



*return to*

intimacy

couple guide & workbook

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### **How to Use this Booklet**

We strongly encourage couples to incorporate this study guide in their daily quiet time or devotional. Allow a few minutes for individual study and fellowship with God, then come together for a time that will enrich your marriage. It's always a good idea to have your personal time of Bible study and prayer before you meet with your spouse—this helps you bring your best to the relationship, and you'll get more out of the Return to Intimacy curriculum also.

Be faithful to your small group each week and share your experiences with other couples. The body of Christ is stronger through fellowship and your relationship will receive health and support through the prayers of other Christian marriages.

## *Investing In Intimacy*

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.

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*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. There are grave disadvantages to basing the success of your marriage on chemistry.*

## Session 1: Couple Questions

Are you nervous to begin a group study with other couples on this subject? What benefits are there to sharing your marriage experience with others?

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Start this experience off right. Tell your spouse some things you truly appreciate about him or her, and talk about different ways you can express those feelings all week long.

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In which of the four elements of intimacy is your marriage strongest (value, energy, sacrifice, or trust)? Why is your relationship healthy in this area?

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### Session 1: Marriage 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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## *Becoming Your Spouse's Safe Place*

You're probably beginning to discover how each environment of intimacy impacts your daily interactions. A great deal of conflict in marriage can arise from misunderstanding intimacy and the ways in which husbands and wives can build inner closeness. What is the model for the level of closeness you desire in marriage? Is it a friend's marriage, your parents or a fictional movie couple? What kind of expectations is that creating between you and your spouse, and can you build healthy intimacy by emulating the model you've chosen?

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*Value, Energy, Sacrifice and Trust.*

*Combine these elements in any one of the environments of intimacy and you have a powerful system for improving intimacy, and creating intimacy where perhaps none exists today.*

## Session 2: Couple Questions

Have you ever known an example of a spiritually connected marriage? Besides praying together, what habits did this couple reveal to you that seem important to being spiritually close to your spouse?

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Wives, tell your husband the factors that most influence your ability to share thoughts, feelings, spirituality and physical affection with him. When have you felt most assured of your intimate connection?

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Husbands, it's your turn. Describe the moments in your marriage when you've felt closest to your wife. In what ways did she encourage that connection through her words and actions?

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## **Session 2: Marriage Exercise**

Designate a day this week when you'll encourage your spouse by sharing in this marriage building evaluation. Take turns praising your spouse for one way they invest in you through value, energy, sacrifice or trust in each of intimacy's environments. Agree as a couple on one thing you could improve in each area, and pray together on more than one occasion this week asking God to elevate your marriage.

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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.



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