4 Steps to Falling in Love Again

This eBook is taken from chapter 9 of "Our Secret Paradise" by Jimmy Evans
Jesus says that disciplined investing is not only the secret of lasting passion but that it is also the secret of falling back in love: “I hold this against you,” Jesus told the church at Ephesus in the book of Revelation. “You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (Rev. 2:4-5, NIV).

Jesus will not tolerate a love that is less than first in our hearts. In other words, He demands our passion. First love means a passionate pursuit of Christ and His calling. Do you know what Jesus meant when He warned the Ephesians that if they didn’t get their first love back He would remove their lampstand from its place? His hearers knew that the lampstand represented God’s divine advertising—His seal of approval. (It shouldn’t surprise us to learn that Jesus doesn’t want to advertise a group of Christians who are apathetic toward Him. It makes Him look bad.)

It’s the same in your marriage—you are a walking advertisement for your spouse. I’m an advertisement for Karen. In those early years of marriage, I was a bad advertisement. But that changed.

The workplace is filled with husbands and wives who talk about how bad their mates are, or they silently shout it through their facial expressions, body language and priorities. No husband wants a spouse who launches an advertising campaign about him like that. And what wife would enjoy being married to a husband who placed an ad in the newspaper telling the world how bad she was? But that’s exactly what we do to
each other when we refuse to invest our time, energies and focus in ways that will produce an ever-increasing harvest of passion in our marriages.

How do you get the passion back? Jesus, in essence, says, “Remember where you fell from, and repent.” “To repent” simply means “to change your mind.” Changing your mind is not conditional on an emotional response. Just change your mind and start doing the things you did at first. Don’t worry about emotions; they will eventually follow action.

So how do you fall back in love? Start investing once again in your marriage. Don’t let your emotions dictate your actions. Remember, it’s not possible to separate your treasure from your heart. Your passion and your heart are always connected.

When Karen and I were out of love, she no longer trusted me. When I repented and asked her to forgive me, she was honest about it: “Jimmy, you’ve devastated me with your mouth, and I don’t trust you. I’m willing to stay, but I’m telling you right now, I don’t trust you. And it’s going to take awhile.”

I understood.

“Karen, I don’t blame you for the way you feel, because I deserve this. I really do. This has gone on a long time and I know I’m going to have to earn your trust. I want you to stay, and I’ll prove to you that I mean business.”

I was genuinely changed because my eyes had been opened. What I did that night was put away my golf clubs, and not only for the next week; I stopped for several years. When my buddies asked me about it, I told them, “I’ve got something more important going on. Sorry, you’re going to have to play without me.” They teased and criticized me, but I drew the line. “You can say what you want,” I told them. “I’m not golfing with you anymore; I’m staying at home.”

I began to invest time and energy once again in my relationship with Karen. We began to walk together. We began to sit down and talk—something we had not done in a long time because of the way my verbal abuse had driven out of Karen all hope for meaningful communication.

It didn’t take long to see results. In just a few days, signs of life began to return to our marriage. It was like the beginning of spring. You could see sprouts of positive emotion budding more and more each day.
In Love Again

After several weeks, a freshness came back to our relationship, and we liked each other again. We were beginning to have some fun; we were laughing. It had been a long time since we had laughed together.

Several months later, we were back in love—and I mean very much back in love. That was 27 years ago. In every one of those 27 years, our marriage has grown better than the year before. Today we are passionately in love.

How do you fall back in love with Jesus? First, remember the heights from which you have fallen. In other words, remember the way it was when you first got saved. Remember how you pursued Him? How you read your Bible? How you couldn’t get enough of Him and His Word?

If your passion for Jesus has grown cold, don’t try to manufacture it. Instead, identify what you’re doing that is different from what you did at first. Then stop giving your time and attention to that activity or relationship. Just don’t do it anymore. Change your mind and say to yourself, *I don’t want to invest in something that’s going to go up in smoke. I want to invest in eternity. I want to lay up my treasures in heaven. I want to give my first and best to Jesus.* When you make that decision, the emotion will naturally follow.

If you will say the same words about investing in eternity in relation to your marriage, you can walk free of the torture chamber that traps those who are slaves to their emotions. Allowing emotions to replace the *agape* love of Christ in us will always lead to a negative downward spiral. Most people in bondage today got there by following their emotions along a downward path of progressive depression and discouragement. The way up is to follow your will instead of your emotions.

Practice by saying, *I’m going to do this. I’m going to discipline myself to do this.* And then act on what you have told yourself. Discipline will always lead to positive emotions. The more you do the right thing, the better you will feel.

When Cain sinned, God said to him, “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Gen. 4:7, NASB). The happiness and sense of well-being and being accepted takes care of itself if you will focus your will on doing the right thing.
Tips for Lasting Passion

Let me give four practical tips for building intense and lasting passion in your marriage.

First, focus on your own mistakes and commit yourself to making disciplined changes and investments.

Second, deal with the root issues that caused you to turn your heart away. If you turned your heart away from your wife and toward work, is there a reason? Was it because of something your spouse did once or did consistently that hurt you? Did he say something? Is she frustrating you?

In a previous chapter, we looked at how common it is for a spouse who feels rejected to reject his or her mate in return. If that has happened to you or is about to happen in you, recognize and deal with the root issues of why you are turning away. If you are focusing more on your children, your friends, your career, or something else, what in the relationship caused you to do that? If you can’t deal with those root issues by just sitting down and talking, then get help. Commit to speaking to a Christian counselor, and listen to what he or she says.

