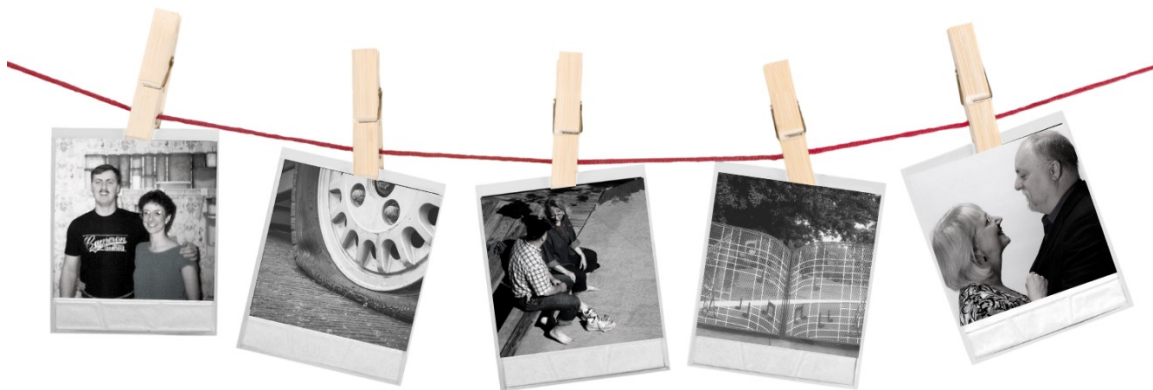


*Lessons from one couple's journey to a joy-filled,
purpose-led, covenant-based marriage*

Finding Graceland



**and other everyday
marriage lessons**

STUDY GUIDE

JIM BENTLEY

Finding Grace(land)

A Marriage Journey of Laughter, Love, and Lessons!

Laugh and learn with Jim Bentley as he shares the wisdom, humor, and grace God has revealed to him through nearly 50 years of marriage to his high school sweetheart.

From the infamous Graceland road trip ... to a cross-country move gone hilariously wrong ... to the unforgettable Olan Mills family photo fiasco, Jim—dad to eight daughters and foster dad to nearly 50—invites you into the laughter, chaos, and deep lessons of a covenant-based marriage.

With a storyteller's charm and a heart for encouragement, *Finding Grace(land)* offers a lighthearted yet powerful reminder that love is a journey best traveled with faith, purpose, and plenty of laughter. Whether you're newlyweds or decades in, this book will inspire you to embrace the adventure and be intentional in building a joy-filled, God-centered marriage.

Finding Grace(land) by Jim Bentley is available at www.vickibentley.com or Amazon.com.

Introduction to the Activities

Marriage is a journey—a beautiful, sometimes challenging adventure filled with opportunities to grow together in love, faith, and purpose. The stories in *Finding Grace(land)* highlight the lessons Jim has learned throughout nearly five decades of marriage, and these workbook activities are designed to help you and your spouse apply those lessons to your own relationship.

Each chapter includes interactive exercises, discussion questions, and reflection prompts to encourage meaningful conversations and strengthen your connection. Some activities are lighthearted and fun, while others dive deeper into essential topics like communication, trust, and prioritizing each other.

Take your time working through these together. Whether you set aside a special date night, work through them as part of a couples' study, or simply use them for personal reflection, our prayer is that these activities will help you grow in love, deepen your faith, and build a marriage that reflects God's grace.

Let's get started!

The term spouse is often used in the activity book to represent your marriage partner or significant other.

Chapter 1: Graceland

Activity 1: Prioritizing Your Spouse

- Reflect on a recent situation where you may not have prioritized your spouse's needs. Write down one way you could have responded differently to show them they come first.

- Discuss: How can you be more intentional about putting each other first in everyday decisions?

Activity 2: Remembering God's Faithfulness

- List a time when you faced a challenge as a couple and saw God's provision or guidance.

- Take turns sharing one specific moment when you saw God at work in your marriage.

- Pray together, thanking God for His faithfulness and asking for wisdom in future challenges. If it helps you, write down your prayer.

Discussion Question:

- The author mentions how distractions can take our focus off our spouse. What are some "distractions" in your relationship, and how can you work together to refocus on your marriage?
-

Chapter 2: Wedding Day Drama

Activity 1: Recalling Your Love Story

- Individually write down your version of how you first met and what drew you to each other.

- Compare your stories—what details stood out to each of you? How does remembering your beginning refresh your love today?

