



Karen and I want to thank you for using *Return to Intimacy* to invest in others for the success of marriages and families in God's Kingdom. Our goal is to arm you with the best Bible-based relationship material for instruction, so you can fulfill the call God has placed on your life.

Our ministry staff, my wife Karen and me are praying for you; asking God to amplify the health of your marriage, and for that to reflect on every couple that embarks on this spiritual journey. My prayerful hope is that this guide impacts your marriage on a personal level as you help families in your community take hold of their great future.

—Jimmy Evans, President, *MarriageToday*

God joins a couple together with a spiritual bond, and your leadership can help deepen the bond between couples and their relationship with Jesus Christ. Begin walking through the *Return to Intimacy* keys with your fellowship today.



MarriageToday™



# *return to* intimacy

leader guide & discussion workbook

jimmy evans



MarriageToday™

PO Box 59888  
Dallas, TX 75229  
1-800-380-6330  
[www.marriagetoday.com](http://www.marriagetoday.com)

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# INTRODUCTION

*Return to Intimacy* has helped thousands of couples recapture the passion they believed was long removed from their marriage.

In the next eight weeks, you will embark on a journey that will dramatically increase the intimacy in your relationship. Inside the *Return to Intimacy* Curriculum Kit are DVD's which include teachings from Jimmy Evans' most recent seminar. The joy of marriage is learning how to become one and growing together with your spouse as God intended. God bless you as you begin together!

Karen and I want to thank you for using this group study to invest in others for the success of marriages and families in God's Kingdom. Our goal is to arm you with the best material for instruction so you can fulfill the call God has placed on your life.

God must show up for your group study to be powerful and productive. He joins a couple together with a spiritual bond, and your small group will bring many couples into deeper relationship with God—if He's invited to attend!

I can't stress how vital it is that you stay close to the Lord during the duration of this study. Spend time with God every day and pray for the grace to lead His people. Commit your small group to God with the anticipation that He will do great things. Know that our ministry is praying for you also . . . not just for the health of your marriage but for every person reached through your leadership. This guide is intended to facilitate your group study, but it's also designed to invest in your marriage on a personal level.

## PREPARATION

We recommend you establish a time and location for your group study after personally contacting some participants. Find out what couples in your church, neighborhood or workplace are curious to know about doing marriage God's way. You'll want to gain a little insight on the needs of the couples that will attend.

- Make it about *YOUR* marriage

Watch the session DVDs in advance of your group study with your spouse. One of the best ways to absorb and share this teaching with others is to talk through its principles with the one you love. Much of the work God will do in the hearts of the couples you serve won't come as a result of the video—it's afterwards that makes the most difference. The DVD is a tool used for encouraging group discussion and shared experiences.

- Pray and pray some more

Ask the Holy Spirit to come and work among the group while filling you with wisdom for leadership. I've been blessed to see so many marriages strengthened and restored through the outreaches of *MarriageToday*, and I can tell you that prayer was essential to touching every marriage.

## THE FORMAT

To help make group time the most effective, here's a suggested format:

- Welcome everyone and introduce new couples
- Begin study time with prayer asking for God's blessing on all marriages
- Watch the video teaching as a group
- Take a short break to kick-start some interaction
- Use the study questions to facilitate further discussion
- Close the group time with encouragement, individual ministry or prayer as the Spirit leads

## A BLESSING

God is with you as you endeavor to lead and we are with you to! We pray Jesus Christ would make Himself known at every gathering, and that the Lord would be glorified through marriages that reflect his divine love in your home, church, community and across our nation. Amen!

Praying for you,

Jimmy & Karen Evans



*Return to Intimacy* SESSION 1

*Investing In  
Intimacy*

### Jimmy's Opening Thoughts

This first session of *Return to Intimacy* focuses on understanding God's plan for inner closeness between a married couple. From the very beginning, marriage was designed to reflect the perfected fellowship between God and His creation. More than any other human relationship, marriage has the ability to meet our need for intimacy. Often couples wrongly assume that intimacy happens naturally or by chance. In fact it's created, and the methods for cultivating intimacy trace back to the first moments of creation.

The Garden of Eden wasn't intended for three pairs; God and Adam, God and Eve and Adam and Eve. It was God and Adam and Eve in perfect fellowship together. I invite you to read Genesis 2 while considering the outward signs of God's presence in your marriage. The goal for a Christ-centered couple is to mirror the intimacy of Eden as they grow in relationship.

The portrayal of romantic encounters in movies and other media leads to much frustration and speculation about chemistry and the role it plays in a marriage. Chemistry is largely based on emotions, which can change based on circumstances and a couple's current level of agreement. Intimacy is built on factors more permanent than your emotional state. God wants you to share times when your emotions are "riding high" for the other, but He asks you to build your love on something deeper because there are grave disadvantages to basing the success of your marriage on chemistry. As with any worthwhile pursuit, the building of intimacy in your marriage will result from work. This study will require mental, emotional, spiritual and physical engagement in your marriage like never before.

You may be surprised to learn this group study doesn't focus only on sex. Sex is one vital component of intimacy, but it relies on the other elements of a covenant bond to be fulfilling. True intimacy is the result of emotional closeness, respect and honesty. The highest level of inner closeness between two people exists when both have a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When two people know God and are intimate with Him, they have a foundation on which to build. If you lack closeness in your marriage today, or if you want to take your relationship to a new level, intimacy can return in a matter of days. Intimacy can be created or recreated. It is not luck. It is not chance. It is not fate.

