

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Finding Hope and Healing for Your Marriage with Jimmy and Irene Rollins

- Episode 251

Pastoring Pastors (Part 4)

“Have I put the success of ministry over the health and success of my marriage?”

As pastors and leaders, our own personal health and wellbeing directly impacts the health of our churches. That’s why in the final episode of our Pastoring Pastors series, we’re joined by Jimmy and Irene Rollins (founders of [TWO = ONE](#)) to discuss their own journey with marriage and ministry, explain how pastors can seek help for their struggles, and give encouragement for moving toward personal and marital health.

Interview with Jimmy and Irene Rollins

Tony: Sometimes we assume our marriages and our ministry as church leaders are disconnected; however, I've seen that the health of the marriage can directly impact the health of the church. Do you agree with that?

Jimmy: I think the health of a marriage is the foundation for the health of every area in our lives—whether it be physical, spiritual, mental, even social health, and emotional health. The enemy is after marriage because he understands that that is the foundation, even of the church. When we think about how scripture pairs the bride of Christ and the church, and then our natural bride, I think that illustrates the importance of keeping it healthy and keeping it the main thing. It's not just in competition with ministry, or it's not just a healthy marriage equals a healthy ministry, I think a healthy marriage equals a healthy life.

Tony: Do you think ministry leaders have unique pressures on their marriages that they experience, that maybe people outside of ministry don't?

Irene: Absolutely. I think one of the pressures is that the enemy is attacking our marriages heavily, because this is the best gospel message we can preach to our church: the unity and health of a marriage. Leading out of a healthy marriage is preaching the gospel to our churches. If we put the work of ministry first, and then we display it as if that's the most important thing to our churches,

they begin to model that. Then what we experienced was that for years the ministry was growing, but marriages were falling apart.

Tony: What are some practical, next steps that pastors and church leaders should consider to protect or grow the health of their marriages?

Jimmy: I think the first thing is doing an internal self-check evaluation of: “Where is my marriage? What comes up for me when I think about my wife? What comes up for me internally when I'm processing our love connection?” Other questions that we need to ask ourselves personally are: “Am I more passionate about my staff meeting every week, but not a date night every week? Am I more passionate about the size of the kids' ministry that I have, or the size of the ministry that I provide to my own kids?”

We really try to help people think about those questions and answer them from a very honest place so that they can assess areas of their life they may be neglecting. And what we're learning is if you're winning at the wrong thing, you're losing at the right thing. And this church world perpetuates the “fastest growing church” idea where you count numbers as success, so when you get to these questions, the final question you'll ask yourself is: “Have I put the success of ministry over the health and success of my marriage?”

Tony: Some of the folks that are listening today may be in the middle of a marriage crisis, and maybe there's no one other than their spouse that knows that. How does the healing begin for that person?

Irene: Don't ignore the cracks—because, eventually, those cracks are going to turn into a crisis. When Jimmy and I found that when we were in crisis, we had to acknowledge where we were—that we were broken, we were in crisis, we were hurting. I think it's hard for church leaders to acknowledge and admit that we, too, can have crises and breakdowns. So the first thing we did was reach out for help—because every pastor should have a pastor!

So don't ignore the crack, get honest, reach out for help, and get accountability. Because pastors hurt, too. We go through trauma. I thank God we reached out to pastors who helped me get to rehab and get the help I needed. And so now it's the anthem of my life: I'll spend the rest of my life telling pastors, "It's okay to not be okay, and it's okay to get help. You're going to have to work on your marriage and yourself for the rest of your life, so get ready."

Tony: Has revealing the challenges that you were facing, and your journey to finding help and healing, hindered your ministry or strengthened your ministry?

Jimmy: It's 100% strengthened in our ministry. What we thought was going to be the end of our ministry actually was the beginning of our ministry. It even helped us to get to the place where

we were able to walk away from leading a church so that we could help others who lead churches. We acknowledge, though, that as a pastor, getting real is an occupational hazard. Telling someone that you're struggling is an occupational hazard depending on who you're talking to. That's why we wanted to provide a safe place for pastors to talk to someone that's not an overseer or a board member and admit that they're struggling.

Irene always says, "You're definitely hurting someone if you're hiding something." So I want to let pastors know that on the other side of being accountable and honest and vulnerable and transparent, there is a thing called freedom. You don't have to hide anymore. There is safety and there is God's presence in being free enough to share: I'm not okay.

Tony: Any final thoughts to encourage pastors and church leaders when it comes to their marriage health?

Irene: It doesn't matter how long you've been married, there's always something you can be working on. There's a statement we say in recovery: "If you're not working on your recovery, you're working on your relapse." So I believe that we are always going to be doing the work of improving and growing in our relationship with Christ, our relationship with our spouse, and our relationship with ourselves. So get emotionally healthy and work on your marriage—that's the best gift you'll give to your churches.

Jimmy: You don't have to hurt and suffer in silence. A lot of senior pastors, especially men, struggle with pride and not having it altogether. But I've just come to understand that God's strength is perfected in our weaknesses. We need to boast more about what we're weak in than what we're strong in, and lean into the presence of God to help bridge that gap. And so I want to encourage you: You're not weak because you're weak. You're actually strong when you can admit the areas that you're weak.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Jimmy and Irene's marriage ministry, TWO = ONE.

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