

Marriage Coaching:

Heart, Hope and Skills for a Great Relationship

By Jeff and Jill Williams



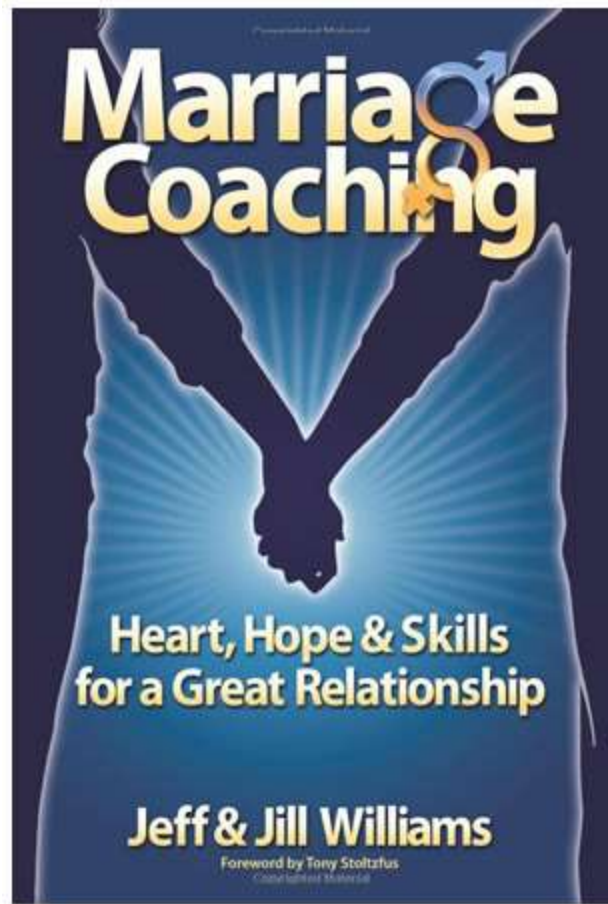
There are plenty of good books out there on marriage. What makes this one great is that incorporates some simple, biblical change principles that seem to have been lost for a long time.

Here's a quick way to grasp one of these principles. Ponder this question for a moment: how many ways can you think of that you could be a better husband or wife?

I don't know about you, but my number would be pretty big! My wife's love language is acts of service, and that is not my strength. I could bring her flowers more often, clean up after myself, take on a few of her responsibilities, set aside more time just to talk... Sort of discouraging to think of all the ways you fall short, isn't it?

Now, let's look at things a little differently. How many things are you really motivated to do for your spouse that you aren't doing? That's a much smaller number! Here's the lesson: knowing what to do does not produce change (otherwise that big list would be much shorter). *Motivation is a far greater predictor of change than information.*

If you are tempted at this point to say, "Duh!" and close the book, hang with me for a minute, because this is profound. In the last church service you attended, how much of the time was spent instructing you on what to do, versus asking what motivates you? In most churches, the ratio is 90 to 100% instruction and very little personal support, practice or interaction. Or if someone came to you for help with their marriage, would your impulse be to offer information and advice, or help them figure it out on their own? The vast majority



of us would choose to teach or instruct. If we summarized what we believe about change based solely on our actions, it would be this: *if people know what to do, they will automatically do it.*

Sounds a little off, doesn't it? Yet we operate out of that belief everyday. Its funny how we can believe things that seem totally ridiculous once we say them out loud. However, change does not begin with information, or even with discipline: it starts with desire.

Coaching is a new way to work at change that is designed around motivation, not instruction. Coaching starts with what *you* want to change based on what God is doing in you, and the whole process is arranged to maximize your motivation--because if you are really motivated, you will really change.

Here are a few more reasons why I believe marriage coaching is becoming an essential tool for revitalizing marriages and growing great relationships:

1. It appeals to men.

The counseling approach is, something is broken or unhealthy that needs help to be fixed. That is a valid approach, but men tend to react to anything that implies they are needy or have failed. Coaching, by contrast, works with people who are basically healthy to help them toward a desired future. It's much easier to get a man into marriage coaching than marriage counseling.

2. It makes people responsible

In coaching you set the agenda, you set the goals and you decide on steps of action. When you choose what to do, your buy-in is higher, and you take more responsibility to get it done.

3. It focuses on growth

The coaching approach works with healthy marriages as well as strained ones, because it trains couples to meet God in their situation and move forward. Instead of getting healed, couples focus on developing the patterns that produce long-term health and growth.

Jeff and Jill explain in depth exactly how coaching works in this book. They've done a great job of applying the fundamentals of a biblical coaching approach to marriages in a practical, applicable way.

I've walked with Jeff for many years, and I have a deep admiration for his intimacy with God, his generosity, his passion for relationships, and the sacrifices he has made to become a man who could write this book. He has been my personal peer coach for the last few years, and through meeting together every few weeks I've been privileged to share the journey of writing it with him (as well as periodically shoving him from behind to get it done!)

Jeff has combined the best of his background in counseling and therapy with the best of the coaching method to produce a book I believe will be a seminal work in this field. As the Message puts it:

“He said, “Then you see how every student well-trained in God’s kingdom is like the owner of a general store who can put his hands on anything you need, old or new, exactly when you need it” (Mt. 13:52).

Reviewed by Tony Stoltzfus, author of *Coaching Questions*