

# FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



Chris & Carmen Garner  
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.

## Building a Marriage on *the* Rock

Matthew 7:24 tells us that a wise man builds his house upon a rock. The passage contrasts the difference of how a house built on sand will not last when storms hit versus a house built on rock that will weather the storms and remain standing. Applying this analogy to our lives, Jesus pointed out that the key to weathering the storms of life is hearing His words and putting them into practice. It is a matter of obedience. The *Christian* marriage is a marriage built on *the* Rock - the Rock of Jesus Christ.

We have seen this principle at work in the past few years. Published articles have blamed marital breakup and divorce on the financial crisis of the past few years. In reality, the crisis did not cause breakup, but revealed marriages built on sand rather than the solid foundation of Christ. Too many couples build their houses - their marriages on how much they feel loved or how happy they are or on the dream of what marriage should look like. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7 that those who marry *will* experience trouble. It is a certainty in this broken, sin-filled world, but in Jesus, we can take heart, because He has overcome the world. Marriages won't fall apart during crisis if they are built on the Rock.



Building a marriage on the Rock requires understanding God's will for marriage; we must listen to His word, but we also have to put it into practice. It is God's will that a couple become one; that they work together in unity and singleness of purpose (Genesis 2:24). Marriage also is to be a commitment for life; no man is to rip apart the one-flesh marriage relationship (Mark 10:6-9). Marriage, as Gary Thomas writes, is not meant to make one happy, but to help people grow in holiness. Commitment and the pursuit of holiness is God's plan and the basis of marriage, not pleasure, materialism or the pursuit of happiness.

Couples must be intentional about growing in their relationship and they must make the decision *together* that they will build their marriages on Christ the Rock. The marriage built on this Rock:

- Prays together
- Celebrates together
- Studies God's word together
- Spends time together
- Worships together
- Guards their marriage against intruders
- Meets Challenges together

All marriages are a work in progress; we all must continue to work on our marriages. It is the process of growing in oneness.

*To paraphrase J.R.R. Tolkien: 'In a more perfect world or a even a better situation, a person might have found a more perfect mate – but in reality, one's true soul-mate is the one he or she is actually married to.'*

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## Chris & Carmen: From Built on Sand to Built on Rock

Usually, this newsletter relates true stories, but names are changed to protect the identity of the couple. This month we relate a true story without adaptation; it is our story. Our marriage began on a high; we were so much in love and accepting Christ into our lives raised our level of happiness to near euphoria. We overlooked the red flags that pointed to a potentially dysfunctional marriage and lacking the knowledge of what marriage requires, launched full force into this wonderful new life together. Our marriage was built in the sand of *feelings of love* and it didn't take long for it to begin crumbling. Faced with many problems in life, not understanding God's plan for marriage, and, it seemed, no solution to our constant bickering, I made the decision to leave. But God had another plan...

God intervened through an acquaintance who was unrelenting in his pursuit of meeting me and then pointedly told me I could not leave my wife. I went home and told Carmen that I wasn't leaving, but I didn't know what to do. I acquiesced to counseling and through counseling, attending marriage seminars and studying God's plan for marriage, we began a journey that led to our working full-time in marriage ministry. We began to understand our identity in Christ, boundaries and a host of other relationship principles, *and* we began growing in Christ and oneness.

Our marriage is not perfect, but after 31 years of marriage, we continue to grow and learn... and sometimes struggle. But our marriage is built on the Rock of Jesus Christ. We can now say that we *are* married for life. We pray together daily, seek the Lord together and *make* time to grow in our marriage relationship. It *is* work, but I can tell you that there is a satisfaction to knowing that we are truly committed to each other. We aren't always happy, but we are always content in knowing that we are each other's true soul-mates.



*You can read the full article about how God saved our marriage at the Fortified Marriages Ministry website or in the book; Can My Marriage be Saved, by Mae & Erika Chambers.*

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

Is your marriage built on the Rock of Jesus Christ? Are you truly committed to your spouse - no matter what? Are you pursuing holiness and in your marriage, growing in your walk with the Lord?

Be the person, God has made you to be and love your spouse as Christ has loved you. Forgive, honor, encourage and challenge each other in your marriage relationship and your relationship with the Lord.

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**PO Box 7385  
Chandler, AZ 85246**

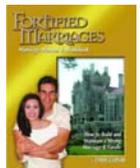
**Phone: 480-699-2515**

**E-mail: [info@fortifiedmarriages.com](mailto:info@fortifiedmarriages.com)**

**Website: [www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com)**

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

- Go to the *Marriage Resources* page to find many great resources.
- Several articles are available about protecting your marriage.
- Learn about the Fortified Marriages manual and workbook - a great resource to help build strong marriages.
- Articles and information are also available to learn more about God's design for marriage.



*Chris & Carmen present a variety of seminars and workshops to help couples grow in their marriage and work together as a team. Contact us for more information about sponsoring seminars at your church.*

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

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