



Lesson 3
Articles and Interviews:
What Does Marriage
Mean Today?

Table of Contents

A New Vision of Marriage	3
Marriage is a Work in Progress	9
Interview with Jill Kimball	13
Interview with Kevin Kimball	21

A New Vision of Marriage

“Love is...a high inducement to the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world for himself for another’s sake; it is a great exacting claim upon him, something that chooses him out and calls him to vast things.”
- Rainier Maria Rilke

My work has focused on the challenges, questions, and joys of the wedding process. But as challenging and joyous as getting married may be, the challenges and joys of actually being married are infinitely greater. And when the intense focus on the wedding dies down, we begin to ask ourselves many important questions about marriage: what does it mean to have a good marriage? How can we avoid falling into the high percentage of couples that divorce? How can we maintain the passion and vitality that initially attracted us to each other?

There are no easy answers to these questions. There are countless books on the subject of maintaining an alive, healthy marriage, each offering their own prescription for working with one of the most intricate of human relationships. The truth is that we are on the threshold of a new frontier regarding relations between the sexes. Never before, or not in recent history, have women and men been regarded as equals and the sex roles been so blurred. Just as we struggle with what it means to be a wife or husband, so we must

wrestle within ourselves for the answers to what it means to be married.

In the past, men and women entered marriage with a clear set of expectations about what their partner should provide and fulfill. Men were expected to “bring home the bacon” and women were expected to create a loving, harmonious home and family; men were the providers and women were the nourishers; men provided financially and women fulfilled the emotional needs of everyone in the family. The primary question in determining a suitable marriage partner has always been: How is this person going to complete me and meet my needs? The needs were clearly delineated and the primary task was to find someone who would skillfully and peacefully fulfill these needs.

For some couples, this traditional model may still work. Some men are content going out into the world and serving as the primary financial provider and some women are content in their role as homemaker. However, as women seek to further their development in the outer world and men seek to further their growth through developing a relationship to their inner, emotional world, the old model ceases to work. Women and men have been expanding their capacity for self-growth for the past thirty years. We are pushing the boundaries of the ways we have always functioned in the world, within ourselves, and with each other, and this monumental change necessitates monumental shifts in the models of our most intimate human relationships.

Women and men are becoming more balanced and self-contained as individuals. As women develop a relationship to their masculine side—through meaningful work in the world—and men learn to relate internally to their feminine nature—through feeling their feelings and becoming their own nurturers—we find ourselves gaining independence and no longer needing each other in the survivalistic ways we once did. Gary Zukav refers to this shift as becoming “the new man” and “the new woman.” He suggests that each sex is striving for internal completion and that it is no longer fulfilling to look to our partner to complete us. If we do not seek each other to fulfill missing pieces in ourselves, what is the glue that holds us together? What are the new binding principles of marriage?

It is important to have a viable vision to support us through the rough patches that inevitably arise in marriage. When the vision of “you provide and I’ll nourish” collapses, what is there to replace it? Several cutting edge thinkers in the psychological world—including Zukav, John Welwood, and Kathlyn and Gay Hendricks—believe that the purpose of marriage has shifted from a model that supports dependence on one another to one that encourages interdependence. They espouse the concept that we are brought together to grow as individuals, and that one of the great challenges of the marriage path is to be willing to look within ourselves, as opposed to our partners, for the source of our problems.

Welwood, in *Love and Awakening*, offers: “Of course, facing the

challenges of this path takes great courage and daring. This is where a guiding vision becomes essential: It helps two partners take heart and gather their energies when they feel lost or bogged down. What can sustain a couple through the most difficult times is knowing that they are together for a larger purpose—helping each other refine the gold of their essential natures by working through obstacles in the way of their deepest unfolding.”

Patricia shares that her view of marriage as a path to personal growth sustains her through the difficult times and keeps her faith buoyed atop the stormy waters. Even in the first six months of marriage, when she felt like she was going to die because of her sense of feeling trapped in the relationship, she knew that she and Peter were brought together for a higher purpose. She beautifully articulates her views on the wedding and marriage: “The journey of getting married and being married has been so different than I ever would have imagined. Peter and I both hold the view that marriage is not just to have fun or to have kids, but it’s something that helps us evolve on a spiritual level. It is as important a vocation as it is to be a religious person. Supposedly, in the ideal sense, the married couple is evidence of God’s love in the world. Someone said that being married is a crucible, and I think that is very true. We feel like in being married each of us is helping the other to strip of the ego, we are like gold being refined. All of our issues are coming up and we are learning, in some fundamental way, how to be less selfish and more loving. We very much see a spiritual purpose behind this whole thing and believe

that is why we are together.”

