

## 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.

### Biblical Marriage vs. Cultural Marriage

Jesus, during His time on earth, often confronted the culture of the day. The Pharisees and their rules and regulations, racial differences, the treatment of women, and specifically, the Pharisees idea of marriage in Matthew 19. When tested about paying taxes to the Romans, Jesus said to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's - He drew a line between the temporal world and the spiritual. Yet, culture always seems to creep into the church; Paul addressed this multiple times calling people to obey God rather than the culture. I believe that Jesus would be challenging the culture today - especially the cultural, yet unbiblical ideas about marriage seen in today's world.

I write this newsletter from Liberia, West Africa and while the culture affecting marriage negatively is a world-wide problem, it especially stands out here in Liberia. People around the world often cling to cultural values regarding marriage, even when they conflict with the Word of God, but in Liberia, some people will vigorously defend those cultural values even when they obviously are unbiblical. Some of the unbiblical cultural ideas about marriage found around the world today are:



1. Sex before marriage is not a problem and is even a good thing.
2. Living together unmarried is acceptable.
3. The individual comes before the couple.
4. The husband is the decision maker, the wife is to "submit."
5. Marriage is 50-50 - contractual; 'You do your part and I will do mine.'
6. There are no role differences between husband and wife.
7. Independence of one or both is a right.
8. Parental over-involvement in the marriage relationship.
9. Happiness is the primary purpose of the marriage.
10. Marriage can be what man defines it to be.
11. Divorce is the way to fix a bad marriage.



The *culture* of the Pharisees was to divorce their wives for any and every reason, but Jesus challenged them, saying that husband and wife were to become one flesh and that they should not separate. The Bible teaches that marriage is a covenant and unlike a contract, it is for life no matter what. The husband and wife are to face *trouble* together, raise their family *together*, make decisions *together*, fulfill their roles *together*, and *together* grow in their walk with the Lord. The mystery of marriage is that two completely different people can be who they are and yet be one in the marriage relationship. The truly *Biblical* marriage is a marriage characterized by both husband and wife giving of themselves to each other.

***"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.."* G.K. Chesterton**

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## Our Example

It is interesting that a nation-wide, in-depth study found that 95% of people in the United States do not want a marriage like their parents had. Consider that for a moment; the vast majority of people reject the idea of marriage their parents have presented to them. Yet, their parents marriage often is the greatest predictor of what a person's marriage will be like. Celebrities tend to be role models for life and at times marriage, but their lives often tend to be relational disasters, like the celebrities who spent millions of dollars on a wedding, only to divorce less than three months later.

The Christian marriage is *supposed* to be an earthly representation of the very nature of God - the triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - three in one. Our God *is* relationship; three individuals, one God in unity, community, oneness, and singleness of purpose. The Lord, our God should be our example. There is no separation, no division, no selfishness in God. Jesus submits to the Father, the Father loves the Son, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son to do their bidding. No squabbling over who is "in charge," no arguing over making decisions, no fighting about who does what. Are we God? Of course not! Are we perfect? No! But have we attempted to live God's ideal for our marriages?

When we live God's way rather than our own way, our parents way, or the culture's way, life and marriage will be better! God is our example. "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." (1 John 3:16-17) Love is giving of ourselves, and yet too many people in marriage relationships do not give to their spouse. It tends to be, 'what are you going to do for me?' Too many will not give because they feel that they have given and given and now they are not going to give any longer. Or couples live separate lives disconnected and lonely, seeking fulfillment in any number of things outside the marriage relationship. God has a plan, we need to develop Biblical marriages and not allow the culture to dictate how marital values.



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

What cultural - unbiblical aspects of marriage affect your marriage relationship? Is your marriage truly a Biblical - Christ-centered marriage? Or do you hold on to things that you have learned from your parents or the culture that hinder your marriage from been what the Lord would want it to be?

It is so easy to allow unbiblical idea and practices into our marriages. It is important to guard against those things

and you do that by learning God's plan for marriage and then living according to His plan. If there is division in your marriage, get help. Seek Godly, Christian counsel or get involved in a couples small group. Begin a couples small group if there are no groups around you! The couples small group is a great way to learn about Biblical marriage and avoid the traps that are far too easy to fall into. Be a testimony for the Lord!



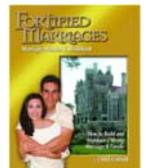
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## Resources Available at [www.fortifiedmarriages.com](http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com)

- 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 to check out:

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

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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>.