

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



Chris & Carmen Garner
MA-MFT

Visit our website

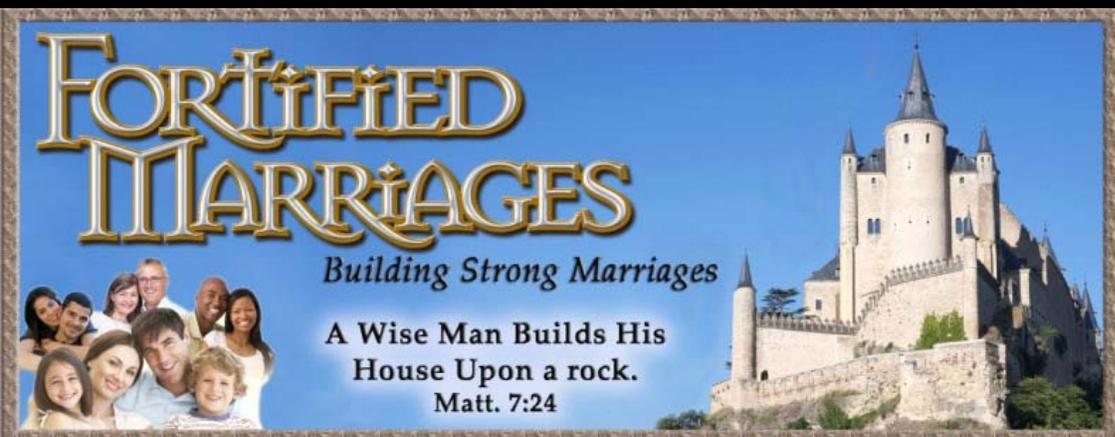
www.fortifiedmarriages.com

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.

También disponible en español



Communicating to be Heard

Everyone wants to be heard. We feel respected, validated and understood when another person actually hears what we say. But why does this seem so difficult? Why is communication one of the most difficult aspects of any relationship and especially the marriage relationship? Often, it is because we do not communicate in ways that are conducive to being heard.

We raise our voice, speak harshly, attack verbally or do not communicate clearly. Yes, the other person must listen, but it would be very helpful if we communicated to aid the other person's hearing what we say.

Ephesians 4:29 states: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." It seems simple enough, but how many of us communicate this way? We have heard all the excuses - some stating that their spouses don't respond until they yell, others saying that yelling is just part of who they are. They blame family, culture or spouses and do not take ownership for their own words and behavior. Yet, we *can* communicate in a way that we will be heard. Beginning with the Biblical principles of putting others first and seeking their best, we can develop healthy communication habits that will help in our marriages and all of our relationships.

James 1:19 reminds us that; "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." The first principle of being heard is being slow to speak; not just reacting to what we've heard. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15:1). It is a matter of controlling our own bodies (or tongues) in a holy and honorable way (1Thes. 4:4); James 1:26 going so far to say that if we don't keep a tight reign on our tongue, our religion is worthless. Communicating with gentleness and softness helps build others up even when we must confront sin or inappropriate behavior (Gal. 6:1). Communicating to be heard means that we have the other person's best interest in mind, that we seek to build them up, that we use "I" statements rather than "you" statements, that we communicate with respect and kindness. It is not easy to change the way we communicate, but if we have the attitude of Christ and in humility, consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2), we can change our communication so that we are heard. If you want the same results, continue to communicate the way you always have; if you want change, you must be intentional about changing the way *you* communicate.



"Couples that demonstrate respect, kindness, and humor are better able to deal with conflict and tend to have lasting partnerships." Dr. Bonnie Jacobson

Improving Your Communication

Mike Speakman's ABC method of communication is simple and follows Biblical principles. It's simple format is: "I understand..." "I feel..." "I would like..." Using this method, one does not criticize or attack the other person, but first takes the other person's point of view, then expresses their own feelings and finally asks for change. It is an excellent way to express what is going on with yourself while remaining positive about the relationship. There are many other tools that can help you build healthy communication into your relationships. Remember, the key is to do something different than you have been doing. One person can change communication patterns in a relationship. You also can use the following 20 points to help you develop better communication. As a couple, pick 2 items to work on each. One for yourself, one for your spouse. Working on 4 items as a couple can quickly and dramatically improve your communication.



Keeping Your Communication Effective

1. When possible, prepare the setting before a disagreement.
2. Remember, your spouse is not your enemy.
3. Allow for your gender and personality differences.
4. Maintain your boundaries.
5. Respect your spouse's boundaries.
6. Show love and respect to your spouse.
7. Listen before responding.
8. Clarify anything you do not understand.
9. Use "I", not "you" statements when presenting a problem.
10. Do not criticize.
11. Work to solve the problem, rather than attacking your spouse.
12. Acknowledge your part in contributing to the problem.
13. Stay on the subject; do not bring in other issues.
14. Do not seek to "win" the disagreement.
15. Do not argue in front of your children.
16. Fight fair; do not manipulate, bring up the past, exaggerate, use the silent treatment, sarcasm, name calling, attacking their character or use anger to overpower your spouse.
17. Use a "time out" when necessary and set a time to resume the discussion.
18. Offer possible solutions.
19. Plan for implementation of your solution.
20. Seek mediation when necessary.

Action Point: What are you going to do?

Everyone can improve their communication; no one is perfect. The communication effectiveness inventory on our website can help you determine areas in which you can improve your communication. Use the inventory and the 20 points above to be purposeful about improving your com-

munication with your spouse, children or anyone you are in relationship with. Please take some time to evaluate your communication and make the effort to improve your communication. You can communicate in such a way that you are heard - it only requires one person to make the change.

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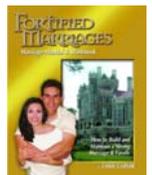
Website: www.fortifiedmarriages.com

- 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.
- There are excellent communication resources available on the site.

Articles for more information:

How Can We Communicate Better? www.loveisrespect.org

Communication Skills for Healthy Relationships: www.wfn.noaa.gov



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>.
