

Merry Christmas!

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isa 9:6

Christmas: Restoring Relationship

The birth of Christ, possibly the biggest celebration of the Christian faith, has become a season in which merchants base the success of their whole year. The frenzied shopping from “Black Friday” until Christmas Eve has become the norm in Western culture and it distorts the true meaning of Christmas. It has come to a point that people simply trade their wealth with family members and call it giving. At the same time though, many Christians now attempt to bring the “true meaning of the season” back into the celebration of Christmas.



Jesus Christ is the true meaning of the season, but there is more to Christmas than the birth of a Savior. Jesus came to earth to restore man’s relationship with God. Broken by sin, the relationship could only be restored by the blood sacrifice of the perfect lamb. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, came to earth, lived a perfect life, died on the cross and rose from the dead that mankind might experience a restored relationship with God. The relationship with mankind was *that* important to God, that he would send his only Son to die for mankind. God, by his very nature, *is* relationship, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three entities, one being. In that *being*, there is oneness, unity and singleness of purpose. Jesus came to earth so that our relationship with the Father could be restored, but also so that our earthly relationships could be restored.

We are meant to live in our marriage, family, church, and community relationships reflecting God’s image; that oneness, unity and singleness of purpose we see in our God. Yet, too often we find broken relationships. Why? Often because of selfishness and one’s own desires that battle within (James 4:1). Yes, there are times when we have done all that we can to live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18), and the other person still refuses live in a healthy relationship. In those cases, we must set healthy boundaries and pray for that person. But if you haven’t done everything you can to restore a broken relationship, the challenge to you this Christmas is to extend God’s love to that person. We pray that all your relationships are healthy and a testimony to God’s awesome love.

A Restored Relationship

One couple attended our seminar some time ago; the husband was going through the motions until he had the opportunity to leave his wife. Their relationship was broken and he didn’t see anyway for their marriage to “make it.” During the seminar, he heard about the devastation of divorce and learned that he wasn’t the first or the only one to experience his feelings of hopelessness. He also experienced the possibility of being able to work with his wife. He recommitted himself to working on their marriage and now experiences a great Christmas present each new year; being able to celebrate the birth of his Savior *with* his wife and four children.



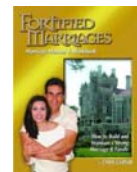
Resources are available to help your marriage!



Perhaps you are on the verge of divorce, or maybe you are biding your time until you can leave, or you might be in a miserable marriage, or have experienced serious problems or sin in your marriage, or possibly you are one the few in a great marriage, or perhaps you only exist together as sort of a domestic partnership to see your children through. It *can* be better! In our sixteen years of work in marriage ministry and helping couples, we have seen a lot; infidelity, addictions, one spouse on the way out the door, and a host of problems couples experience. We have experienced God's miraculous work in our own lives and marriage as well as seen God touch many, many other marriages and bring about restoration. Whether you are experiencing problems or know another couple whose marriage is not doing well, there is hope! Our website www.fortifiedmarriages.com contains many resources to help you build a stronger marriage where-every you are at and links to many more resources.

Our God is in the business of restoring relationships; it is his very nature. This Christmas, give something more than the typical material things that will be forgotten about in no time; give the gift of relationship. Like the husband above, make a decision to invest in your relationship and in God's power, do something to make the change. Help is available, but you have to ask for it. Call or check out our website.

- Go to the *Resources Available* page to find a lot of great resources.
- 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.



We also now have a blog; interact with the articles, ask questions, build a marriage that will withstand the storms that will come against it. Check it out at: <http://fortifyyourmarriage.blogspot.com/>

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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. You can partner with us 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/page.php?22>.

Please consider a year-end gift to help build strong marriages.

Year-end Ministry Update

2011 was an amazing year for Fortified Marriages Ministry! It began extremely busy gathering resources and support for the Liberia, Africa project. We so appreciate the many who contributed resources, money and prayer support to provide the resources and then ship a 20 foot container full of resources to Liberia. Many contributed to the great success of our two weeks in Liberia, helping with the Franklin Graham Crusade, counseling, presenting marriage seminars, training and equipping counseling and marriage ministry in Liberia. We praise God for what He has accomplished!

The work with Fortified Marriages Ministry has been rewarding, but at times daunting and tiring, but the Lord always picks us up, gives us peace and encourages us to continue in the work He has called us to do. It is an honor and privilege to be involved in this work and to experience God changing lives and building strong marriages.



We look forward to what God has for us in 2012. Several seminars and conferences are scheduled for next year and the Lord has opened the doors for a counseling practice at a church near us. Please continue to pray for us, our family and the ministry as we will continue to pray for you... *Love in Christ, Chris & Carmen*