter</p> <p>Rushed lives show up as physical piles — laundry, paper, unfinished everything.</p>	<p>Addiction to speed</p> <p>An adrenaline-fueled need to juggle every "essential" priority at once.</p>
<p>Extreme multitasking</p> <p>Inattentional blindness — failing to perceive what matters most.</p>	<p>Superficial relationships</p> <p>A life lived a mile wide and an inch deep.</p>
<p>Relationship fatigue</p> <p>Giving your spouse only the leftover "time scraps" of your day.</p>	<p>Spiritual emptiness</p> <p>A malnourished soul with no energy left for worship or compassion.</p>

### **Story Snapshot: The Tuesday Reservation**

Three years in, Priya and Sam Okafor had become “a very efficient committee” — every conversation an agenda item, the laughter long gone. It hit Priya at a wedding, watching another couple goof off on the dance floor: “We used to be like that.” So they booked a standing Tuesday-night reservation with each other — one hour and forty minutes, exactly one percent of their week — with one ironclad rule: no logistics. The first Tuesday was awkward. By the second month, the hard conversations had gotten easier too. Why it matters: they’d been trying to talk their way back to connection. What they actually needed was to play their way back — and let the connection do the talking.

### **Why This Session Matters**

Couples rarely drift apart through a single dramatic failure. They drift through a thousand skipped dates, a thousand glances at a phone, a thousand “yeses” to good things that quietly stole time from the best thing. Session 3 is the antidote: a permission slip to play, a calendar appointment to date, and the courage to slow down. The work is small — one date, two beverage bookends, one media-jail rule. But over a lifetime, it’s the difference between a museum of memories and a house full of roommates.

| Play, don’t just work, at your marriage. Book the date. Slow the pace. Build the museum of memories.