There is no doubt that several issues will surface in the course of a marriage. These issues could be psychological and emotional—confronting the ways in which we attempt to control or feel controlled, coming to terms with our fears of abandonment and suffocation—and they could be ways that the external world creates obstacles—issues around money, work, living environment, illness, death. If we enter marriage with the belief that we will “live happily ever after”, each time a challenge arises we will view it as a problem that we must get rid of. If, on the other hand, we accept that part of the function of marriage is to learn more about ourselves and others, to become more loving and fulfilled people in the world, then each difficult situation becomes an opportunity for growth.

Michael, married twenty years, offered this wisdom when asked what he would say to couples entering marriage: “Be aware that marriage will bring up some of the toughest issues you’ll ever have to look at, and that that’s a gift, not a burden or something to be avoided.

Recognize that conflict is a blessing in disguise, and that it is through resolution of conflict that peace comes. And the greater the conflict, the greater the peace and joy. Be compassionate with yourself and your partner. Recognize that marriage is the most sacred and complex of all interpersonal relationships.”

Viewed in this light, marriage becomes a spiritual path. Woman and

man are bound to one another the way a nun is bound to her convent and a monk is bound to his monastery. Like the nun and monk, who take vows upon entering their spiritual dwelling, so the married couple take vows upon entering the sacred union of marriage. The vows are a covenant which ask the married couple to abide by certain laws, abstain from certain behaviors, and hike the arduous terrain of their souls as they continually learn what it means to love themselves and another. Marriage is a mature, rigorous discipline. It is also a glorious, rewarding path, for the fruits of this labor are to find one's true nature and to share life with someone who intimately knows the tiny paths of your soul.

Marriage is a Work in Progress

My clients come to me with a host of erroneous beliefs that inform their anxiety and confusion regarding their upcoming marriage. Some of these beliefs include thinking they're supposed to feel more in love during their engagement than ever and wondering if thoughts about an ex means they're not supposed to get married. But there is one belief that is talked about even less than the others: that at the wedding day, the relationship itself is supposed to be at its height of ease, love, and workability.

Very few of us carry accurate beliefs about what love and marriage are really about. Instead, we consciously or unconsciously live our lives according to the models propagated by the media. We grow up watching Disney movies and popular television where we see a basic equation for love portrayed: meet – play a game of chase – fall in love – get married. Inherent in this formula is the assumption that by the final stage – getting married – every conflict, quirk, annoyance, and issue has been resolved. We may watch a relationship unfold over several years on a television series, but by the time the couple finally gets married, the conflicts are resolved and the show usually ends, And herein lies the false message: your relationship should be “perfect” at the time of the wedding.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Like all courageous

endeavors, marriage can and must evolve over time. We enter into it with the greatest of intentions, hope, and commitment. We spend enough time together to determine if the partnership is a good match in terms of shared values, enough spark, some ability to resolve conflict, and no serious red-flags. And then we jump off the wedding cliff together with a leap of faith. For we never know at the onset what the final outcome will be. Marriage, like life, is ultimately a mystery regarding a magic formula for success. And the intricacies of this mystery, the strands of the story that comprise the final tapestry of one's marriage, can never be known on the day you say "I do."

And yet we long to know. We want the answers right at the beginning of the story. Instead of expecting the relationship to be new and unknown, we expect a budding marriage to be a finished work of art. We expect our partners to know everything about us and fulfill each of our needs. Most people, when they marry, actually know very little about each other, especially compared to how much they'll know in fifty or sixty years! Human beings are complicated creatures, and it takes living with each other day in and day out – sharing finances, dealing with work stress, having children, handling the conflicts that arise around each other's families – before we slowly, slowly learn the details of thought, feeling, and spirit that comprise our partners.