The third tip is to tell your spouse what you’ve done wrong. Don’t point your finger and put the blame on your mate’s shortcomings. Sit down with your spouse and say, “Listen, I haven’t been giving you my best. I just realized that I’ve taken you for granted—I’ve turned my heart away. I want you to know that I’m back and I’m committed.”

Don’t place any conditions on what your spouse says back to you. In other words, don’t turn back toward your spouse based on him or her reciprocating in kind. Sometimes when people act as though they want forgiveness, they’re really baiting the other person—fishing for an apology themselves. (When they don’t get the desired response, they become even more offended.)

Regardless of what your spouse does, you do the right thing. The best person does the right thing first, and the redeemer does the right thing even when the other person doesn’t. Communicate your commitment regardless of what your spouse does.

Finally, build disciplines into your relationship that keep you investing in it. Build some “first things” together.
Karen and I have built some firsts around money, focused time together as a couple, and praying together. For example, when Karen and I get a paycheck, the first thing we do is write a check to the church. We give the first to God. Likewise, we have date nights—regular times together each week that are set. Right now, because we’re empty nesters, Tuesday and Thursday nights are our date nights.

If you’re not sure about what I mean by date night, date night is a special night to get dressed up and invest a lot of energy. It’s a night to go out somewhere—not just sit around eating chicken and watching a movie on TV. There can be other special outings—one or two nights of camping or going to a nearby town. Spend a couple of days together. Get a babysitter and go somewhere. Your relationship will be energized by time spent exclusively focusing on each other.

You may be surprised to discover that the deepest intimacy in life is not sexual—it’s spiritual. Karen and I pray together all the time; we’re prayer buddies. When you’re praying and worshiping God together, it creates the deepest bond you can imagine. It’s so important for couples to spend this kind of time together.

These disciplines we’ve put in place in our relationship are commitments of our will, not our emotions. They are not something we intend to do; they are something we will do. They are first things.

Without a doubt, the secret of lasting passion in marriage is disciplined investment. Right now you may be out of love and don’t feel the passion you once felt. You’re not alone. In my experience of marriage counseling, I can’t tell you how common it is for a spouse to say, “I just don’t love him/her anymore.” But if you will take seriously what you have just read, you will begin to see that how you feel is not the problem. Your lack of feeling love is a result of some choices you’ve made—choices you can change and ignite once again with that first love.

I have to admit that in some ways I’m kind of an old, crusty marriage counselor. I’ve learned to say “I’ve heard it all before.” Yet I’m not discouraged by the dire pronouncements and clichés of hopelessness I hear in case after case. When I hear another person say, “I just don’t love him/her anymore,” what I want to say is, “Well, so what?” So what if you don’t love each other! Big deal! I’m here to tell you that your attitude is
subject to change. Emotions will follow if you will bring your treasure back into the relationship.

Remember that when you say your love (your passion) is gone, it says something about you. Where are you investing? Where have you been sowing? Is it with your girlfriends? Is it with your children? Is it with your work? Is it with a sport? Where are you harvesting for your gratification and validation?

Don’t let your emotions dictate your life. Don’t let the devil stand there at the side of your dead emotions and tell you that you made a mistake and need a divorce. Don’t run off with someone you met on the Internet in the absurd belief that things will be different. (This is happening every day across America—people getting on the keyboard and lying their faces off.)

No, I want you to know that if you’ve fallen out of love, just admit that you’ve made a mistake and commit to doing the things that you know will bring the passion back.

Recall Jesus’ simple advice: Remember where you fell from; repent; and do what you did at the beginning. The rest will take care of itself.
Our Secret Paradise

JIMMY EVANS
Filled with straightforward truths and practical applications, *Our Secret Paradise* will empower and encourage your marriage. If you need insight, healing or even a rekindled fire in your marriage, this book will guide you to the place God has promised for you and your spouse. *Our Secret Paradise* is a must-read for those who long for God’s absolute best in their marriage.

**John Bevere**

*Author, The Bait of Satan, The Fear of the Lord and Under Cover*

*Founder, John Bevere Ministries*

Jimmy Evans has masterfully coupled Scripture, personal experience and godly wisdom to create a refreshing and insightful manual on building powerful marriages! This book will most assuredly make good marriages even better. Put on your seatbelts—things are going to change in your house.

**Dr. John C. Hagee**

*Pastor, Cornerstone Church*
God has blessed Jimmy Evans with tremendous insight into what makes a marriage successful. His MarriageToday™ ministry has had a huge impact on thousands of couples throughout the country. I consider his books essential reading material for all who seek to have a Christ-centered marriage. His down-to-earth delivery and biblical insight make Our Secret Paradise a must for any married or soon-to-be-married couple.

Chad Hennings
United States Air Force Pilot and
Three-Time Super Bowl Winner, Dallas Cowboys

Our Secret Paradise is a revealing story of how Jimmy and Karen Evans turned their surviving marriage into a thriving marriage. Their personal journey helped them create simple but powerful principles to build a strong and vital marriage.

David H. Olson, Ph.D.
President, Life Innovations
Author, Empowering Couples

Jimmy and Karen Evans have a God-given passion to help couples of all ages. We’ve seen their work up close and personal—we know their hearts. In Our Secret Paradise, Jimmy brings a message of optimistic fervor for restoring marriage to everything God intended it to be.

Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott
Authors, Love Talk
Founders, Center for Relationship Development