

# FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



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MA-MFT

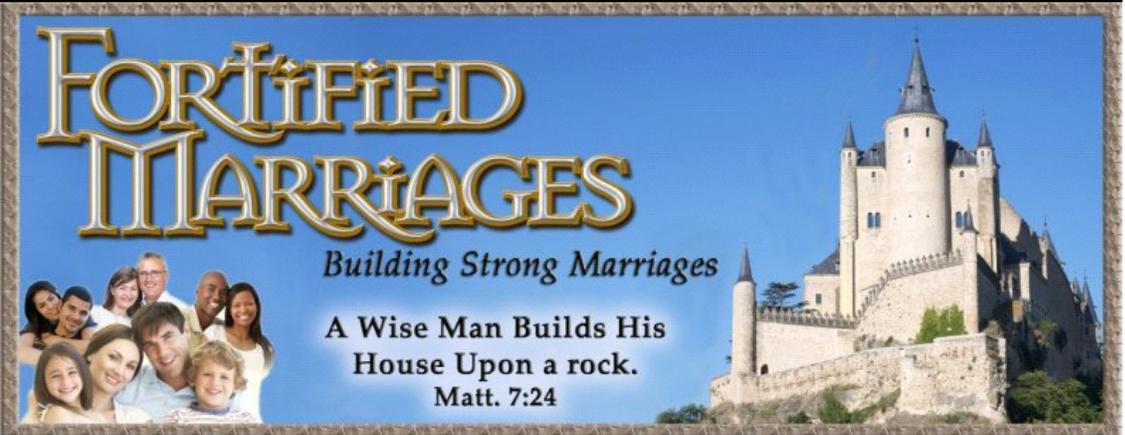
Visit our website

[www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://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.



## Stages of Marriage

Recently, I encountered information that altered the way I view a couple's journey through life together. Several writers proposed stages of marriage I had never heard of and after investigation, I collated those ideas into a proposal that there are five stages of marriage: Enchantment, Realization, Acceptance, Commitment and Co-creation. The information below is a condensed version of the full article found on our website.

**Enchantment**; the "honeymoon" stage that typically lasts for one to two years, more or less, after the wedding. It is the newly in love stage in which many couples believe these "feelings" of love will last forever. Clinging to the euphoric enchantment of this stage is unhealthy and couples must move forward to continue their growth toward oneness in the relationship.

**Realization**; a time of disenchantment, realizing that the person married is not quite what one thought he or she would be. Differences, rather than similarities become prominent and conflict seems to rule the relationship. Healthy boundaries are critical for working through this stage of marriage and couples must be on guard against the disunity and emotional separation that can occur during this time.

**Acceptance**: Couples learn that they can achieve oneness without losing their identity; that their spouses don't have to become just like them. They are better able to work through their differences and cooperate with each other; using their differences to better manage their world; parenting, finances, careers, spirituality, and families. It is important that couples reach this stage of marriage.

**Commitment**: Characterized by greater peace and harmony, couples in this stage of marriage have learned to work together through the trouble and chaos of life without allowing it to seriously affect their relationship. Couples in this stage now know the faults and shortcomings of their spouses, but choose commitment because they also know the strengths and positive attributes of their spouses.

**Co-creation**: Couples reaching this stage now look outside their relationship, extending their oneness and unity to others; there is shared creative work. Susan Campbell is the only writer I've encountered who has suggested this stage of marriage yet, we see that God created mankind in His image (Genesis 1:27), told them to be fruitful and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28) and of all of His creation, only gave humans imagination and the power to create. Priscilla and Aquila in the Bible worked closely together as a team teaching and evangelizing. Billy and Ruth Graham, a different example of this stage of marriage, may not have worked as closely together, but still accomplished much because of their partnership.

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## What Does this Mean for My Marriage?

Marriage reflects God's nature, couples are meant to be in relationship, unity and oneness as seen in the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. Oneness, being naked and unashamed with each other *is* God's plan for married couples. Couples do not move through the stages of marriage towards oneness naturally. It requires work and an investment in the relationship. Knowing the stages of marriage helps couples understand where they are and with that understanding, they can take steps to move forward through the stages. It requires understanding your spouse; making the effort to understand where your spouse has come from and who he or she is a person. There are many resources available to gain this understanding. You can go to marriage seminars, small groups or just plug in to several other couples for a couples study. It may mean that you go for counseling to help work through the problems holding you back from growing in your relationship. The main point is that you must do something.

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## Struggling in the Realization Stage

Roger and Maria were stuck. The enchantment with each other had worn off and they were not moving forward. They had been married for nearly 20 years, but they either argued about most everything or retreated from each other into an uneasy peace. It was easier to be away from each other than to be together. Things reached a crisis point during one event where Maria did not meet Roger's expectations and he reacted in an angry and especially hurtful manner. The ensuing silence was thick with tension one could feel. The next day Maria told Roger she was leaving him. Shocked, he asked what could be so bad that she would leave. She responded that she was done; she was tired of the arguing, bickering and the constant stress in the relationship and would not put up with it any longer. Maria went to her pastor who suggested they try counseling to which Roger readily agreed to. Once in counseling, they learned that their relationship did not have to be so difficult, that through understanding and working through their differences, they could learn healthy communication and how to solve disagreements without hurtful conflict. Counseling helped them out of the Realization Stage and into the Acceptance Stage where they could really begin to grow in their relationship together.

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## Action Point: What are *you* going to do?

What stage is *your* marriage in? Take an honest look at your marriage relationship and determine which of the 5 Stages of Marriage you are in. Is it Enchantment? Realization? Acceptance? Commitment? Co-creation? Do you accept your spouse for who he or she is? Do you know and understand your spouse? Are you working together as a team?

These are questions we need to ask ourselves and our spouses on a regular basis. Society and the culture today tends to drive couples apart, they must work hard to remain connected and continue to grow in their relationship. Are you growing together? Spiritually? Emotionally? Intellectually? Seek to move toward the Co-creation stage so that you might be effective in whatever ministry God has for you, individually or as a couple.



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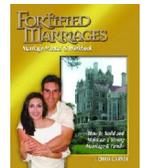
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## Resources Available at [www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com)

- The full *Stages of Marriage* article is available on our site.
- Go to the *Resources Available* page to find a lot of great resources.
- Click "Manual" to learn about the Fortified Marriages manual and workbook.
- Articles and information are also available to learn more about God's design for marriage.



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**Fortified Marriages Ministry** is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization seeking to build strong marriages to withstand the storms that will come. Please consider partnering with us to affect marriages and help couples leave a Godly legacy. Ministry partners may donate to the cause of building strong marriages, become monthly contributors, pray regularly for the ministry, or by letting others know about the ministry. More information is available at <http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com/page.php?22>.