

MARRIAGE BUILDER: SURRENDER (TEACHING BY JIMMY EVANS)

In the last *Marriage Builder*, I shared how the most important step Karen and I took toward healing our broken marriage was to give up. To give it over to God. To surrender and admit that repairing it was something we needed Him to do, not us.

Surrender isn't a word I use lightly. It has enormous implications and even greater long-term consequences.

When Karen and I raised that white flag of surrender, it was monumental. But still, it was just the first step toward putting our marriage back together again. Damage had been done. Wounds don't always heal quickly.

Your marriage won't change overnight. There are no quick fixes when it comes to messy humans and complicated relationships.

For instance, it's not easy to spend years of your life in a war of wills and then suddenly just decide to stop fighting. Bad habits are hard to break. It takes hard work, serious discipline, and days and nights of retraining your thoughts, holding your tongue, and choosing love.

Eventually Karen and I saw changes. These led to shifts in perspective. We began to like each other again. We began to enjoy each other's company.

We began to restore our friendship, and then the romantic feelings began to renew. One day at a time, we rebuilt the love we had smothered.

I tell you this to make sure you understand that I have been where you are. I know what it's like. When I counsel couples, I hear their stories of wounding words and unmet needs. I hear stories of abuse, neglect, apathy and selfishness. These stories bring back my own painful memories because *I have been there*.

Karen and I know this frustration because we have lived it. But because we have lived it, we also know the solution. This is one of the hardest aspects of counseling for me, because counseling is a process. Couples need to work through their issues at a healthy pace.

But do you know what I want to tell them right from the start? I want to grab each husband and wife and say, "Listen! This is not that hard! What you need to do is surrender! Stop trying to fix this on your own and give your marriage to God!" Because, honestly, that's the only way they're going to make it.

I don't dare do that, because surrendering is something you have to choose for yourself. It's a personal decision. I can't make you do it. And often, couples are unwilling to do it until they've hit rock bottom. Surrender seems to be the last resort of a dying relationship.

This shouldn't be the case. Regardless of the state of your marriage, my advice is that you surrender it to God now. Whether you're at the end of your rope and on the brink of divorce, whether you're feeling distant from your spouse and hoping to rekindle a dwindling flame, or whether your marriage is pretty good already...I want you to

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Give Him your will, your desires, your need for approval, your quest for control. Give Him your bitter thoughts, your worries, your regrets, and your hurts. Give Him your marriage and then give Him yourself. Let Him do with it what you could never hope to accomplish on your own. *Surrender.*

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.