

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages
to Strengthen
Families, Churches
and the
Community



Chris & Carmen Garner
MA-MFT

Visit our website

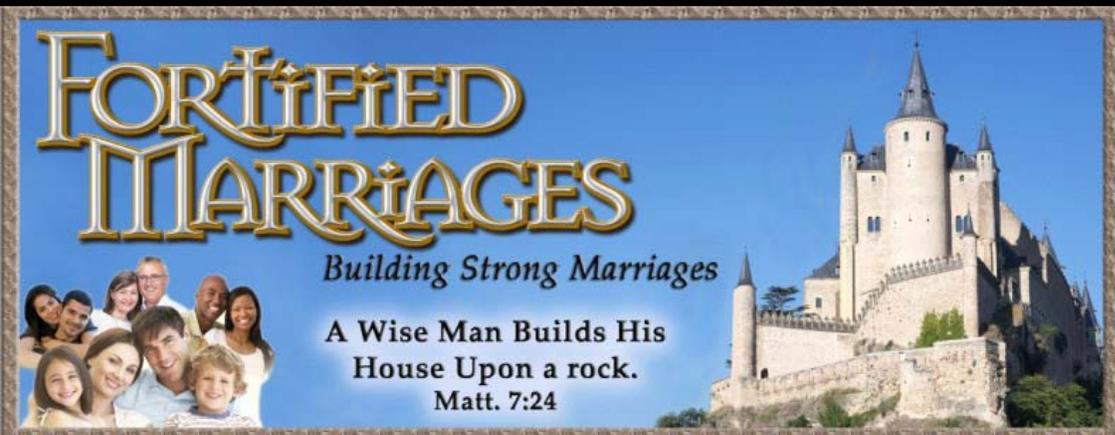
www.fortifiedmarriages.com

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
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make the ministry to
couples locally and
internationally possible.

También disponible
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Emotions, Can You Trust Them?

Defining emotions is not an easy task; the “experts” do not agree and dictionaries are confusing and center around *feelings*. There is a lot of information about what emotions *are*, but no quick and easy definition. Emotions are part of the human existence and how people react to their emotions deeply affects their lives. The Bible portrays a God who has emotions; He expresses *happiness, anger, disappointment, concern, grief, pain, jealousy, pride* and many other expressions of emotions. Essentially though, emotion is the state of mind brought about by circumstances, mood or relationship with others. It is the range of feelings we have in reaction to the environment around us.

Can we trust emotions? Yes, but it depends. We must realize that emotions tell us something; they inform us of things going on within us and we need to take heed of those emotions and ask ourselves why we are feeling what we are feeling. As an example: I come home after a frustrating, stress-filled day at work and my wife wants to know “what’s wrong.” I say, “Nothing,” but she reads me differently and pursues the matter. I feel anger over her probing and attempting to figure out what is going on with me. The question is where is that anger coming from? My wife loves me and wants only the best for me, but the work environment has left me frustrated and stressed, so am I going to realize that my anger is a product of the day and the fact that I don’t want to talk about it right now, or am I going to react in anger towards her, because she is the immediate source of some irritation; i.e. wanting me to talk when I don’t want to talk? If I take a moment to look at it; I can say, “Honey, it was a frustrating day, can you give me an hour and then we will talk.” The emotion of anger told me something about what was going on with myself. But I couldn’t allow myself to be controlled by the emotion and say something hurtful to my wife.

Gary Oliver wrote; “True maturity involves a balance between our heart and our heat and our will—between our feeling, our thinking, and our doing. Each one is important. Each one is designed by God for our good.” We can allow ourselves to be controlled by our emotions, we can deny or ignore our emotions or we can look at our emotions, evaluate them and respond to people and situations in healthy, mature ways. Most people just react to situations, allowing their emotions to drive them, rather than stopping and responding in healthy ways. We do have a choice, but to make the choice for healthy responses, we must submit to the Lord, living as redeemed, holy, saints rather than the pagans who do not know God. We must be controlled by the Spirit, rather than the flesh.

Emotions must be subordinate to the truth - to reason; in the example above, the truth is that my wife loves me and cares for me, why would I want to take my frustration out on her? Emotional reactions can rip apart relationships, but when we stop, just for a moment, we can respond to those emotions in healthy ways and develop healthy relationships.

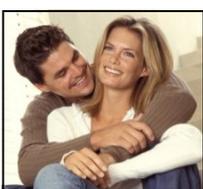
Each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God. 1 Thess 4:4-5

Emotions Out of Control

Ben and Jean were full of anger towards each other and they let the emotions fly. Many who knew them felt they should just split up, that they would never be able to communicate respectfully and have a healthy, meaningful marriage. It seemed that they only tore each other down and their anger spilled into all of their relationships. They said they couldn't communicate; that was obvious to anyone who was around them for more than five minutes, but communication wasn't the problem. The problem was that they allowed their emotions to rule over everything else. Both were angry and they would not stop for even a moment to understand their own part in the problem. It made me think of Proverbs 29:11; "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."



Once they did stop, they discovered that her anger came from feeling abandoned and unloved. He worked too many hours and she did not feel important to him. He also had unmet needs, but buried them in work attempted to achieve the "American Dream." He felt badgered and put down and whenever he attempted to do something for the relationship, it seemed that it was never good enough. It wasn't until they took control of their feelings of anger and sought to respond to each other in healthy ways rather than react negatively, that their relationship began to turn around. They found it would be worth staying together, but it would take time and effort.



Ben and Jean had to stop *venting* their frustrations and anger and express their needs, hurts and feelings in healthy ways. They found that they were able to communicate, but for a long time, they had to suppress feelings of anger and the tendency to react negatively. Instead of emotions out of control, they found that in God's strength, they could control emotions and communicate to build the relationship and meet the challenges of life.

Action Point: What are you going to do?

Do you give full vent to your emotions and let them fly no matter who gets hurt? Are you controlled by your emotions? Or on the other hand, do you deny or ignore your emotions; shrugging them off, but still allowing them to negatively affect you and your relationships?

Do not live as those who do not know God, allowing their emotions to control their lives. By God's Spirit,

choose to acknowledge your emotions, seek to understand where they are coming from and use them to build your marriage relationship rather than tear it down. Express hurt, even anger, but do it healthy ways. If you are not able to control your emotions, talk to a pastor, Christian counselor, or someone who can help you discover the underlying problem leading to hurtful expressions of emotion.

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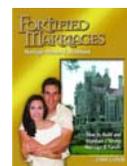
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- The Fortified Marriages website has many great resources.
- The Fortified Marriages manual and workbook is a great small group resource to help build strong marriages.
- Check out the Fortify Your Marriage Blog
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Article to check out: Trust in God, Not in Relationship
(at Startmarriageright.com)

Books to check out:

Mad About Us by Gary & Carrie Oliver
Emotions, Can You Trust Them by Dr. James Dobson



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>.
