

# 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-deductible and make the ministry to couples locally and internationally possible.

## The Graceful Marriage

Grace; receiving what we don't deserve, is the ideal that sets Christianity apart from all other religions and philosophies. It is a principle that, hypothetically, is lived out in the church and every Christian's life. But as we know, too little grace is found in the Church and in Christian lives and too often we do not find grace in Christian marriage. Philip Yancey wrote, "For many, romantic love is the closest experience of pure grace. Someone at last feels that I - *I!* - am the most desirable, attractive, companionable creature on the planet." Usually, people begin marriage with that romantic love, no wonder they are so disappointed when the "love" wears off and the routine of daily life takes over - and grace is no where to be found. The graceful couple seeks to love each other as Christ loves them - unconditionally

Grace is not allowing someone to run over, abuse, control or use us, but it is, as Paul Zahl says, "unconditional love toward a person who does not deserve it." The *graceful marriage* radiates this unconditional love despite the slights and wrongs that occur every day. Couples ought to keep *no* record of wrongs or be easily angered or self-seeking. (1Cor13) The marriage relationship should be a place where forgiveness, patience and kindness rule while couples seek to protect, trust, hope and persevere in their love for each other. God loved us enough to come to earth and die a horrible death for us - His grace gives us what we could *never* hope to achieve, how can we *not* extend grace to the person we've promised to love and cherish and stand with for the rest of our lives? Christ demonstrated love and gave grace to us; His selflessness is to be a model for how we live our lives as Christians and as husbands and wives.



Everyone has their excuses; we hear it all the time in counseling. 'You don't understand how awful he (or she) is.' 'You don't understand how long I've put up with his (or her) hurtful words (or bossiness, or lack of care or attitude, on and on and on).' We've heard so many reasons why people don't care, won't work on their marriage or decided to just give up. What if Christ gave up on you?! We sin every day and yet God extends grace and more grace and more grace to us. We demand justice for our spouse, but cry out to God for grace for ourselves - what hypocrites we are! Do we not understand that the power of grace is different than the power of justice; it is unworldly, transforming, supernatural? If you want change in your marriage, stop seeking justice and start giving grace. John Stott reminds us that "grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues." The couple in a *graceful marriage* don't seek to win, dominate, defend, attack or jump to conclusions; they seek to accept differences, allow mistakes, tell the truth and seek to understand their spouses.

*The graceful Christian is one who looks at the world through grace-tinted lenses.*  
Philip Yancey

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## From No Grace to a Lot of Grace

Ron grew up as a driven person and a calling into ministry didn't change his drive to succeed, even at the expense of others. For the first nine years of his marriage, he led his wife Betty in this success oriented, driven life style; neglecting her, ignoring her and living his life entirely for the churches he pastored. Grace? He was a pastor, he was in charge and she would just have to come along as best she could. Ron placed many demands on Betty, not extending much grace.

Life was to change dramatically for the Wisemans one day in 1962 when Ron went up to the roof to adjust his television antenna. A storm had blown a power line into the antenna and aware, Ron grabbed the antenna sending many thousands of volts through his body. Unconscious, his body rolled down and off the roof landing head first on the cement patio below. God wanted change in Ron's life, but wasn't to come with the still small voice, the Lord had to get his attention in a more emphatic way. He was in the hospital for the next thirteen weeks near death's door, and one point his doctor and his wife heard the "death rattle" in his throat, but as the doctor started to pull the sheet over Ron's head, Ron uttered a statement that God was going to raise up His servant and with his wife would have a ministry to marriages.

The doctor told Betty that Ron would not get any better and he might live a week, maybe a year, so she should take him home to live out his days there. A deep darkness followed; perhaps the powers of heaven and hell fighting over Ron's body, but out if it the Lord commanded him to live out Ephesians 5:25 and love his wife as Christ loved the church. He knew he had heard God's voice and said; "Lord, if you'll just give me feeling in my hands and feet, if you'll let me walk again, I'll spend the rest of my life spoiling Betty Wiseman rotten." God did heal Ron, although it took more than a year to completely rehabilitate from his injuries. He remained a changed man and when we visited the Wiseman's several years ago, the change was still evident.

Ron extended grace to his wife; making himself available to her, thinking about her and caring for her twenty-four hours of every day. Betty told us that Ron never served himself without asking her if she also wanted something. The Lord had to deal with Betty also as she extended grace to her husband by forgiving him for the nine years of mistreatment. They built a graceful marriage, caring for each other and forgiving slights when they came up and they also were used by God to touch many thousands of lives and marriages through their many years of ministry. Ron and Betty Wiseman are a testimony of what the Lord can do with a couple focused on God's grace.

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

Is God's grace evident in your marriage? Do give unconditional love even when your spouse doesn't deserve it? Do you seek to understand your spouse? Or are you

focused on your own correctness, your own rights? Love your spouse with grace; caring, forgiving and giving to your spouse every day of your life.

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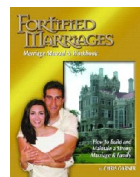
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- The Fortified Marriages website has many great resources.
- The Fortified Marriages manual and workbook is a great small group resource to help build strong marriages.
- Our website has information about how you can get involved in ministering to marriages.



**Books to check out:** *The Grace Filled Marriage* by Dr. Tim Kimmel

*Enjoying Marriage* by Ron Wiseman

**Article:** What Is Grace? By Justin Holcomb:

[www.christianity.com/theology/what-is-grace.html?p=0](http://www.christianity.com/theology/what-is-grace.html?p=0)

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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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