What if we viewed the wedding not as an ending – the final chapter of the story – but as the beginning that it is? What if we understood that a marriage is a work-in-progress that begins on the wedding day and

continues to grow and change for the rest of our lives? What if we let ourselves – and our partners – off the hook regarding having to feel and receive the greatest possible love on and around the wedding day? We put so much pressure on ourselves these days, and oftentimes it's that very pressure that dampens our ability to know and be known by our husband or wife. In other words, by not allowing ourselves to ease into the marriage over a period of several years, we place the marriage itself in a vice where it can't breathe organically and evolve according to its own rhythm.

What interferes with most people's capacity to experience the wedding transition free of anxiety are their expectations. The bride-to-be expects to feel happier than she's ever felt in her life during her engagement. The groom-to-be expects to be able to let go of his bachelor identity easily. And nearly everyone expects that they engaged couple should feel solid and certain about their relationship. We view the wedding as the culmination of a relationship instead of as a beginning. Marriage, in the end, is a largely a journey of acceptance, and while we may enter into it believing we fully accept our partners, very few of us actually do. And that's okay. It's only the expectation of otherwise that interferes with our ability to accept the inevitable challenges that arise during the early years of marriage.

As with so many aspects of the wedding transition, the practice is about letting go: letting go of pressure, letting go of expectations, letting go of perfection, letting go of the old life, letting go of "shoulds",

and letting go of trying to squeeze yourself and your relationship into a preconceived image or model of how you think your relationship is supposed to be.

Interview with Jill Kimball

Date of Initial Interview: August 1999

*Follow-up interview with her husband, Kevin,
from October 2010 included as MP3 in this lesson*

I think it's important for people marrying today to have role-models and a vision for what marriage can and should be, and so many of us don't have that. Can you give me an overview of how you see your marriage--it's evolution from when you entered the marriage to now?

I think in images -- I describe pictures and analogies. What I don't understand is the term marriage. I realized that I used to be an expert on it. When we first got married it was sort of like when you said the term marriage it was like those circus pictures that were all painted and all you had to do was put your face in. When I got married there was an image of what marriage was, marriage was something, and I had a sense of marriage and I had read about marriage but the only thing missing was the face. It ended up that he was the face in the big mural. Over time what happened was we grew and learned about each other, and parts of the mural started to fade and I could see him through it. But he wasn't doing the right thing! Here's this wonderful mural and, my goodness, I had it figured out. For example, let's say it's a knight in shining armor holding a lamp. And then that starts the fade and I see him and he's not holding a lamp he's holding a

football! That's not right! And he's not dressed right! He's not sitting the right way on the horse! Somewhere in there I got the sense that he clearly needed to work harder and do better--change his clothes or what he was holding or do something essentially about him to meet this expectation of marriage and to fulfill this image that I had. Over time the marriage mural was gone and I was just looking at him, at what I thought was him, but at this time he was standing there dressed in a monster suit! I wasn't seeing him still, he had just donned a monster suit. Then over time--of course this is simplifying everything--I started to see under the monster suit, and I saw glimmers of gold. Now I'm at the spot where I see him not as the knight in shining armor that I expected him to be but actually as the wonderful prince that he is.

And from now I realized what I had a problem with as I was reading through the questions that the term marriage is mixed up in all those images and expectations. So when I went through the questions and took out the word marriage and substituted "my commitment to loving Kevin" then I understood them.

Did you feel like the word marriage held so many connotations of what marriage is?

It's so complex, there are so many things attached to it. Somewhere in there I just took the word marriage out of my thinking. My

commitment to loving Kevin I understood, and that is splendid. And my commitment to loving him individually as a person, it's not an idea, it's not a theory, it is him. Committing to love him more than anyone else. I only have so much time in a day and as far as my priorities go and my capacity to love he is the one that I choose to love and be committed to. My energy is directed there first.

Do you have the same ideas about the word wife?

Yes! Wife to me now means being a partner to Kevin. I can't put anybody else's name in there. I only comprehend being married to him. What I can give is what it has been like to love him. That I can give. I can't address marriage or wife.

