

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



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MA-MFT

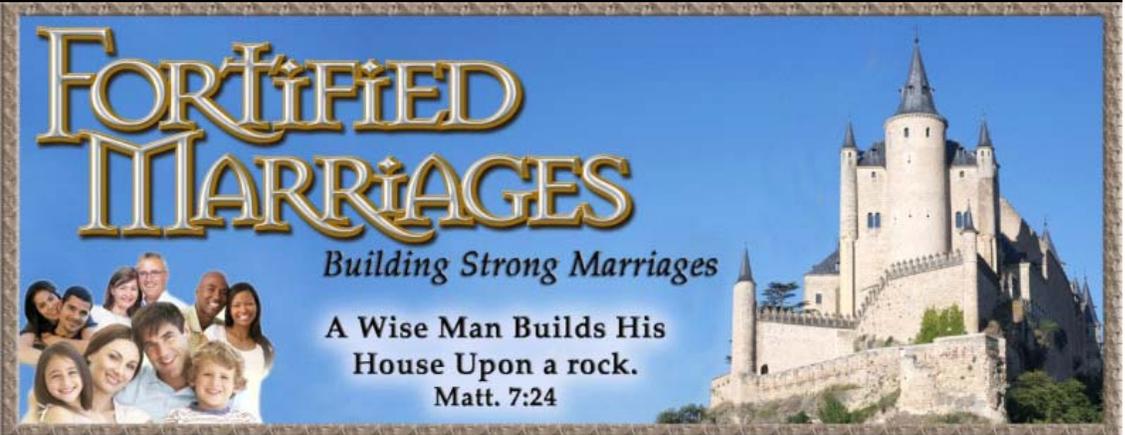
Visit our website

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.



The Christ-Centered Marriage

The term “Christian” tends to be used today without much thought. People call themselves Christians, but there is no evidence that Jesus Christ is lord of their lives. In the same way, people say they have a “Christian marriage,” yet there is little or no indication that Christ is in the marriage. The fact that the “church” has virtually the same divorce rate as the world demonstrates that too many marriages today are not really *Christian* marriages. Add to this the abuse, neglect, dysfunction, division and lack of oneness so often seen in marriages in the church and one has to wonder if Christ has any place in marriage today. Jesus admonished the hypocrites of his day that they honored him with their lips, but their hearts were far from him (Matthew 15:8). Jesus also said that to love him, was to obey him (John 14:15). How can we claim to have a Christian marriage, if our marriage does not reflect Jesus Christ?

A *Christian* marriage should be centered on Jesus Christ and based on Christians principles. People should be able to watch a couple and see that there is grace and the love of Christ in that marriage relationship. The marriage should be “Christ-centered,” not merely “Christian.” What does a Christ-centered marriage look like? There are several general aspects that are seen in the *Christ-centered* marriage. First, a couple should fulfill the law of Christ by carrying each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2); this is praying and caring for and encouraging each other when a couple experiences problems. Grace must be evident in the marriage; we have received so much grace from our Lord, we must extend grace to our spouse. Finally, the fruit of the Spirit should be evident in the Christ-centered marriage: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). It is not a list of “dos” and “don’ts” - the Christ-centered marriage is a husband and wife living out their identities *in Christ* and living in obedience to their Lord and Savior.



The Christ-centered marriage is a marriage focused on Christ, not self. Too often our own selfishness and self-centeredness gets in the way of living our lives for Christ. We must die to self and seek to love our spouse as Christ demonstrated love for the church by giving himself up for her. When we die to self and seek to give to our spouse; to love him or her, first as God would want us to love them and second as they need to be loved, our marriage will reflect Christ and will be a testimony for all those we come in contact with. It is a day by day, moment by moment decision to surrender our lives to Christ and allow God’s Spirit to control and guide us - to help us love our spouse as Christ loves us.

A Christian Marriage is a spiritual union with God that is intended to be a visible expression of the relationship that God has with the Church, which is the Bride of Christ. ~ Neil Anderson & Charles Mylander

The Christ-Centered Marriage Lived Out

Can you think of a couple who truly has a Christ-centered marriage? What would that look like in day to day life? Is it even possible? I have seen glimpses and read stories of Christ-centered marriages. Contemplating this topic, I think of my friend always considering his wife's needs before his own and being ready to serve her. I think of Aquila and Pricilla never being mentioned individually and *together* helping Apollos understand the way of God. I think of Abigail Adams enduring the pain of separation so that her husband, John could help bring about the formation of the United States. But also of John postponing his return to work as President during Abigail's serious illness in 1798 to remain by her side. I think of Abraham Lincoln appearing before a Senate committee investigating his wife, Mary and humbly standing up for his wife, denying any treasonable acts. I see the Christ-centered marriage lived out when I see a husband or wife die to self to encourage, uphold - to *love* his or her spouse unconditionally and completely.



A Christ-centered marriage requires that we extend grace, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness to each other just as God has done for us. It is not always easy, but out of obedience to Christ, it is always the right thing to do. And God will bless that obedience! It does not mean that we allow our spouse to sin against us, we must maintain healthy boundaries, but it does mean that we die to self and put our spouse first.

Tips for A Christ-Centered Marriage by Darlene Schacht

- #1. Pray with and for each other.
- #2. Communicate with love and respect.
- #3. Be willing to give more than you get.
- #4. Show respect.
- #5. Don't talk bad about your spouse - ever.
- #6. Seek to grow in intimacy and oneness.
- #7. Get the idea of divorce out of your mind - completely.
- #8. Appreciate what you have.

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

Do you have a *Christ-centered* marriage? Would someone see Christ in your interaction with your spouse? Is selflessness or selfishness most evident in the day to day living of your married life?

Place Christ at the center of your marriage, dying to self and putting your spouse first. Love him or her unconditionally, extending grace and forgiveness as needed and compassion and kindness always.



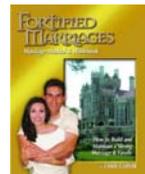
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- The Fortified Marriages website has many great resources.
- The Fortified Marriages manual and workbook is a great small group resource to help build strong marriages.
- Our website has information about how *you* can get involved in ministering to marriages.



Book to check out: The Christ-Centered Marriage by Neil Anderson & Charles Mylander

Article: 12 Tips for a Christ-Centered Marriage; by Darlene Schacht

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>.
