

TWO ORIGINALS

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

THE TRANSFORMATIVE 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**

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)

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 Chapters 5 and 6 of the book, then watch Session 4 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 group back. Session 4 tackles two of the most common sources of friction in the early years: the differences between spouses, and the negative tone that creeps in when those differences go unmanaged. Jim and Doug put it memorably — differences attract, then differences attack.

This is a session that can get tender, because nearly everyone in the room is quietly running some version of “Operation Change My Spouse.” Set a safe, light tone. Name your own examples first if you can. The goal is for couples to leave seeing each other as two originals worth celebrating — and to leave with a concrete plan to raise the ratio of warmth to friction in their home.

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:

- Name one difference between you and your spouse that used to be charming and now sometimes irritates you. Can you say it with a smile?

Scripture Foundation

Before we talk about what to do, we start with what is true. These three passages anchor everything in Session 4. Read each one slowly — out loud and together if you can.

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”
Psalm 139:14 (NIV)

The differences that drive you crazy were God’s design, not God’s mistake. Your spouse is not a rough draft of you. They are an original masterpiece — fearfully and wonderfully made.

“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)


Paul names two needs that function like oxygen and water. A wife wilts without intentional love; a husband withdraws without respect. Meeting the need you don’t naturally feel is the work.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

Tone is a choice. The same sentence can heal or wound depending on how it’s delivered. We feel tone stronger than we hear words — and a gentle answer is almost always within reach.

Reflect Questions

- Which of these three verses speaks most directly to where your marriage is today? Why that one?
- Psalm 139:14 says each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. Where have you been treating a spouse’s God-given difference as a flaw to fix instead of a design to respect?

 **Video (15-20 Minutes)**

Play Session 4 Video

In Session 4, Kelly and Leah facilitate the small group couples as they talk honestly about their differences — personality, pace, preferences — and the ways they've each tried to "fix" the other. The teaching covers celebrating differences (love and respect, the five love languages) and choosing the positive (tone, the magic ratio, thank therapy).

 **Group Discussion Questions (30 Minutes)**

These questions are designed for small groups. Take your time. Listen more than you speak. Be ready to go first — vulnerability from the leader makes the room safe.

1. Jim and Doug say differences attract, then differences attack. Which of your differences has made the move from "cute" to "irritating"? Can you name it together without blame?
2. Emerson Eggerichs describes love and respect as a wife's and husband's deepest needs — like oxygen and water. Which do you most need to feel from your spouse? Which are you better at giving than receiving?
3. Gary Chapman's five love languages — words, acts of service, touch, gifts, quality time. Go around the circle: what's your primary language, and where have you been speaking the wrong one to your spouse?
4. Tone is a choice, not a talent — we feel tone stronger than we hear words. When is your tone hardest to control? What's usually going on inside you when it slips?
5. John Gottman's magic ratio is five positive interactions for every negative one — including eye rolls and sighs. Where does your ratio sit right now? What's one thing that would move it?
6. The vital question is "Does this really matter?" What's one piece of "small stuff" you've been treating like big stuff?

 **Practical Activity Assignment (5 Minutes)**

THIS WEEK: A PRACTICE TO TRY

Trade the Goggles. Speak the Language. Start the Therapy.

Celebrating differences and choosing the positive are skills you practice, not moods you wait for. This week, do three things:

- 1. Put on the positive goggles.** Pick one difference in your spouse you've been treating as a flaw. Re-name it as a strength out loud this week ("not stubborn — committed"; "not slow — careful"). Say the re-named version to your spouse directly.
- 2. Speak their language.** Find out (or confirm) your spouse's primary love language — words, acts of service, touch, gifts, or quality time. Do one deliberate thing this week in their language, not yours.
- 3. Start thank therapy.** Each spouse writes down twenty specific reasons you're thankful for the other. It is nearly impossible to feel grateful and bitter at the same time. Trade lists at the end of the week.

 **Closing Prayer**

Prayer Suggestion

God, You made every person in this room an original — fearfully and wonderfully made. Forgive us for the projects to change each other into copies. Teach these couples to trade rejection for respect, to love and respect in the ways their spouses actually receive, and to guard their tone. Make ours homes with five warm moments for every hard one. Make us grateful people, because gratitude and bitterness cannot share the same heart. We trust You with these marriages. Amen.