I would love to hear about what loving Kevin has been like--

It's been a wonderful journey. When we married the expectation was that we were supposed to complete each other. An image was given to me was that we were like a puzzle and where you have pieces missing the other person will fill in. I believed that-- so clearly if I'm hurting somewhere it's his job to fix that, and it was my job to do that for him. We did a pretty good job of that! Then we would run into problems when we both needed to be filled up at the same time. We would discuss at length--not using these words-- whose job it was to fill up whom. The message was that if we loved each other we would

do this filling. We took turns. We went back and forth. One thing I appreciate about our relationship is that we really have been trying all along to grow. We were doing the very best we knew how. We just didn't know better a lot of the time. But the commitment was there to growing.

It was also very helpful that there was a commitment to God. For me the marriage vows were critical. When we were married I made a covenant with God and with Kevin to be married not only for this life but forever. That felt like pillars of marble that went down deep into my soul. They were a strong foundation that I could hold onto when it felt like everything else was falling apart. There were times when I couldn't stand him but I had made a commitment to God. That was what I held onto. For me it has been critical.

So we went along. I think our growth pattern is that one of us will grow and the relationship will get stressed, then the other one has a choice whether to grow or not, then the other will grow and move past the other one, and again it's stress, so again its sort of stressful but the growing has continued. I think that point two and half years ago was interesting. Three years ago I had a critical piece for me where I recognized a lot of my family pathology and decided to take a different path. I knew I couldn't do that anymore. The patterns that I had been handed were faulty and I was going to take a different path. It was very painful and also very enlightening. I was committed to

choose a path of health and saw that I had been handed something else. I changed essentially. I did a piece of core work. I was at the time at my brother's house. I had gone on a trip with a friend of mine, I was gone five or six days and we did therapy the whole time, and I came back truly a different person. At that point I realized that it wasn't loving for me or for him to continue in the patterns of trying to fill him up and asking to be filled up. I just didn't want to play anymore. We'd agreed to that mutually. And I changed. I said I don't want to do that anymore, and he didn't understand what I was talking about. From the change in my behavior I couldn't act the same way anymore because I was different. Then I believe that he became more stressed because I wasn't agreeing to try to fill him up anymore, so it sort of peaked, that was one of those that my growth at that time moved ahead and stressed the relationship and he could choose what he was going to do. And he chose to grow. That's my read on why the timing was that way. And then through his part-- I didn't know if he was going to stay or not stay, it was the most desperate time in our marriage. It was extremely difficult on my part. I hadn't grown that much--where I was ready to handle that. Through the process I learned a lot more about what it means to love somebody. I finally got to the spot of "I am committed to loving Kevin" and that meant whether or not he left or didn't leave make a difference in my commitment. It was truly a one-directional love. I was committed to loving him no matter what shape that took as far as what his behavior was. I'm in it with both feet. You're not getting rid of me. I think that's

part of what he was doing too. That fear of being abandoned as well as a fear of being engulfed. And the part that I felt the strongest was he could do what he wanted--I can't control him--and also I wasn't going anywhere .

It was so exquisitely painful, clear down to my core. I didn't think I would survive it because it was so painful. The only way I could get through was I talked to God and He helped me, I mean literally. He held my hand when I needed help, there were many nights when I couldn't sleep and I would walk down he stairs and lay on the floor, push my body against the floor because it was comforting, I wasn't going to explode from the pain. God told me each step of the way what to do. When he was hurting me I thought I needed to go, I couldn't stand it anymore. God said no, you stay, you have to stay. He said over and over and over again, stick with it, stick with it, stick with it. I worked it out with him as a therapist. I said back, "You've got to be kidding. I can't do this anymore. i didn't know it was going to be so hard." No one told me it would be so hard. No one told me it would take my very heartstrings. He just kept saying to stick with it. And then I remember the answer came, "it's time to stand up Jill. No more lying on the floor. No more crawling to me. You are my daughter. You are my child. And you have a divine birthright. Stand up now." And that was wonderful. It was a movement on my part that I was no longer a victim anymore. That was wonderful. In standing up I had a different perspective on the world. And then there was a time when

God said, “Okay, Jill, you have been through this long enough now. I’m not going to tell you to stick with it anymore, you decide what you want to do.” That was a wonderful gift. Then I wasn’t being told anymore. It was me deciding.

That’s when all of the marriage expectations came to the surface. I said even through this has been so hard, really you choose to be married to Kevin, not as a victim, but because this is the person I choose to spend my life with. That was a wonderful experience. This period of turmoil lasted about a year.

