

TWO ORIGINALS

Chapters 5 & 6 • Based on *The First Few Years of Marriage* by Jim Burns and Doug Fields

THE ARC OF THIS SESSION

From a **marriage trying to change each other into copies** → to a **marriage that celebrates two originals and chooses the positive**

In One Paragraph

A thriving marriage doesn't require fewer differences — it requires a change of posture toward them. Before the wedding, differences attract; after the wedding, they can attack. Session 4 names the two skills that decide the outcome. First, celebrate the differences: abandon "Operation Change My Spouse" (which only ever signals rejection), trade rejection for respect, and learn to love in the language your spouse actually receives. Second, choose the positive: guard your tone (we feel tone stronger than we hear words), maintain John Gottman's magic ratio of five positive moments for every negative one, and practice thank therapy until gratitude becomes a reflex. As the authors put it, a happy marriage doesn't sweat the small stuff — and most everything is small stuff.

Anchor Scriptures

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Psalm 139:14 (NIV)

"However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Ephesians 5:33 (NIV)

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

Four Core Shifts

From	To
"Operation Change My Spouse"	Respecting two originals
Differences as flaws to fix	Differences as divine design
Tone on autopilot	Tone as a deliberate choice
Keeping score of the negatives	Keeping a 5:1 ratio of positives

Key Language You'll Hear Jim and Doug Use

"Differences attract, then differences attack." The traits that charmed you while dating can become the very ones that irritate you once you share a home.

"Operation Change My Spouse." The futile project of turning your partner into a copy of you. It signals rejection — and the heart pulls away from what rejects it.

"Love and respect." Emerson Eggerichs' insight: a wife's deepest need is intentional love; a husband's is respect. Like oxygen and water.

"We feel tone stronger than we hear words." Tone is the "how" of communication. A negative tone triggers stress hormones that shut down connection — and tone is a choice.

"Does this really matter?" The vital question that separates essentials from small stuff. Most everything, the authors say, is small stuff.

The Five Love Languages (Gary Chapman)

How you give love may not be how your spouse receives it. Learning their primary language is the difference between effort that lands and effort that misses.

Love Language	How love is most felt — and what stings most when it's missing
Words of Affirmation	Daily praise and encouragement; critical words sting deeply.
Acts of Service	Easing the load; broken promises feel like a lack of love.
Physical Touch	Regular affection; withholding touch is "dehydrating."
Receiving Gifts	Tangible thoughtfulness; forgotten gifts signal rejection.
Quality Time	Undivided attention; distractions feel like betrayal.

THE MAGIC RATIO (JOHN GOTTMAN)

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Stable marriages keep five positive interactions for every one negative — and negatives include eye rolls and sighs, not just words.

Story Snapshot: The Photocopy

Two years in, Anika was quietly trying to turn her steady, thoughtful husband Theo into a faster, more spontaneous version of herself — a campaign delivered in sighs and small digs. Theo, feeling studied for flaws, started pulling away. It took her sister to point out the obvious: the very traits Anika now complained about (“he’s so slow”) were the ones she’d fallen for (“he’s so steady”). So she swapped the sighs for “positive goggles,” re-naming “slow” as “careful” and saying the good parts out loud again. Theo came back — not because he changed, but because he could finally feel the difference between being rejected and being delighted in. Why it matters: the heart leans toward whatever celebrates it.

Why This Session Matters

Differences and negativity are the quiet engines of marital drift. Left unmanaged, they turn romantic partners into roommates who keep score. Session 4 hands couples a different operating system: see your spouse as an original masterpiece rather than a project, speak the love language they actually receive, and protect a climate where warmth outnumbers friction five to one. None of it requires the other person to change first. All of it is within your control — which is exactly why it works.

Stop trying to change an original. Celebrate the difference, choose the tone, keep the ratio — and don’t sweat the small stuff.