

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



Chris & Carmen Garner
MA-MFT

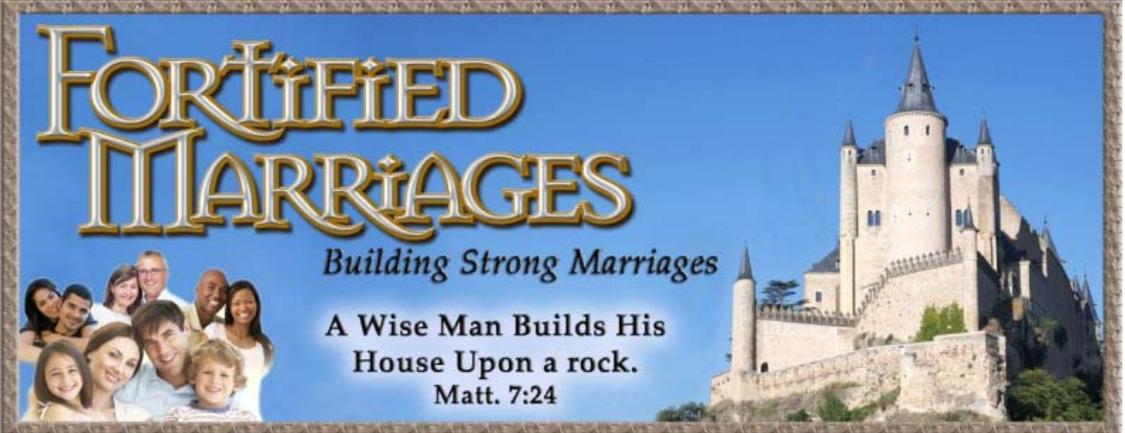
Visit our website

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.



Unrealistic Expectations: A Relationship Destroyer

Everyone enters marriage with expectations. They range from house-keeping ('this is the way my mother always did it.') to the way one celebrates holidays to how a couple communicates. We generally enter marriage expecting to continue doing the things we have always done in the ways we have always done them. Adapting from "me" to "we" is part of the adjustment every couple experiences. Problems occur when one spouse expects the other to just do things his or her way. Bigger problems occur when there are expectations that a spouse will *never* do anything hurtful or say anything contrary to what one believes. There are many unrealistic expectations couples have in marriage and they can be very destructive.



People don't usually verbalize their expectations but the expectations become traps that spouses unknowingly fall into, and as pain and hurt build, the traps become bigger and more damaging. The fact is that your spouse is not you, and even as you grow in oneness, your differences will remain pronounced and a potential wedge between you. The most unrealistic of expectations is that one's spouse should always make him or her happy. Stephen Arterburn reports that 70 percent of Americans believe the purpose of marriage is for one's mate to make him or her happy. It is a myth perpetrated by selfishness and media portrayal that living *happily ever after* is what marriage should be about. In reality, we *will* face problems and challenges in life and in our marriage. We don't bring together two different worlds into the oneness of marriage without some conflict and adjustment.



Married life does not have to be one challenge after another. *Two are better than one* and if we work together, we can grow and effectively work through the conflict we will inevitably experience as a couple. Couples must first accept each other for who each person is, as God created him or her and then give grace as one's spouse does things that don't meet expectations.

Yes, sinful behavior must be addressed, but here we are talking about the expectations most people have regarding certain aspects of life. Other people, even our spouse, do not know our mind nor think like us. If we want something from our spouse, we need to let him or her know. They don't just figure it out intuitively. Unrealistic expectations are really all about self; defining love as someone doing everything we want, how we want it and when we want it done. None of us would verbalize that; but in reality, that is what expectations are. Biblically, we are to seek to love and give, not hold expectations of what we should receive.

Unrealistic expectations lead to resentment which is poison to a relationship.

The Pain of Unmet Expectations



Sandy's life was miserable. Her husband, George, just didn't seem to get it. It was almost as if he purposefully sought to annoy her and do things his own way. She had told him what she needed from him for years and she didn't know if he was incapable of doing what she wanted or just refused to accommodate her. Sandy was to the point of giving up on the marriage; she shouldn't have to live life this way. For his part, George wanted to do the right thing, but whatever he did seemed to be wrong. He didn't understand why their marriage had to be so difficult.

Their marriage began right, George was attentive and they worked well together, but at some point things changed and their life together became one conflict after another. His responses were aggravating and she began reacting in anger which led to many arguments. The marriage relationship deteriorated into an almost daily cycle of her demanding and his detachment, leading to terrible arguments and intense dissatisfaction.

When George and Sandy went to counseling, neither were very motivated to work on the marriage. Sandy wanted George "fixed" so that he would be the husband she needed him to be. George felt he had been working hard in the marriage for years and couldn't see how things could change. It was only when they both gave up their unhealthy expectations that they were able to begin making progress and moving toward a healthy marriage relationship. Sandy had to give up her expectations of how *she* wanted George to be. She had to begin setting healthy boundaries; accepting responsibility for the way she communicated to her husband allowing him to be who God created him to be. George also had to let go his expectations of how the relationship should be, seek to engage emotionally with his wife and think about what he could do for her instead of attempting to avoid conflict (it never worked) at all costs. As they began giving of themselves to each other and seeking understanding rather than expecting understanding, their marriage improved dramatically.



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

Do you have unrealistic expectations of your spouse? Please think about this; consider what you argue about. Do you have arguments because your spouse doesn't see things your way or perhaps because he or she doesn't understand what you are saying? We all have expectations of

our spouse and if they are unrealistic, they can lead to resentment that will destroy our marriages. Remove the unrealistic expectations from your relationship; accept your spouse for who he or she is and give grace when things are not done the way you think they should be done.

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PO Box 7385
Chandler, AZ 85246

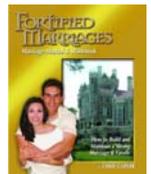
Phone: 480-699-2515

E-mail: info@fortifiedmarriages.com

Website: www.fortifiedmarriages.com

- The Fortified Marriages website has many great resources.
- The Fortified Marriages manual and workbook is a great small group resource to help build strong marriages.
- Our website has information about how you can get involved in ministering to marriages.
- For an excellent blog about unrealistic expectations, go to:

www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-arterburn/stop-clinging-to-unrealis_b_3430029.html



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.

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>.