Activity 2: Expressing Love in Words

- Take a few minutes to write a heartfelt note to your spouse about why you appreciate them (either here or on separate pages).

- Exchange notes and read them aloud to each other.

- Discuss: How do words of affirmation impact your marriage?

Discussion Question:

- The author shares how he and Vicki grew in their relationship over time. How have you seen each other change and mature since your wedding day? How can you continue to encourage each other's growth?

Chapter 3: The Newlywed Game

Activity 1: Marriage Check-In

- Each of you write down three things that make you feel most loved and appreciated.

- Exchange lists and discuss how you can be more intentional about meeting each other's emotional needs.

Activity 2: Fun Marriage Quiz

- Set a timer for 5 minutes and individually answer these questions about your spouse:
 - What is their favorite meal?
 - What is one of their biggest dreams?
 - What was the last kind thing they did for you?

- Compare answers and have fun discussing how well you know each other!

Discussion Question:

- In this chapter, the church game revealed that some couples had stopped saying "I love you." How often do you express love and appreciation in your marriage? What are some simple ways to do this daily?
-

Chapter 4: My First Car

Activity 1: Handling Responsibilities in Marriage

- Think about a time when your spouse entrusted you with an important responsibility. How did you handle it?

- Discuss: What are some ways you can better support each other in areas of responsibility?

Activity 2: The Value of Appreciation

- Write down one practical thing your spouse does that you might sometimes take for granted.

- Share this with each other and express appreciation for the unseen efforts you both contribute to your marriage.

Discussion Question:

- The author reflects on the lessons learned from his first car purchase. What is one decision in your marriage that, in hindsight, taught you a valuable lesson?

Chapter 5: Kidney Stones—Oh, the Pain!

Activity 1: Supporting Each Other in Hard Times

- Share a recent challenge one of you faced. How did your spouse support you through it?

- Brainstorm ways you can be more intentional about encouraging each other during difficult moments.

Activity 2: Financial Stewardship in Marriage

- Review your current financial habits and discuss any necessary adjustments.

- Identify one financial goal you want to work toward together in the next year.

Discussion Question:

- The author discusses the importance of teamwork and shared responsibility. How do you ensure that both of you feel valued and supported in decision-making?

Chapter 6: It's a Whopper

Activity 1: Dealing with Unplanned Setbacks

- Think of a time when unexpected circumstances disrupted your plans. How did you react?

- Discuss how you can support each other better in the face of frustration or unexpected challenges.

Activity 2: The Power of Perspective

- Write down one situation where your spouse helped you see the bigger picture or kept you grounded.

- Share how their perspective strengthened your marriage in that moment.

Discussion Question:

- In this chapter, the author acknowledges his tendency to push forward with a plan at all costs. How can you balance persistence with flexibility in your marriage?

Chapter 7: Lost...Again

Activity 1: Recognizing Strengths and Weaknesses

- Each of you write down one strength your spouse has that complements your weaknesses.

- Discuss how you can work together to rely on each other's strengths rather than being frustrated by differences.

Activity 2: Navigating Life Together

- Plan a fun "directions" challenge: One spouse gives the other step-by-step directions to a destination (even if it's just a walk around the neighborhood) – without using GPS. Or one spouse can be blindfolded as the other verbally guides the other through an obstacle course.

- Discuss how this exercise relates to communication and trust in marriage.

Discussion Question:

- The author jokes about his wife's struggle with directions, which he chose to see as a unique-ness or need vs. a "flaw." What is one lighthearted unique-ness in your spouse that you have learned to appreciate instead of being frustrated by?

Chapter 8: Just 90 Minutes

Activity 1: Finding Joy in the Journey

- Reflect on a time when a minor inconvenience turned into a meaningful memory.

- How can you shift your perspective to find joy even when things don't go as planned?

Activity 2: Managing Stress Together

- Identify a recurring stressful situation in your marriage (e.g., running late, financial strain, work pressure).

- Discuss ways to tackle these challenges as a team rather than allowing them to cause division.

Discussion Question:

- The author initially reacts with frustration when the car breaks down. How can you work on responding with grace instead of irritation in stressful moments?

Chapter 9: Watering the Seeds

Activity 1: Encouraging Your Spouse's Purpose

- Each of you write down one God-given talent or passion you see in your partner.

- Share what you wrote and discuss how you can encourage each other to use these gifts in your marriage and community.

Activity 2: Evaluating Rest vs. Engagement

- Reflect on a time when you or your spouse struggled with balancing rest and engagement.

