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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.

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FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Building Strong Marriages



A Wise Man Builds His House Upon a rock.
Matt. 7:24



The Number ONE Problem in Marriage: Selfishness

We all marry thinking that the “honeymoon” will never end; that the euphoric feelings of love will always be there, but the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that those who marry will have trouble (1Cor. 7:28). Yes, there will be trouble from the outside; illness, financial problems, problems with children, but often the problems couples experience come from one or both spouses’ selfishness. James 4:1 points this out; “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” Each spouse’s own selfishness tends to be the biggest problem in marriage.



People don’t usually think they are marrying a selfish person or that they, themselves are selfish. Timothy Keller addressed this problem when he wrote that at some point relatively early in the marriage relationship, a spouse discovers how selfish his or her spouse is. Then they discover that their spouse has gone through a similar experience and begins to tell them how selfish they are. Finally, each spouse concludes that their spouse’s selfishness is more problematic than their own. We tend to minimize our own selfishness and remain focused on our spouse’s selfishness. This should not be so! The Bible has much to say about our pointing the finger as others when we have our own sin in our lives and God desires that we take responsibility for our own behavior without judging others.

Mr. Keller wrote that, “If two spouses each say, ‘I’m going to treat my self-centeredness as the main problem in the marriage,’ you have the prospect of a truly great marriage.” We must get over ourselves and take on the attitude of Christ; who being God, the Creator of the universe, humbled Himself and endured the scorn of mankind so that we might be saved (Phil 2). Too many husbands and wives today justify their own poor behavior pointing out that their spouses’ behavior is wrong and worse than their own. We must take responsibility for our own behavior, words and actions and quit being so selfish and self-centered!

The Apostle John wrote; “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1John 3:16). When we seek to give and die to self, we are living as God would want us to live. Yes, we must set healthy boundaries. Abuse or sin of one spouse is not acceptable, but that is not the problem in most marriages. We all suffer from the “human” condition of the sin that so easily entangles us. But God has given us everything we need for life and Godliness; in His strength, we can overcome our selfishness and live an other-centered life.



“...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. ~ Matt 20:24

Moving from Self-Centered to Other-Centered

I have a friend who will tell you that for too many years, he was a selfish, self-centered man. Life was all about him, what he wanted and what he would or wouldn't do. After more than 30 years of marriage, his wife said enough; she was done with his selfishness. By the grace of God, they went for counseling and he woke up. Confronted with his wife's pain and her refusal to continue in marriage as they had for too many years, he said he would do whatever it took to change. He listened to his wife and he validated her concerns, pain and hurt. She also realized that she had her own selfishness to deal with. They both allowed God to work in their lives and submitted their lives and marriage to Christ. The change didn't happen overnight, but as they developed healthy communication and helped each other grow in their obedience to Christ, their marriage changed dramatically.



The movement from self-centered to other-centered did not happen magically in this couple's lives. It began with a decision; a decision that they were going to view selfishness as the major problem in their marriage and that they were going to change. First, the husband and then the wife did change and as they both sought to build each other up and help each grow in Christ, their marriage became a flourishing, strong marriage that was uplifting to both. Are they perfect today? NO! But they seek to give to each other and they tend to even act like newlyweds! It is wonderful to see what God can do when two people submit their lives and marriage to Him and allow Him to mold and shape them more into His image. Their marriage is a testimony to many!

Action Point: What are you going to do?

Are you willing to acknowledge that selfishness is the major problem in your marriage and address that selfishness in yourself? Will you confess that you too often get mad at your spouse because he or she didn't do things the way you wanted in the timing you desired? Will you admit that the fights and quarrels in your marriage too often come from your own selfish desires?

Surrender your spouse to God and allow Him to change him or her. Quit trying to mold your spouse into the image you want and allow God to mold him or her into His image. Love your spouse as Christ loves you; unconditionally and with a willingness to die to self and give everything. It is not easy, but you can do everything in Christ who will give you the strength.

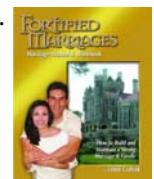
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Phil 2:3



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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: *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy Keller
The Christ-Centered Marriage by Neil Anderson & Charles Mylander
Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas

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>.