How do you see your relationship with Kevin now?

I see my relationship with Kevin right in there with my breathing. It’s not necessarily as essential to life but as much a part of who I am. My relationship with Kevin is an expression of me. That third party, the marriage thing, is gone, there isn’t something else. Loving him is an expression of who I am. It’s just there like breathing.

Do you have any advice to young couples marrying today?

I thought about it for a long time. My advice is: Be gentle with yourself and each other. Keep a history of your family, pictures and stories. I really think that the moment you’re married, or the moment the relationship begins, I think that family begins when you get married,

saving the stories and pictures will be wonderful to help through the hard times. Sometimes you forget and it's nice to look back and say, "You know we really had wonderful times, and although right now it's horribly painful, we had wonderful times and I do love this person, I just forgot."

Also keep a personal journal as a way to do therapy with yourself. Again for those times when you're married and you don't want to talk to somebody because it feels like a betrayal, and you certainly aren't going to talk to your parents because what do they know! I don't want to do it like they did, so keeping a journal is a way of helping. Also, look to live and loving people for guidance. They're out there.

The part I feel most deeply about if I could give a gift to people just getting married-- I'm picturing myself talking to these lovely people just getting married. I would say first of all you have my respect for having the courage to begin a journey. I have the deepest respect for people being willing to do this. I believe to the bottom of my soul that marriage is from God, and that it is sacred and holy, and because it's from Him, he will prepare a way for you to succeed. The world will tell you differently and of course the statistics will tell you differently, but it really is set up for success. It is meant to happen and it is designed to require the very deepest in us, and to require a complete commitment and complete devotion, it is designed to give the greatest joy that we can have in this life.

Interview with Kevin Kimball
Date of Initial Interview: August 1999
Follow-up interview from October 2010 included
as MP3 in this lesson

Age: 39

Married: 18 years

How did you meet?

I was born in a small town in Utah named Pacen. Jill and her family moved to Pacen when we were juniors. I still remember when she first showed up at our high school, I remember thinking she was attractive and she looked like a really nice person. We got to be pretty good friends in high school, although we had different interests. I was primarily athletically oriented and she was into drama, literature, stuff that I later came to like but I didn't do much of that in high school and she never really came to any of the ball games or anything. I did join the concert choir and we did become good friends. For most of our senior year she dated my best friend and I dated her best friend. We became very good friends that year but we didn't really start to date until college. We commuted every day together to college and that's really when we fell in love. We did a lot of talking. Started dating pretty steadily our freshman year of college. I knew then that she was the woman I wanted to marry.

We're Mormons and I chose to do my two year mission -- one of the obligations or privileges or expectations of young Mormon males is that they give two years of service to go on a proselytizing mission through the church. It's a time of real religious service. I was called to go to Uruguay. We couldn't call--we wrote every week--but we didn't date or see one another. I didn't want her not to date or do things with other people--she had fallen in love with someone else. When I came back things rekindled themselves fairly quickly and we got engaged seven or eight days after I came back from my mission. Mormons have a belief that premarital sex and extramarital sex is something you shouldn't engage in--so the engagements are very short. We were married two months later in July 1981.

Background: leading up to the marriage. When I got back from my mission I felt like things were moving too fast. I had been away for two years. I knew how completely connected I had felt to her when I had initially made the decision that I wanted to marry her. When I knew she was the woman I wanted to marry, in our courtship phase our freshman year, I felt like the only thing I ever wanted to do was be with her. I could envision nothing that brought me greater joy. I felt full, complete, I felt completely in love, I enjoyed holding hands and kissing and being close and sharing. One of the things that has always been attractive to me about Jill is our ability to communicate on a deep level. I didn't want somebody who was only interested in the superficial stuff--I get impatient with that fairly quickly and I want

to move to deeper levels. That's something that she's interested in. Trying to look at things, searching for something deeper than just the superficial stuff. At the same time I was a person who had grown up with a lot of ideas that I had never really challenged. I remember wanting to just be with her. I felt that when I married her life would be heaven. I would be able to take this feeling that I had with her then-- the feeling of completeness and wholeness and walking on air and all those kinds of things-- and have it forever. Then when I had got back from my mission, we hadn't spent any time together for two years. I got back and I didn't feel at that time this feeling of completeness like I had initially. I thought what's gone on? What's happened? Where is this feeling? I remember just before we got married talking to my dad and saying I'm not sure this is really what I want to do. He said, "Did you pray about it?" I said yes. He said, "Did you get an answer?" I said I think so. He said, "What more do you need?" He wasn't in a position to give me the support I needed right then. I remember distinctly that once we had announced the engagement and set the process in motion I had very significant second thoughts. I wasn't sure that's what I wanted, For many years thereafter there was a part of me that said, I'm not sure that's what I really wanted."

