

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.

Barriers to Intimacy

Intimacy; that openness, transparency; spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical closeness—the oneness of marriage does not occur naturally. Mankind was designed for intimacy; first with God and then with one’s spouse. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God and they were naked and unashamed with each other - in other words, they knew deep, satisfying intimacy. Couples must spend time and energy to build intimacy in their marriage. It requires vigilance on our part because there are many hindrances and barriers to intimacy. These barriers breakdown intimacy and can lead to breakdown of the marriage relationship.



Barriers to intimacy are those things that block or prevent intimacy from occurring in our marriage relationship. They make it difficult to understand or connect with our spouse. Barriers to intimacy can be:

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|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Busyness | Stress | Tension |
| Criticism | Miscommunication | Lack of communication |
| Expectations | Self image | Hurtful communication |
| Disrespect | Fatigue | Lack of acceptance |
| Impatience | Illness | Children |
| Rejection | Secrets | Addictions |
| Sin | Wrong priorities | Sarcasm |
| Exhaustion | Financial problems | Unforgiveness |

There are many different things working against intimacy in marriage. Since the fall of mankind, intimacy is not a *natural* part of marriage. Our tendency is toward separateness, not connectedness. Some of the barriers to intimacy are out of our control. We don’t decide to get sick, but illness is a barrier to intimacy. There may be great demands at work and children can consume a couple’s time with the many needs they have, but we still have a choice about whether or not these demands will build walls between us as a couple. Many of the barriers to intimacy are under our control; in reality, we have a choice regarding our expectations, criticism, disrespecting our spouse or keeping secrets. Our defense mechanisms are often hurtful to our spouse and mankind’s bent is toward selfishness and self-centeredness. Walls *will* build up between husband and wife if we let them.



“Successful couples are those who are in touch with each other’s emotional worlds.”
John Gottman

Breaking down the Barriers to Intimacy

Barriers to intimacy build up naturally, couples must work together to break down the walls that develop between them. Even couples in good marriages will tend to drift apart from time to time. The key is being purposeful about reconnecting on a regular basis and to continue to grow in intimacy. Whether it is a little separation or huge walls between husband and wife, couples can and need to reconnect to bring intimacy back into their relationships.



The first step to breaking down barriers is to identify the barriers. Every couple we counsel lacks intimacy in their relationships and often, identifying intimacy barriers is not easy. If a couple is not careful, the identification process itself can break down intimacy if they begin criticizing or point fingers at each other. During the identification process, we need to focus on the problem, not each other and seek to honestly discover the barriers keeping us from enjoying the intimacy God wants for our marriage.

Once the barriers are identified, we can now begin working together to eliminate the barriers. It may mean developing better habits of communication, discovering ways to connect emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and physically, making the effort to spend time together in a variety of ways - at times, just having fun together! Intimacy must be cultivated in our marriages and there is no one right way to develop intimacy in marriage. Every couple must discover what builds intimacy in their relationship. The biblical command of clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience and forgiving one another as Christ forgave us (Colossians 3:12-13) certainly will help breakdown many barriers to intimacy. Developing a *graceful* marriage will also help a lot. We need to think positively and do loving things for our spouse to help breakdown those barriers that will creep into our marriage. The question is, 'When will we stop making excuses and begin working together to tear down those walls between us as husbands and wives?'

Action Point: What are you going to do?

What will you do to build intimacy in your marriage? Do you need to make time to connect with your spouse? Change the way you communicate? Be more kind, compassionate, and gentle with your spouse? Intimacy; openness, transparency, and unity is God's plan for marriage.

What can you do to bring intimacy into your relationship? The work of building intimacy was easy during courtship and while there certainly may be barriers to intimacy later in marriage, it is possible to build and maintain intimacy throughout your married life.

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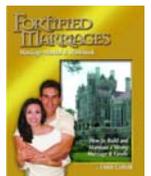
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- The Fortified Marriages website has many great resources.
- The Fortified Marriages manual and workbook is a great small group resource to help build strong marriages.
- Our website has information about how you can get involved in ministering to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



Books to check out: Intimate Allies by Dan Allender & Tremper Longman
Intimate Encounters by Ferguson and Thurman

Article: Creating Intimacy & Friendship in Marriage by Debra Evans:
www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/sex_and_intimacy/the_role_of_friendship_in_marriage/creating_intimacy_and_friendship_in_marriage.aspx

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>.
