

# FORTIFIED MARRIAGES

Fortifying Marriages to Strengthen Families, Churches and the Community



Chris & Carmen Garner  
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-deductible and make the ministry to couples locally and internationally possible.

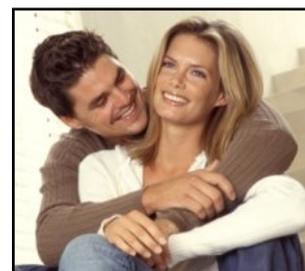
También disponible en español

## Gratitude for Your Spouse

A secular article some time ago announced that “gratitude is a spiritual way of being.” Gratitude, thankfulness, should be a daily part of our Christian lives - even those in the world understand the concept. 1Thessalonians 5:18 admonishes us to “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Our circumstances may be bad, in fact, they may be horrendous, but there is always something to be thankful for, even if it is only the fact that we have the hope of eternity with the Lord, our God. Gratitude, or thankfulness for our spouse is critical to a healthy marriage. It is interesting that researchers have found that couples go from appreciating and loving every little detail about each other early in marriage to becoming deadened to their spouse’s special qualities and abilities and focusing on the annoying aspects of their spouses. We are not talking about overlooking the sin of one spouse or being thankful for a selfish, self-centered spouse. Sin must be addressed.

Yet, research found that couples who mutually demonstrate appreciation for each other tend to have healthier, happier marriages. Gratitude for our spouse *will* do much to improve our marriage. It is a matter of our focus; are we focused on the annoyances and differences of our spouse? Or are we focused on the good things our spouse brings into our life? It is easy to slip into negativity and criticism; gratitude helps us remember why we fell in love with our spouse in the first place and values him or her. The marriage relationship provides endless opportunities to extend love, forgiveness and gratitude to our spouse. Perhaps you provide care for your spouse; he or she has a debilitating illness and there doesn’t seem to be anything to be thankful for. Yet, in spite of the circumstances you can be thankful for the opportunity to extend God’s love to the person you have committed your life to. For example, Robertson McQuilken cared for his wife of 42 years as she deteriorated from the ravages of Alzheimer’s even though many told him he should institutionalize her so he could get on with his life. He found ways to be thankful, not only to God, but for his wife. We must make a decision to be thankful, in spite of our circumstances.

Gratitude is a skill we cultivate and a attitude we must nurture. It begins with a right perspective toward God; like Job or David or Paul, we need to focus on the Lord and remain thankful in spite of our circumstances. We have much to be thankful for and as we maintain gratitude to the Lord, it allows us to be thankful for our spouse, in spite of his or her imperfections. We must discover and focus on our spouse’s positive attributes and be thankful for them.

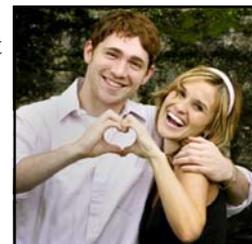


*“Of all the ‘attitudes’ we can acquire, surely the attitude of gratitude is the most important and by far the most life changing.” Zig Ziglar*

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## Your Spouse is NOT Your Enemy

Roger and Mary came for counseling considering splitting up. They felt that they had never had a healthy marriage and their many years of disconnection had led to very little intimacy or trust and each viewing each other more as enemies rather than life partners. Thankful for each other? They couldn't even conceive of being grateful for the spouse they had committed their lives to so many years before. Roger was not engaged in the relationship and only focused on his job and his interests. They had little hope for their marriage, but decided to give counseling one more try. As they worked through their relationship problems during counseling they found hope and also found there were aspects of their marriage and each other they could be thankful for. This couple who had virtually given up on their marriage, found that their differences were something to celebrate rather than argue over. Several months later, they found much to be thankful for and their gratitude for each other increased dramatically. They continue to be thankful, first to the Lord for saving their marriage, but also thankful for each other; thankful that each gave it one more try, thankful for their differences - now that they can use their differences to enhance their relationship. They are also thankful to have each other as they look forward to their future together. This couple moved from almost being enemies to being united and thankful for each other!



It is too easy for husbands and wives to take each other for granted and focus on the negative aspects of their relationship and each other. Your spouse is NOT your enemy, he or she is a gift from God and it is important to develop an attitude of gratitude in your life and your marriage relationship. A spirit of thankfulness honors God and strengthens our faith and also strengthens our relationships. One writer said that 'we can't be in a right relationship with God or with anyone without a spirit of thankfulness. Like Roger and Mary we need to change our focus and look at the positive aspects of our relationship rather than the negative and be thankful for our spouse!

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*"Pride slays thanksgiving, but an humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grows. A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves.." Henry Ward Beecher*

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

Would you say that you are a thankful person? Can you praise God and thank Him for His grace and mercy and goodness, even during the trials and tribulations? Do you give thanks to the Lord for His wonderful love? Gratitude is not just saying a prayer at meal time, it is a permanent attitude of the heart - acknowledging God for His goodness

Are you thankful for your spouse? Do you express gratitude for not only the things he or she does for you, but also for who he or she is and how the Lord uses them in your life? Find things about your spouse to be thankful for and then express those to your spouse. Replace criticism with gratitude in your marriage relationship.

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## Fortified Marriages

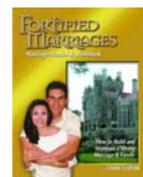
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- The Fortified Marriages website has many great resources.
- The Fortified Marriages manual and workbook is a great small group resource to help build strong marriages.
- There are excellent communication resources available on the site.



### Articles for more information:

*Does Gratitude Matter in Marriage?*

*The 31 Benefits of Gratitude: [happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude](http://happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude)*

*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.*

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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 let others know about the ministry. More information is available at <http://www.fortifiedmarriages.com>.

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