

TWO ORIGINALS

Chapters 7 & 8 • Based on *The First Few Years of Marriage* by Jim Burns and Doug Fields

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ARC OF THIS SESSION

From a **marriage fighting each other and drifting apart** → to a **marriage that fights the fear together and pursues real intimacy**

Anchor Scriptures

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."
Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

"I belong to my beloved, and my beloved is mine."
Song of Songs 6:3 (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 7 and 8 of the book, then watch Session 5 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. This is the tender session — the one on conflict and intimacy. A word to you as leader: read the room and keep things safe. You don't need couples to share anything private about their physical relationship in the group. Keep the public conversation on the principles (relational fear, the Fear Chase, forgiveness, emotional connection) and let the intimate application happen privately, at home, with the couples guide.

Jim and Doug's big reframe is liberating: most fights aren't about the surface issue — they're about old relational fears. And a good physical relationship is usually the fruit of a good emotional one. Set the tone by going first and being appropriately honest about your own "hot buttons."

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:

- Think of a recent fight that was "about" something small. Looking back, what might it have actually been about?

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.

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."
Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)

Paul doesn't say don't get angry. He says don't let anger dig a hole in your foundation. Conflict is inevitable; the foothold is optional. Deal with it before the sun goes down.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
Colossians 3:13 (NIV)


Forgiveness is the only one of the four options that actually heals. Forgetting fails, repressing leaks, holding on imprisons. Forgiving — a choice, not a feeling — sets both people free.

"I belong to my beloved, and my beloved is mine."
Song of Songs 6:3 (NIV)

God devotes an entire book of the Bible to the delight of married love. Intimacy is not an afterthought or a necessary evil — it is part of the design, meant for connection, bonding, and joy.

Reflect Questions

- Which of these three verses speaks most directly to where your marriage is today? Why that one?
- Ephesians 4:26 says not to let the sun go down on your anger. What unresolved thing are you currently "going to bed" on?

 **Video (15-20 Minutes)**

Play Session 5 Video

In Session 5, Kelly and Leah facilitate the small group couples through the two hardest topics in marriage: conflict and intimacy. The teaching covers relational fear and the “Fear Chase,” the four options for handling an offense (with forgiveness as the only one that heals), and the principle that emotional intimacy precedes physical intimacy. Handle the conversation with warmth and discretion.

 **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. Most fights aren't about the surface topic but about relational fear. Think of a recurring argument. What fear might be hiding underneath it for each of you?
2. In the Fear Chase, one person explodes and the other implodes — and each reaction triggers the other. Which are you? How does your pattern collide with your spouse's?
3. You are 100% responsible for your own hot button and response, 0% for your spouse's. How does that change what you can do in your next argument, even if your spouse doesn't change?
4. There are four things you can do with an offense — forget, repress, hold on, or forgive. Where are you tempted to repress or hold on? What would forgiving look like in practice?
5. Jim and Doug call the sex life an emotional thermometer and say emotional intimacy precedes physical intimacy. What does emotionally connecting throughout the day look like in a marriage?
6. Couples who date weekly are far more likely to report being very happy. What's one intentional rhythm you could commit to that protects both connection and intimacy?

 **Practical Activity Assignment (5 Minutes)**

THIS WEEK: A PRACTICE TO TRY

Name the Fear. Clear the Wound. Reconnect.

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

- 1. Name your hot buttons.** Each spouse names their top one or two relational fears (rejection, failure, disconnection, being controlled, being unseen). Tell each other — not to assign blame, but so you can recognize the fear next time it gets triggered.
- 2. Clear one wound.** Is there an offense one of you has been holding — a “stone in the pocket”? Choose to forgive it this week. Remember: forgiveness is a choice before it's a feeling, and it's the only option that heals.
- 3. Reconnect on purpose.** Pick one way to rebuild emotional closeness this week — a real goodbye kiss, a phones-away conversation, a kept date. Emotional intimacy comes first; let it lead.

 **Closing Prayer**

Prayer Suggestion

God, You know the fights in this room that aren't really about what they're about — the old fears under the anger. Teach these couples to stop fighting each other and start fighting the fear, side by side. Give them the courage to forgive the way You forgave us, not as a feeling but as a choice that frees them both. Don't let them go to bed with the sun down on their anger. And restore the closeness that busyness and hurt have let drift. We trust You with these marriages. Amen.