

GOING FURTHER - RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE FAITH @ HOME CENTER

It Starts At Home (by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope) explains why marriage is a key path of our spiritual formation and provides practical advice for intentional couples.

The Marriage Masterpiece (by Al Janssen) unveils the beauty of God's design for every marriage.

Building Your Mate's Self-Esteem (by Dennis and Barbara Rainey) shows why one of the most vital ingredients in a marriage today is to build one another's self-esteem.

Love and Respect (by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs) discusses a powerful biblical model for each spouse understanding and meeting the other's most deeply felt need.

The Five Love Languages (by Gary Chapman) describes how to discover and serve your spouse's unique love language.

Simply Romantic Nights Kit (from Family Life Ministries) Discover intimacy in a new light using a series of his/her date night ideas.

GOING FURTHER - CHURCH SUPPORT

Life Groups: Authentic Christian community and mentoring is available through Riverview's Life Group ministry. Contact our Life Groups pastor Michael Beene at Michael@rbclake.org for more info.

Pastoral Counseling: Pastors are available to counsel those who would like more Godly wisdom on this issue. Please call the church office for more info: 573-348-3515

Love and Respect: is a short-term course that is offered to couples who are interested in becoming intentional about honoring God in their marriages and loving one another more deeply. Contact our Next Generation and Life Groups pastor Michael Beene at Michael@rbclake.org for more info.

BUILDING A STRONG MARRIAGE

faith @
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BUILDING A GOD-HONORING MARRIAGE

No one plans to become a broken family or a miserable couple. We marry because we yearn for a life-long, thriving relationship. How can believers become intentional about building a God-honoring marriage? Below are five foundational priorities that can set a healthy trajectory for marriage.

PRIORITY ONE: *Discover God's Design for Marriage*

We must understand that every marriage is intended to be a masterpiece reflecting THE marriage between God and His people. Marriage is the most frequent metaphor used in the Bible to describe God's relationship with His people. In fact, writing to the Ephesians, Paul called marriage a "profound mystery" because the man represents Christ, the groom, while the woman represents His bride, the church. The marital union of husband and wife is a sacred reflection of the gospel itself. One of the great mysteries of Christian marriage is that happiness in marriage is ultimately a byproduct of a holy marriage. If we seek a happy marriage before we seek personal and marital holiness, we usually get neither. But, if we seek to live lives set apart for God, we find happiness becomes a natural byproduct. Our Christian marriages are meant to reflect God's glory to the world around us.

PRIORITY TWO: *Commit to a Covenant Marriage*

Today's civil marriages are much like business contracts—easy to get into and easy to get out of. God's covenant with His people was a promise to remain eternally faithful even if His people weren't faithful in return. In covenant marriage, both spouses are committed for a lifetime—in sickness and health, for better or worse. They don't threaten divorce or consider it as an option. This doesn't mean that our marriages won't experience difficulty. But, it means our marriages are grounded on something much stronger than seeking personal happiness—they are grounded in God.

PRIORITY THREE: *Pursue a Passionate Marriage*

Couples aren't supposed to just stick it out and find a way to make their marriages survive. God calls us to pursue a passionate, thriving marriage. The Song of Solomon expresses the kind of love, joy, and celebration God designed for marriage. That passion is built on much more than infatuation and sexual desire. It is rooted in the physical, emotional and spiritual intimacy God created couples to experience as a foretaste of the eternal unity, communion, and intimacy we can have with God.

PRIORITY FOUR: *Become Heroic in Marriage*

Christ made the ultimate sacrifice to rescue humanity. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul connected Christ's sacrifice directly to marriage: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25) and "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands" (Ephesians 5:24). In other words, mutual submission to one another requires giving up our own interests to heroically serve the other person. This is much easier said than done, and it may not be reciprocated by your spouse at first. But, that doesn't change God's commands in Ephesians 5. We are called to love and submit to our spouses out of honor and love for God whether the other person deserves it or not.

PRIORITY FIVE: *Fight for Your Marriage*

Every couple will mess up. Too often, however, they also choose to give up. Throughout scripture, God fights for His relationship with His people, remaining faithful in the face of unfaithfulness. He forgives again and again. No couple can avoid strife and arguments, but we can avoid giving the "devil a foothold" in our marriages by keeping short accounts and quickly restoring the relationship regardless of what happens. Remember, when you were not seeking Him, Christ pursued you. He died for you. In the same way, we are called to pursue our spouses. We are to die to ourselves for them—if for no other reason than to demonstrate honor and love for God Himself.