

Marriage Builder: The First Step - Giving Up

(By Jimmy Evans, *Marriage Today*)

I haven't been shy about detailing the rocky early years of my marriage to Karen. Both of us were certain that our marriage was destined for greatness—that we would never fight, never get tired of each other, never worry about money or kids or any of the petty things other couples argued about.

We both knew we were the perfect match and nothing could stand in our way. We were confident. It only took two weeks for us to realize how misplaced our confidence was.

I don't remember the first argument Karen and I had after we were married, but I do remember wondering if the fighting would ever stop. One argument would flow into the next one, like an endless raging river. Though we kept fighting, neither of us ever won.

After three years, we hit rock bottom, numb and out of love. We were barely speaking. Both of us were thinking about leaving.

What happened to turn things around in our marriage? How did we ever get from that point to where we are today—two giddy old married people who can hardly keep their hands off each other?

The truth is, it wasn't any one miraculous event, but a long series of small decisions and attitude changes followed by more decisions and attitude changes. It was a journey.

But like all journeys, it began with one critical, monumentally important first step: *We gave up.*

There came a point when we both realized we simply could no longer make it on our own. We understood we were completely incapable of putting our marriage back together again—at least on our own power. So we quit trying. We put down our weapons and surrendered.

No one would have blamed us for leaving each other. Looking back, I'm surprised I never got to that point of no return, and even more surprised that Karen didn't. I was an emotional bully. Almost anyone else would have left me.

It didn't happen overnight. It was a daily process of dying to self, getting up each morning and deciding to be nicer to each other than we were the day before

But somehow we both found the strength to do the right thing. We surrendered our marriage to God. We opened our hands and hearts and gave ourselves over to His will, recommitting ourselves to the relationship. Little by little, day by day, we began to rebuild the love that had died.

It didn't happen overnight. It was a daily process of dying to self, getting up each morning and deciding to be nicer to each other than we were the day before. More forgiving. More loving. More selfless and caring.

In short, we did with our marriage what God asks each of us to do in our own Christian walk. Instead of focusing on our own selfish desires, we focused on the needs of the other. I started learning Karen's needs and looking for ways to fill them. She did the same for me.

We gave up trying to make it on our own and instead leaned on God to rebuild the love affair we had so callously destroyed. That has proven to be the most supernaturally rewarding decision we could have ever made. What about you? Is it time for you to give up?

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.