



FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



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Visit our website

www.fortifiedmarriages.com

to find out more about the ministry and how you can get involved.

The website also has a great deal of marriage resources and links to other marriage organizations available.

Donations are tax-deductible and make the ministry to couples locally and internationally possible.

Healthy, Productive Communication is Possible

Researcher Judith Wallerstein noted that, “a conflict free marriage is an oxymoron.” Couples are too different to *not* have conflict in marriage. Conflict in the marriage is not the problem, the problem is how couples handle their conflict. In the midst of conflict, couples often allow emotions and poor communication habits free reign and say hurtful things to each other; hurtful words that are not always easily forgotten. Conflict is inevitable in marriage, but it does not have to be hurtful. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul provided an excellent principle to guide our communication: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

Our communication *can* be helpful for building our spouse and others up according to their needs, if we will slow down long enough to think about what we are saying. The Bible has a lot to say about communication and if we will do what it says, our communication will improve. Effective communication is a choice we have to make; we must make the necessary changes to improve communication. It will not happen without work. Most of us have many bad habits in the way we communicate. Discipline is required to make the adjustments and stick to them long enough to develop new healthy habits.

The first thing we must do is stop reacting negatively and learn to respond positively to our spouse. James 1:19 states; “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” Very often, we are thinking of our response as our spouse is speaking or we don’t even wait for him or her to finish, we react to what he is saying or what we think he is saying.

Healthy communication *is* possible, but it will require some changes on our part.



Learning to Communicate Effectively

There are many resources available to help a couple learn to communicate effectively. The Fortified Marriages Manual & Workbook covers every aspect of marriage and will help a couple learn about their differences, understand principles of boundaries and learn communication tools to aid healthy communication. Check out our webpage and go to the Communication Resources page to discover additional resources. Especially look for the “20 Points to Keep Your Communication Effective.” This downloadable page offers 20 points to help any couple increase the effectiveness of their communication.

I like Mike Speakman’s ABC method of communication: “I feel...” “I understand...” “I would like...” Utilizing this tool, one communicates his or her feeling without attacking or

putting down the receiver. As an example; “I feel disrespected by the way I was spoken to this morning. I understand that it was a stressful time for you. But I would like to be communicated to in a respectful way.” When we communicate without attacking our spouse, we can elicit change without the discussion breaking down into an argument.

Communication will also improve when we *validate* our spouse; “Communicating that another’s emotions and responses are legitimate and understandable” (Sue Johnson’s definition). It does not mean that our spouse is right or wrong, it means that we communicate that what he or she feels or thinks is worthwhile. Too often, we invalidate our spouse’s feelings and again, communication breaks down. Validation makes our spouse feel heard and understood.

Roger and Angie (not their real names) had been married ten years. It had not been an easy ten years, discussions usually became arguments and many hurtful things were said over the years. Angie wondered if it was even worth remaining in the marriage. When she heard about a marriage class beginning at their church, Angie thought about asking Roger to go, but quickly dismissed the idea. ‘He wouldn’t attend anyway,’ she reasoned. The following Sunday, in conversation with friends, the subject of the marriage class came up and their friends said, “Hey! We’re going to attend the marriage class, why don’t you guys come with us?” Angie waited and to her surprise, Roger said, “Sure, we’ll come. Won’t we Angie?” Angie nodded in agreement, but inwardly wondered if they would really attend the class.



Both Roger and Angie now say that the Fortified Marriages class was a turning point in their marriage. Discussion with each other and interaction with the couples helped them learn and apply Biblical principles to their marriage. Their communication has improved dramatically and they are working together rather than against each other. They are an example of what God can do when a couple yield themselves to the Lord and begin to work together on their marriage.

Action Point: What are you going to do?

Effective communication is more an attitude than anything else. Will you commit to an Ephesians 4:29 attitude, not letting any unwholesome talk out of your mouth? Will you commit to learning and using healthy communication tools to increase the effectiveness of your communication? Download information and resources from our website and attend a marriage workshop or seminar. Attend or even begin a couples small group to improve your communication and help other couples also. Fortified Marriages Ministry can help!



Chris and Carmen present a variety of seminars and workshops to help couples understand Biblical principles for marriage and begin working together in their marriage relationship. Communication, understanding differences, parenting, needs and finances are some of the presentations available. Contact us to set up a seminar or workshop at your church or organization. A full list and description of the workshops we present are available at our website, under the “Seminars” tab.



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Resources Available at www.fortifiedmarriages.com

- Click “Communications Resources” for books and resources to help improve your communication. (NEW!)
- Click “Links” to find organizations to help strengthen marriages.
- Click “Resources” to discover many excellent marriage materials.
- Click “Manual” to learn about the Fortified Marriages manual and workbook.
- Click “Crisis Resources” to download a helpful resource list.
- Articles and information are also available to learn more about God’s design for marriage.