Intimacy is cultivated in four primary environments, so let's begin this group journey by discussing the first—mental intimacy.

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**Group Dialogue**

Because intimacy requires the deepest levels of personal exposure and vulnerability, it needs to be fostered in safe and trusting environments. You can receive prayerful support from the couples in your group while offering what you’ve learned in marriage to others. Genesis 2:24-25 reveals God’s plan for a successful marriage and achieving intimacy. Consider these verses the scriptural road map to your marriage becoming “one flesh”. Begin by asking God to adjust your focus from yourself to your spouse, and make you skilled at meeting his or her needs in all the environments of intimacy. Ask for His will to be accomplished in every person present, and for the group to develop a strong bond.

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**Session Q & A**

What things make you apprehensive about participating in a group study like this? What expectations and hopes do you have for your marriage once the study is complete?

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Whether it’s the first time or you’ve have said it before, tell your spouse how much you appreciate what he or she has sacrificed for your relationship.

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Jimmy mentioned one of the reasons you love someone is because you admire them. What do you admire about your husband or wife?

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Identify one of the four elements of intimacy that you'd particularly like to invest in more (value, energy, sacrifice, or trust). Why is this element important to you?

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What practical steps can you take this week to transform your marriage into a personal Eden by moving from "me-ness" to "we-ness"?

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**Live It: At Home Exercise**

Week one of *Return to Intimacy* can be especially challenging for couples because it exposes the soft spots in your relationship, but it can also make you aware of your strengths. Let the Holy Spirit work in your marriage this week, and resist striving to change everything at once. One of the best ways to prepare for growth of intimacy in your lives is using a calendar. Start a calendar that includes both your schedules, and identify days when you can be invested in a “date night” or marriage building activity. This will be especially useful each week as you apply the study principles at home.

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**Group Leader Outline & Notes**

- God created man and marriage in a perfect environment of pleasure and delight. Husbands and wives both have a deep need for intimacy.

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- Marriage is designed to be the most intimate relationship on earth. Intimacy is an inner closeness and depth of relationship—complete mutual awareness or understanding of another person.

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- God created Eden as a perfect environment for humans to express and experience total intimacy. Genesis 2:24 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* NKJV

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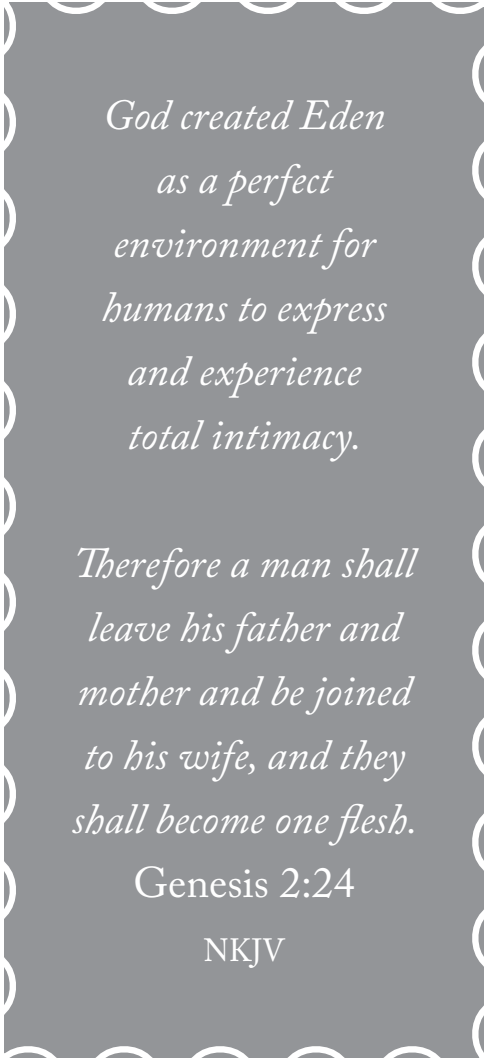
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- IN-V.E.S.T. stands for value, energy, sacrifice and trust—the essential elements of intimacy.

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- Value: every person has the need to feel valued. Marriage must be valued above all other things in our lives for it to work.

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- Energy: your relationship requires daily work. Even if you marry the “perfect” person, there will still be emotional and spiritual work for you to accomplish.

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- Sacrifice: selfishness is the greatest sin that threatens marriage. Sacrifice in marriage means, “I lay down my ‘me-ness’ for ‘we-ness.’” In the greatest marriages there is a pervasive “we” attitude.

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- Trust: Mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually we relate to each other in a respectful environment because our feelings are sacred.

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- The first environment of intimacy is mental intimacy; the ability to share thoughts on a deep level and to successfully find a point of agreement.

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*Value your spouse's thoughts by listening to and understanding their perspective while sacrificing your need to be right and judgemental. Create a consistent and caring atmosphere where your spouse is free to share any thought without fear of shame or retribution.*

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- Men's core needs are honor, sex, kindred fellowship and domestic support.

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- Women have core needs of security, open and honest communication, non-sexual touching and affection and leadership.

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