Do you have any idea now what that was about?

Yes. Now I do. I think I just needed some time. I had just been in a foreign country. It was too soon. If I had it to do over again I would

have taken more time. That would have been kinder to me. And I think it would have been kinder to me to be able to come to my own determination. Sitting here now I fully believe that that would have been to marry Jill. But that didn't feel like my choice then. And for many years into our marriage I resented the fact that that had not fully been what I perceived to be my choice. I was a victim.

Whom did you feel pushed by?

When I got back and we got back together and things were rekindled for her very quickly. She broke it off with the other person. So I felt concerned because we had the announcements out there and what about her parents and my parents? Public humiliation factor. I was a person who for the first many many years of my life including the first dozen or so years of my marriage to Jill, public approval from whatever source was vital to me. And so the fact that everyone would think, "What happened there?" was to me an intolerable thought. I felt like the process had been set into motion and I felt resigned to going forward at the time. I figured I would make the best of it and push that to the back of my mind but it was always there.

I believed for a long time in the early parts of marriage that marriage was that vehicle that was designed to bring to me the sense of fullness and completeness that I had experienced freshman year dating Jill. I remember going back to the first girlfriend I ever had. I felt like marriage should provide me with the same sense of euphoria

that you experience when you're falling in love or in love, or as it has been portrayed to us. There is certainly, in my experience, there's something physiologically that happens -- it's a whole body, whole soul experience where you feel this tremendous unity with the other person. So then I thought when that wasn't there for the first many years of my marriage I thought it was because it wasn't the right thing, that I had gotten pushed into it. What I clearly knew was that this feeling of euphoria that I had been looking for, of being full and complete, wasn't there at all. And I was miserable in a lot of respects. **I was miserable in the sense that I kept thinking it was Jill's responsibility to fill me up. To the extent that I wasn't emotionally satisfied or sexually satisfied or spiritually satisfied, mentally satisfied, occupationally satisfied, somehow it all seemed to be someone else's responsibility, and certainly that emotional-spiritual side of things not feeling complete, I began to conclude that there must be something wrong with me, our marriage, Jill, or some combination of all three, but** it was a lot easier to focus on the marriage and Jill because I wasn't in a place to start taking responsibility for myself. Over time, and I'll cut to the end now and there are lots of in between steps, my frustration with my lack of fulfillment reached a critical point about two and a half to three years ago. I had been doing my own inner work and trying to seek out what was going on . I had done work around parental issue, issues with my religion, and ultimately reached a point where I really believe that our marriage wasn't something that was going to be able to

sustain me. It wasn't filling me up. It was right about that time that friend mentioned Healing your Aloneness- it was one of those time that just read the book and things just leapt off the page at me and I called the number at the front of the book does she do lecture. She said she's going to be coming to Michigan in 10 says. I took copious notes. I had been doing a lot of therapy but what she said took on a whole new dimension. I went to my first Intensive in June. I was literally on my way out of the marriage. I'm a person who takes very seriously my vows and obligations--I have three children whom I love dearly, Ben was an infant at the time-- I was wrestling with what to do. Is this really what's right? I kept coming back to my commitment to do what the loving thing was--it was never perfectly clear to me what that. Every time I came close to leaving I knew that I wasn't absolutely sure, and if I wasn't sure it would have a tremendous impact on everyone else. I kept saying that I reach the conclusion that it is the right thing then I'm gone. There was a deeper part o me that knew that it wasn't the right thing., I was very much in conflict.

The reasons you were wanting to leave was that you felt that Jill wasn't fulfilling you in the ways that you felt that she should?

Yes, Jill and the marriage. I thought that the marriage ought to be this utopia that helped you journey through life in a way that was somehow more full more complete then I was experiencing.

