

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.

Serving Your Spouse

Jesus set the example and pattern for the Christian life and also for the Christian marriage. The Bible tells us that “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Yet, how many couples have you seen who strive to always serve their spouses? I can think of one, but it took the husband literally being struck by lightning before he began serving his wife. You cannot imagine the stories we hear in counseling of men and women refusing to serve their spouses. Husbands who ignore their wives’ needs while seeking his own fulfillment through career or advancement, or expecting that she “submit” and take care of him while he does nothing for her. Wives who out of past pain, refuse to support or help their husbands or say they will serve their husbands when their husbands act the way they “should.”

How can we call ourselves Christians and refuse to live the example Jesus set for us? Do we not know that the Bible even calls our Christianity into question when we do not give of ourselves for our fellow Christians - the closest fellow Christian being our spouse (see 1 John 3:11-20)? The Bible defines love as giving of ourselves, dying to self - *servicing*. This is reiterated in Philippians chapter 2; reminding us to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4). There is no doubt that the Bible teaches that husbands and wives are to serve one another - it *is* the essence of the Christian walk.



So what does it mean to serve your spouse? The Bible points out that serving our spouse means that we consider him or her before ourselves, that we seek to encourage, build up, strengthen and uphold our spouse and carry his or her burdens. It is living for our spouse rather than living for self. Yes, we must have healthy boundaries and say ‘no’ to sin. But that is a part of serving our spouse as we help him or her to become all that the Lord wants him or her to be. Sure, serving means that we are considerate of our spouse, but more than that, it is a matter of thinking of our spouse first. Can we honestly say that most often, we think of our spouse and his or her welfare first before our own welfare? I think the vast majority of us (me included) would have to answer no, we don’t. It doesn’t mean that we give up, but that we, in God’s strength and power, continue the growth process in Christ, being transformed more into His image and seeking to love our spouse with the same selfless love He has for us.



Husbands and wives must serve each other, must “give themselves up” for one another.
Timothy Keller

Experiencing Service First Hand

On December 30th our lives changed pretty dramatically for the following six weeks. Carmen missed a step and broke her foot in two places. She could only avoid surgery if she put NO weight on her foot for the next four weeks. She had to remain down with her foot elevated. So I got to experience serving my wife, meeting most of her needs and taking care of the house completely so that she could heal and prayerfully avoid the surgery many go through with this type of injury. While she could go to the bathroom and move around some with her scooter, I had to help her bathe, do the wash, cook, clean and be available to take care of most of her needs.



I have to say that the first week was easy, but by the second week, I had things I needed to do. I needed to work and take care of the ministry. The pressure was on and would I successfully complete my time of serving my wife? Or would I get impatient with her for *inconveniencing* me with her needs? I am happy to report that she tells others that I did very well. Thank you Lord! You see, we *can* do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthens us! Now, the next step is to continue with this attitude of serving my wife, even as she heals and does not require my service as much.

Jesus washed His disciples' feet. We today cannot comprehend how offensive this action would be in the culture of the time. The master or leader simply did not humble himself that much. Yet, Jesus commanded His disciples to go and do likewise. He further admonished the disciples by telling them that they would be blessed if they did these things. I have to tell you that I experienced some of the blessing Jesus spoke of through my wife's appreciation and thankfulness for what I did to serve her. Why do we have to get stuck in our selfishness of the old nature holding us back from the blessing God promises for our service? My prayer is that I will continue to serve my wife unselfishly even as she heals and returns to full health, but also that you will see the benefits of *servicing* your spouse and blessing him or her.

Action Point: What are you going to do?

Do you seek to serve your spouse? Do you consider his or her interests before your own and die to self to take care of your spouse before yourself? I understand that it is not easy with the incredible pace of life that most of us live in, but friend there really is no option here. Jesus said that you

love Him, you will obey Him and He commanded you to serve one another. Serve your spouse, not out of obligation, but with an attitude of thankfulness; thankfulness for the wonderful grace and mercy of a Lord who didn't just command service, but lived it out for you.

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

PO Box 7385
Chandler, AZ 85246

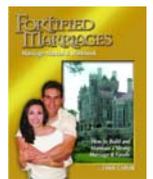
Phone: 480-699-2515

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 great article about serving your spouse see: *Serving with the Right Attitude* at www.focusonthefamily.org.



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>.
