

## FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



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MA-MFT

Visit our website

[www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://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-deductable and make the ministry to couples locally and internationally possible.

### The Importance of Forgiveness to a Healthy Marriage Relationship

Forgiveness is critical to a healthy marriage and researchers have found that forgiveness is the cornerstone of a successful marriage. Couples often marry believing they will live “happily ever after,” but unfortunately, this belief does not coincide with the reality that mankind is not perfect. Who do we hurt deepest and most often? Who hurts us most deeply? Those closest to us, especially our spouse—the person we love more than anyone else.

Forgiveness researcher Robert Enright proposed a definition of forgiveness as, “a willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly hurt us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love toward him or her.” When hurt, we may have the right to be angry and resentful, but in God’s economy, unforgiveness simply does not work. Not only is forgiveness critical to a healthy marriage relationship, but studies have found that it is important to our own physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Forgiveness is not always easy and it certainly does not mean that one allows another to continue to hurt him or her. We may need to set healthy boundaries to protect ourselves from continued hurt, but that does not mean we don’t forgive. In fact, Ephesians 4:32 charges us to ‘forgive of others, just as Christ forgave us.’ Forgiveness is an intentional process that requires making a choice to forgive; sometimes an on-going, continual choice. We are called to forgive as we have been forgiven. Is it easy? No. It is a process that requires continual work, choosing to live in forgiveness rather than resentment.



### Forgiving the Ultimate Betrayal

Wedding vows always say something about being faithful to one another, but the reality is that too often one spouse or another breaks those vows and commits adultery. Jesus acknowledged adultery as a very serious sin, but it is not the unforgivable sin. Charles and Martha thought they would always keep their wedding vows when they married, but when she confessed to adultery with a friend of theirs, their world came apart. Intense pain, unanswered questions, and emotions ranging from despair to intense anger wracked them both. Martha’s humility and openness helped, but the pain he experienced over her betrayal was intense and there were many times when they did not think they would make it.

Three counselors and a lot of work did much to bring about healing, but Charles could not get over the betrayal. When reminded that Jesus considered lust after woman as adultery, he would say, “but at least I didn’t do it!” Martha was humble and truly sorry for her failure, but over time, she felt like he could not exact enough punishment out of her for her sin. There wasn’t a particular point when things got better, but overtime and a continual, day by day, even moment by moment decision to forgive helped them work through the problems, reconnect and build a healthy relationship.

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## The Day to Day Slight—Little Foxes that Ruin a Marriage

The Song of Solomon speaks of the little foxes that come into a garden and ravage it slowly, but surely. It is not usually the huge storm of adultery that destroys a marriage, but the small things, the daily hurts that build up and lead to resentment and bitterness. Continually left unresolved and unforgiven, these seemingly little things may result one spouse or the other finally giving up and leaving the marriage. I am not suggesting that a couple go through a formal process of asking for and extending forgiveness for every little wrong, but I believe that couples need to address issues that come up between them. If the hurt is something that may lead to bitterness, and one spouse can't let it go, he or she needs to address it with the other spouse.

The spouse who wrongs his or her spouse should humbly acknowledge the wrong and ask for forgiveness when confronted with hurtful behavior. Defensiveness or justifying hurtful behavior will extend the hurt and keep healing from occurring. When you have hurt your spouse, accept responsibility for your behavior and ask for forgiveness.

When your spouse asks for forgiveness, extend it. Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Forgiveness is not just an occasional act: it is a permanent attitude." Possessing an attitude of forgiveness will positively affect your entire life as will a humble heart, quick to ask for forgiveness.



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*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ~ Colossians 3:13*

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

Do you ask for forgiveness when you hurt your spouse, children or others? Do you acknowledge the offence and address it, or do you tend to become defensive and attempt to justify your hurtful words or behavior. It is not always easy to ask for forgiveness, but it is always beneficial.

On the other side, do you have an attitude of forgiveness? Are you willing to forgive hurtful words or behavior? Forgiveness is a necessary part of the marriage relationship and unforgiveness will destroy your marriage

if continues. Matthew 6:14-15 goes as far to say that if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven. It is an integral part of the Christian walk. We have been forgiven much and are commanded to forgive. Is it easy? Certainly not. As we saw with Charles and Martha's story, it was a painful, long process. But both of them now are thankful they worked through it. Their marriage now is better than it ever had been before. Choose to build a marriage relationship of forgiveness, it will fortify your marriage.



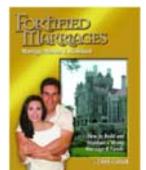
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### Resources Available at [www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com)

- Go to the *Resources Available* page to find a lot of great resources, including resources and ideas to help spark romance.
- Click "Manual" to learn about the Fortified Marriages manual and workbook.
- Articles and information are also available to learn more about God's design for marriage.

Books Available: The Art of Forgiving by Lewis Smeades  
Total Forgiveness by R.T. Kendall  
Choosing Forgiveness by Nancy Leigh DeMoss



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*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 by letting others know about the ministry. More information is available at <http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com/page.php?22>.