What did your marriage look like on a daily basis? Was there arguing or was it just stagnant?

We've never been people who have argued much with one another. There was conflict, but never any -- I was an angry person so sometimes I would withdraw and my emotions would brew. I would withdraw and say angry things but never really arguing or yelling. There was more a sense for me of conflict, sometimes bordering on despair, of "What is this all about?" We continued to have periodic sex through the whole time, but I was wondering if that was as satisfying as I wanted it to be. We became very involved socially with friends, spent a lot of time trying to distract ourselves. Eating has been one of my addictions so I would try to find in food what I couldn't find in our relationship. Or we would try to find in friends what was lacking. There were crises outside that we could dedicate our energy to. If you asked a lot of people they would have said that we were marching along fairly well. I held wonderful jobs throughout and we were going to church and participating.

At the Intensive-- just prior to and at the intensive and in the months that ensued, I was at a point in my life that I was really ready to start doing my own work. I had been to therapy before but a lot of that was to try to validate my perception that maybe something wasn't right in the marriage so do I need to go ahead and move on? I remember realizing how deeply I had always craved approval. I realized how in

virtually every relationship I had I was looking to relationship as a means of taking or getting something from someone else rather than giving. I remember in the aftermath of my first intensive being the most profoundly disorienting experience of my life. I was starting to sort out all the ways that I had been a victim and all that ways in which I had been looking to other people to do my work for me and make my pain go away. I was looking to take from people. It became very clear to me in those following three or four months that that was precisely what I had been doing in my relationship with Jill all along. It was a time of deeply grieving my unwillingness to regally put myself out there and look at my marriage as an opportunity to give, and a place where I could express and give. That's when my whole world began to change. I realized that the resentment that I had felt all along about not knowing about whether this was the right marriage or not, for example, was really a reflection of my own resentment for not listening to myself and taking my own responsibility. For not taking responsibility for meeting my own needs. I have since learned that -- (cries) I have come to realize that marriage, is to me, the most sacred of all relationships, and it is an opportunity for me to continually refine my ability to love and to give and to serve. I can honestly say that while I still lapse into that old stuff I don't' stay there very long and I recognize that that's my privilege in being in this marriage. I have a hope, but not necessarily an expectation, that that will be returned. As I let go of trying to control getting what I need from Jill I have been open to receiving what she so beautifully and wonderfully gives, and

the irony is that in those moments when I give up control and I allow her to love me as a gift and in the way that she chooses to love and according to her timing and schedule, I catch glimpses of that earlier euphoria. I believe it's ultimately out there. The experience of falling in love provides us with a pot of gold that exists at the end of the rainbow. I believe that that euphoria and fullness is there but it is the deepest treasure in life that is there -- it's something that's not to be had easily and that requires tremendous individual work. In my instance a complete shifting of my own perspective.

Your marriage much have completely changed at that point a few years ago -

It absolutely did in terms of the energy and intimacy. The way that I look at and reverence Jill. The excitement that I have about what we have right now in our lives. It was a profoundly transformative experience, and it has continued. I realized that there was some part of me that always felt like I was bad, and as I did some inner work I realized that I formed that conclusion at a very young age, probably around a year old. Both my mother's parents were alcoholics, my parents married at 19 and I'm the oldest of nine kids, they weren't in a position to really be able to love me. I remember experiencing the agony that I know that I felt when I was a very young child. I was in the midst of my pain. I felt like that pain literally filled me up, but there was a layer of Saran wrap on top of the pain that I didn't know

existed before. I became aware of a part of me that wasn't consumed in the pain. As I was willing to look at that pain and take responsibility for the conclusion that I drew about me at one year old that I was bad, I was able to open to truth which is that far from bad I'm a wonderful person. Our marriage did take an incredible turn two and a half years ago and continues to evolve in ways that take my breath away. I came home from the August intensive and realized that all the years we had been married, I literally believed that it would kill me if I put myself completely out there and I was rejected, as I was when I was one years old. I didn't believe I could survive that. As I did my work, the most marvelous conclusion came, which was I survived it once, I am a lovable person, I'm a good person, and I'm going to put it all out there again. Do I have a guarantee that Jill won't leave and she won't withhold her love? The answer is clearly no, I have no control over any of that. But to not love, at that point, would have been far more painful to me then to love and be rejected. For the first eighteen years of my marriage, the fear of rejection was one that I was not even aware of. All of the subtle and pervasive ways that that plays itself out. I have spent the last three or four months sorting out those ways. I think I feared that if Jill didn't love me, if I put myself out there, that I would die. The fear of rejection kept me locked in the place that I was. It was stunning to me to see that.