- Discuss: How can you help each other find a healthy balance of rest and purpose-filled activity?

Discussion Question:

- In this chapter, Jim realized he was limiting Vicki by encouraging rest. How do you discern when your spouse needs encouragement versus space to recharge?

Chapter 10: Show It Off

Activity 1: Public Affirmation Challenge

- Throughout the week, find opportunities to publicly affirm your spouse (e.g., social media, with friends, at church).

- Reflect: How does speaking highly of your spouse impact both of you?

Activity 2: Marriage Role Models

- Identify a couple you admire for their strong, Christ-centered marriage.

- Discuss what qualities they display and how you can implement those qualities in your own relationship.

Discussion Question:

- The chapter encourages couples to “show off” their marriage in a positive way. What are ways you can model a God-honoring marriage to others?

Chapter 11: Catastrophe Avoided

Activity 1: Practicing Honesty and Accountability

- Share one area where you struggle with transparency (e.g., finances, emotions, temptations).

- Pray together and set an action plan for open and honest communication in these areas.

Activity 2: Strengthening Your Boundaries

- Discuss situations where you've seen marriages fall due to a lack of boundaries.

- Together, identify boundaries you want to reinforce in your marriage.

Discussion Question:

- This chapter emphasizes avoiding temptations before they become problems. How can you safeguard your marriage from subtle compromises?

Chapter 12: *That Shirt?*

Activity 1: Understanding Different Perspectives

- Think of a lighthearted disagreement you may have (e.g., clothing choices, household habits) and explain your perspective. (See part 2, below, first!)

- Practice listening without defending, then switch roles. Discuss how to approach small differences with grace.

Activity 2: The Power of Encouraging Words

- Write down a time your spouse's words built you up and a time when they unintentionally hurt you.

- Share and discuss how to be more intentional with words in the future.

Discussion Question:

- This chapter highlights how minor frustrations can escalate. What steps can you take to keep small annoyances from becoming bigger conflicts?

Conclusion: Building a Stronger Marriage

Activity 1: Creating a Marriage Mission Statement

- Together, write a short mission statement for your marriage. What values and commitments do you want to uphold as a couple?

- Post your mission statement somewhere visible as a daily reminder of your purpose as a team.

Activity 2: Strengthening Your Marriage “Muscle Memory”

- Identify a small, daily habit that will strengthen your marriage (e.g., morning prayer, evening check-in, random acts of kindness).

- Commit to practicing this habit consistently for the next 30 days and discuss the impact it has on your relationship.

Discussion Question:

- The conclusion highlights being intentional in marriage. What is one practical step you can take today to be more intentional in nurturing your relationship?

Appendix A: Make It Special (*Focusing on Intimacy in Marriage*)

Activity 1: The Love Song Challenge

- Each of you choose a love song that reminds you of your relationship and share why it's meaningful.

- Consider playing these songs during a date night or special moment together.

Activity 2: Acts of Love

- Over the next week, focus on fulfilling your spouse's emotional or physical needs before they ask.

- Reflect on how this effort affects your connection and communication.

Discussion Question:

- How can you shift your mindset from focusing on your own needs to prioritizing your spouse's needs in your intimate relationship?

Appendix B: A Life-Changing Decision (*Faith and Marriage*)

Activity 1: Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

- Take a few minutes to share your personal faith journey, including challenges and growth moments.
- Discuss how your faith has shaped your marriage and ways to strengthen your spiritual walk together.

Activity 2: Building a Faith-Based Marriage Plan

- Set a faith-related goal as a couple (e.g., praying together daily, joining a small group, studying Scripture on marriage).
- Create an action plan to implement this goal and keep each other accountable. What will your first step be?

Discussion Question:

- How does your faith impact the way you approach challenges and conflicts in marriage?

Appendix C: Find the Study Guide (*Continuing the Journey*)

Activity 1: Planning a Marriage Check-In

- Set a date for a dedicated marriage check-in, using this guide if necessary.
- Discuss key takeaways from *Finding Grace(land)* and how you can apply them in your relationship.

Activity 2: Marriage Growth Resources

- Research additional marriage-strengthening resources (books, podcasts, workshops).
- Choose one resource to explore together and discuss its impact on your relationship.

Discussion Question:

- What is one lesson from *Finding Grace(land)* that has changed the way you view marriage, and how will you implement it moving forward?

Finding Grace(land) by Jim Bentley is available at www.vickibentley.com or Amazon.com.