

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



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MA-MFT

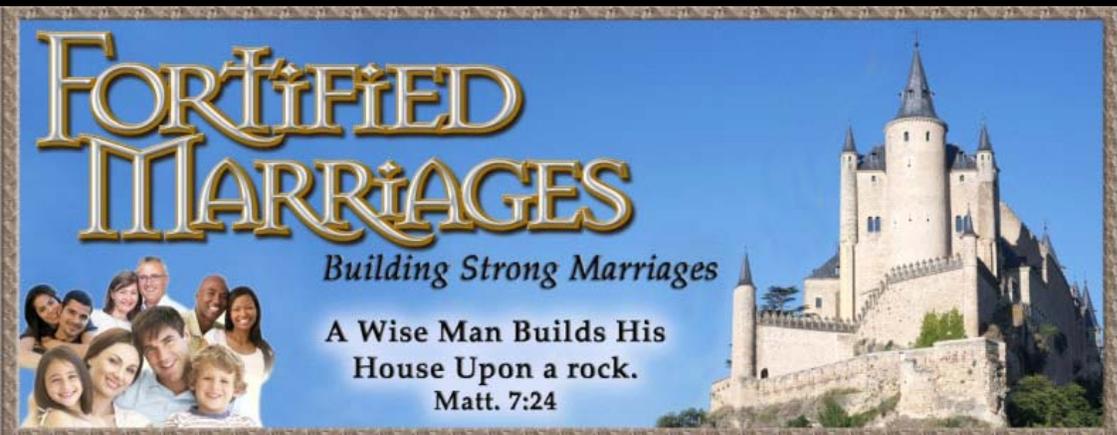
Visit our website

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.



Intimacy: Oneness in the Marriage Relationship

Love, intimacy, and sex are often discussed together as one concept or they may be confused with one another. There is great misunderstanding regarding these concepts, especially in society today. People may think that each is essentially the same thing or that one can have love or sex without intimacy and still have a healthy relationship. The truth is that intimacy ties love and sex together; without intimacy, love is empty and sex is just the physical act of lust. The word *intimacy* derives from the Latin *intima*, meaning “inner” or “innermost.” The saying that intimacy means; “into me see” is very close to the mark. We see this in God’s original plan for marriage as Adam and Eve, before the fall, were “naked and unashamed” (Gen. 2:25). Through intimacy couples grow in oneness, the oneness that should be characteristic of the marriage relationship (Gen. 22:24).



A serious problem lies in the fact that most couples measure the health of their marriages by the quality and/or quantity of sex in the marriage relationship. A few years ago, Christianity Today even published “The Best Sex (Survey) Ever!” to help couples discover how their sex lives compared to others. Intimacy, how much a couple sees into each other should be the measure of relationship health rather than sex. An intimate, close, connected couple, barring physical problems, will find it much easier have a healthy sex life than the disconnected and distant couple.

Enhancing intimacy in the marriage relationship requires time and energy. Intimacy doesn’t just happen, it is the result of a couple doing the things that will connect them; spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically. Husbands and wives are very different and they must be *intentional* about growing together in intimacy. Honesty and openness promotes intimacy and brings a couple closer together. Acceptance, respect and seeking to meet each other’s needs grows the relationship and further builds intimacy. Praying together is extremely important to building intimacy. Through prayer, the couple grows in their relationship with God and with each other.



Intimacy is a crucial part of a growing, strong marriage and although it is a challenge to build and maintain intimacy in marriage, it can be done. Couples must carve out time together and intentionally work to build intimacy. Praying together is a big step in the right direction, but it is also a matter of taking the time to communicate at deeper levels; it is worth the effort.

Intimacy Lost and Found Again

Steve and Carla did not intend to lose intimacy in their marriage, but it didn’t take long

before they both felt disconnected and alone in their marriage. Establishing careers and then the arrival two children moved the couple from best friends always wanting to be around each other to roommates attempting to work through the daily grind of life. When a lay-off caught Steve, he thought he would find another job quickly, but there weren't any jobs to be found and the added financial stress seemed to break down any intimacy left between husband and wife. Physical intimacy was non-existent and a sore point between them, but the breakdown went much deeper than that.

At coffee with a friend, Carla wondered out loud about whether or not it was time to just throw in the towel. Her girlfriend was astonished and asked what could be so bad in her marriage. Carla responded that it wasn't that it was so bad, but there just wasn't anything left in their marriage. Her friend begged Carla to go for counseling and after some prodding, Carla even promised that she would seek out a Christian counselor before thinking any further about divorce. She found a counselor, but when she asked Steve to go to counseling with her, he balked; 'it costs too much,' 'those counselors don't know that much,' 'why should we air our dirty laundry to a stranger' - Steve argued against counseling until Carla said, "I'm thinking about leaving you, and counseling is the last chance; do you want to go or not?" Steve had no clue things were *that* bad and agreed to try it.

During counseling, they learned that the busyness of life consumed their lives and they had stopped connecting with each other. Through some simple (and even fun) exercises, Steve and Carla began reconnecting and reclaiming lost intimacy. It didn't take very long before they felt that they were back on track in their marriage. They learned that they could not stop working to connect with each other, that they needed to continually make time to connect by sharing the joys and fears of life, and also to work together to solve problems they faced. They began praying together daily and saw God miraculously provide a job for Steve. They didn't have more time in their days, but by prioritizing connection with each other, the busyness didn't seem to consume their days. Steve and Carla are now even considering beginning a small group for couples to continue the work they've begun and also help other couples.



Action Point: What are you going to do?

How do you connect with your spouse to keep intimacy in your marriage? Do you make the time to connect together and grow together? Do you pray with your spouse? If not, you can begin praying together today! Building or maintaining intimacy your marriage requires effort, but it

is worth the effort! Don't wait until your marriage has come apart before you seek help or do something to reconnect with your spouse. Or perhaps you know someone lacking intimacy in his or her marriage. Challenge him or her to seek help and rebuild intimacy.



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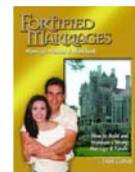
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Resources Available at www.fortifiedmarriages.com

- Go to the *Resources Available* page to find a lot of great resources, including resources and ideas to help build intimacy.
- An article is available on the site to help you begin praying together.
- Boundaries, Communication, and Conflict Resolution resources are available also.
- 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.



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 let others know about the ministry. More information is available at <http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com/page.php?22>.