

FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community

Our Purpose

To be used by God to fortify marriages. To make a difference in lives, marriages and families.

Our Vision

To see marriages become healthy, productive, able to withstand the storms of life and used by God to strengthen other marriages.

Our Mission

To provide direction and education with resources and training to individuals, couples and churches in order to help them define and build a solid foundation for a Christian marriage.

Contact Us

www.fortifiedmarriages.com

Info@fortifiedmarriages.com

480-699-2515
866-263-5638

PO Box 7385
Chandler, AZ 85246

Married for Life

Fortified Marriages Ministry's Newsletter

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Ministering to Marriages in Africa

Good friends invited and made it possible for us to travel to Liberia, Africa this summer to conduct marriage seminars. This is a country torn by twenty-five years of civil war and dictatorship. The country's infrastructure is long gone; gas operated generators provide the only electricity and obtaining basic necessities often proves very difficult, if not impossible.

Carmen and I wondered how we could effectively minister to marriages in such an environment. What do we have to offer? Could we connect with couples? How we limit our God! He provided the connection and He has *much* to offer in spite of our

inadequacies. We counseled individuals and couples during the day and conducted marriage seminars each evening. We saw God touch lives, and couples make renewed commitments to each other. 535 people attended the seminars; 150 were pastors. We were told that a Muslim couple attended and remained through the seminar, the time of fellowship at the end.

Counseling couples revealed that Liberians face many of same the problems we experience in the U.S. Building strong marriages takes work wherever we live!

We praise the Lord for the work He did while we were there, but our desire is that the work would continue to grow. We were able to leave Luther with a laptop computer loaded with marriage ministry information. Luther & Christine plan to begin conducting workshops and seminars soon. Please pray for them!



With Christine & Luther Tarphe in Liberia. Luther coordinated the seminars.

Join the Fight to Strengthen Marriages

God called us to marriage ministry; we live it every day as we seek to be used by God to strengthen marriages and help hurting couples. What about you? What can you do to strengthen marriages? You may not be called to marriage ministry, but you can join the fight to strengthen marriages.

First, if you are married, you can strengthen your own marriage. Invest in your marriage by working through the *Fortified Marriages Work-*

book with your spouse, attend a marriage conference or retreat—look into the excellent resources available to improve your marriage relationship—don't wait for problems to occur!

Whether you are married or not, you can ask your pastor to take a strong stand *for* marriage. Ask him to start a marriage ministry at your church and to begin marriage classes or studies. Ask him to participate in the annual Association

of Marriage & Family Ministries conference (see www.amfmonline.com). Let your pastor know that Fortified Marriages Ministry and a host of other ministries are available to help him strengthen marriages in the local church.

Finally, you can support our ministry financially, with prayer and by letting others know that our ministry is available to help strengthen marriages.

The Marriage Relationship Requires Work

Few couples have any marriage training or education; they don't understand themselves, much less their spouse and often don't truly understand who they are "in Christ." They often don't possess the foundational relationship skills required for marriage. Couples haven't attended marriage classes or seminars where they can learn Biblical principles and relationship skills that would help them have a productive, growing marriage. They enter marriage thinking they will *live happily ever after*, but soon learn that the "feelings" of love recede after the "honeymoon" period is over. Couples juggling career, family, friends, church involvement and personal development find that their marriage relationship has moved lower on the priority list in their day-to-day lives. They grow apart and don't understand why their relationship has deteriorated, yet they have not invested time and energy into their mar-

riage. Too many people think they marry and then move on with life; that the marriage does not (or perhaps should not) require work. This thinking leads to the breakdown of their marriage.

Many people think that it is enough to be *committed* to the relationship, that their spouses know they love them—that work is not required for the relationship to grow. That fact is that love will die if the marriage relationship is ignored. Couples race through the week working at a frenzied pace in an attempt to complete work assignments, care for children and accomplish personal, vocational or spiritual goals. They think that they will catch up with their relationship on the weekend, during vacation or somewhere along the way—it *does not happen!* Couples invest in homes, careers and retirement, but do not spend the time, energy or money to build a strong marriage—a marriage that will withstand any storms that will come

against it.

The *work* required to build a strong marriage is not that bad! Can you spend a few minutes connecting with your spouse each evening talking about your day? Can you spend a few hours each week doing something together—going out for coffee, playing games, taking walks, doing a hobby or craft; something you can both enjoy together? Can you commit to spending a weekend alone (at home or away) twice a year? Send the children to grandma's house and take some down time for the two of you. You must be purposeful about building your relationship—that is the *work* of marriage. You did it naturally while dating and with a little effort you can do it again. Your investment into your marriage will pay off! It can become fulfilling, loving, strong and a testimony to your family and friends.

Ministry Update

Praise the Lord! This has been a very busy summer for us. In addition to the trip to Liberia, we attended conferences in Washington DC, Anaheim, CA, Indianapolis and Philadelphia that gave us the opportunity to connect with many pastors and ministry leaders. The US Air Force purchased 105 marriage workbooks. We will explore the possibility of the military using our book to strengthen military marriages.

Nineteen couples from eight different churches attended our Phoenix Facilitator Training August 18. One marriage class and a home study has already started and we expect several more to begin in the next month.

The Lord has raised up seventeen couples committed to financially support this ministry on an ongoing basis. Please pray about how the Lord might want to involve you also.

Pray for God's work in the following upcoming events:

September 27-29: National Association for Marriage Enhancement (NAME) Conf.

We will conduct workshops.

October 13: Marriage seminar in Chandler.

October 25-28: Marriage Seminars and Training in Etchojoa, Mexico.

Early November: Facilitator Training Southern California.

The Marriage Minute: Love and Respect

God created man and woman different. We can see the differences, we experience the differences and yet, we still tend to love our spouse as *we* want to be loved. In Ephesians 5:33, the Lord says that the husband "*must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*" God knows our differences and tells us what to do to meet the needs of our spouse, but it seems that the Lord has given each spouse a difficult task. Men typically do not naturally know how to care for and nurture their wives and they show love when their wives are *love-*

able. Similarly, most women find it difficult to show respect for their husbands. They will show respect when he *earns* respect. God's word doesn't leave room for conditional love or conditional respect. Husbands must love their wives and wives must respect their husbands - both are to be unconditional.

Men are to die to self and love their wives as Christ loved the church - unconditionally and as they need to be loved. This means that they must honor and cherish her, protect her, open up emotionally and *live with her in an understanding*

way - that is to learn about her and meet her needs. Wives are to respect their husbands; to appreciate him, uphold him and seek to strengthen him in his leadership role. It is sad to see couples in the vicious circle of trying to get their own needs met while purposefully refusing to meet each other's needs. It doesn't have to be this way. God will empower husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands when they make the decision that they will begin doing those things that will show love and respect. We can start doing this *today!*