That's a huge one!

It really is. Shortly thereafter Jill and I went to a couples' intensive. Right now we are reveling in dreaming together and sharing together. We're really delighted by where we find ourselves right now.

How would you describe your marriage on a day to day basis?

I think it is in my experience, there are moments, sometimes periods of euphoria. [Note: In the MP3 interview with Kevin in this lesson he comments on his use of the word "euphoria" and replaces it with the word "joy"] We do move in and out of them to some degree. But the beautiful thing is once you begin to take responsibility for yourselves-- I really believe that the euphoria I felt early on in the relationship was a product of my being willing to be open and loving. To the extent that I'm not feeling the euphoria, the conclusions I draw are not so abusive anymore. It doesn't mean that I am a bad person or Jill is not holding up her end or our marriage is somehow less than it ought to be. It means that there's an opportunity for me to learn and when I'm compassionate with myself and patient with myself when I learn, I learn the lesson. It can take a long time or not so long. Sometimes I don't even have a lot of control over that, than I move to the next period of euphoria. There's a sense of wonder and journey to it all, that even in the moments where I'm not in euphoria, if I'm open to learning about why I'm not is itself somewhat euphoric. I think I misspoke earlier: I think the connectedness we feel when we're falling in love is an imitation of, and sometimes a not complete imitation of

the feeling of completeness we feel when we get to the end of the rainbow. And I'm not there yet so I don't know what that looks like. The sense of fullness that I have is far richer and far more solid than the sense I had when I first falling in love. When I was falling in love I was only happy when I was with this other person. I believe that this sense of euphoria is something you bring from each individual and that the relationship can be the medium where that euphoria, love, creativity can be expressed with one another.

It's not the relationship with the other person that creates the euphoria, it exists within you and you bring it to the relationship and if you're both coming from that place then you experience it,

Something far more wondrous happens. It is the most sublime experience I know. It is sacred. When those moments happen I'm left almost without words to be able to describe it. In that movie Contact Jodie Foster sees this beautiful new world and she says, "You sent the wrong person. You should have sent a poet." The experience in that moment is something I can't quite put into words. I get the sense that there is whole world out there that I am just beginning to scratch the surface of. The euphoria comes from us. We have an opportunity to access that within ourselves. And relationship creates the medium where creativity and love can be shared in a way that is transcendent.

Words of wisdom couples entering into marriage:

Be compassionate with yourself and your partner. To be committed to recognize that marriage is the most sacred and complex of all interpersonal relationships. Be aware that it will in fact bring up some of the toughest issues you'll ever have to look at, and that that's a gift, not a burden, or something to be avoided. Not moving into judgment for yourself and your partner. Recognizing that conflict is a blessing in disguise, that it is through the resolution of conflict that peace comes. And the greater the conflict, the greater the peace and joy.

Do you go over your vows at all?

At the time I was ready to leave my marriage it was my vows, my covenant to God and to Jill that kept me here long enough to start doing my own work. The vows were like these pillars that I was able to hold onto when the whole world was swirling around me. I was thinking about doing things that to me were inconceivable-- coming from the Mormon perspective with its view on divorce that I would even be entertaining such a possibility was to me extremely unnerving and yet I had to do that to be true to myself. In the midst of all this stuff I felt like my vows were pillars that I could anchor myself to until I became clear. Mormons believe that marriage not only until death do you part but it is for time and all eternity. We also believe

that it is through the marital relationship that we become God-like. I now recognize that if I had left it would have been the greatest mistake of my life. If I had left I would have left as a result of a very powerful illusion or the wrong conclusion and I would have missed the opportunity I have had to grow through the resolution of these things. Advice: always seek to be aware of what our intention is in our marriage, whether we're trying to give or to get. And if we're trying to get to figure out what it is we need and how we can provide that for ourselves, and look to marriage as the best vehicle known to man for learning to give.