

BUILDING A GOD-HONORING MARRIAGE

Marriage is a mysterious union, established by God, in which a man and woman willingly bind themselves together in love and become one. When we begin our journey into marriage, our intention is to have a successful, godly marriage. We yearn for a life-long, thriving relationship with our spouse.

How can believers become intentional about building a God-honoring marriage?

PRIORITY ONE

Discover God's Design for Marriage

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.

"Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church Ephesian 5:31,32.

PRIORITY TWO

Commit to a Covenant Marriage

Strong, healthy marriages don't just happen. It takes two people committed and cooperating to make a marriage good. Too many 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 were not faithful in return. In covenant marriage, both spouses are committed for a lifetime – in sickness and health, for better or for worse. They do not threaten divorce or consider it as an option.

PRIORITY THREE

Pursue a Passionate Marriage

Couples aren't supposed to just "stick it out" and settle for a marriage that survives. God calls us to pursue a passionate marriage that thrives. In the Bible, The Song of Solomon expresses the kind of love, joy and celebration God designed for marriage. You definitely should read it! 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. And it's a foretaste of the eternal unity, communion and intimacy intended for us with God.

Make date night a priority. Setting aside time to spend with your spouse is strategic for a passionate marriage. It is vital for husbands and wives to talk with each other about their hopes and dreams and spiritual things, not just work, kids and the to-do list. Developing a deep sense of intimacy allows you to celebrate the good times and encourage one another in the difficult times.

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.

PRIORITY FIVE

Fight for Your Marriage

You will have hard days in your marriage but do not let those days bring you down or ruin your relationship with your spouse! Choose to love your spouse through life's toughest moments. Marriage is a commitment that's much bigger than your temporary circumstances or emotions. Marriage is based on love... and love is more than a feeling. Love is a choice.

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.

Prayer is a key part of fighting for your marriage. When couples pray together on a daily basis less than one percent would end up getting a divorce.

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GOING FURTHER

RESOURCES

Lovelogy: God. Love. Marriage. Sex. And the Never-Ending Story of Male and Female by John Mark Comer

Gives a biblical vision for sexual intimacy and marriage and tackles difficult questions related to human sexuality.

Love and Respect by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

Helps couples appreciate and meet their mate's greatest need.

The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman

Helps couples understanding and speak their mate's "love language."

Have a New Sex Life by Friday by Kevin Leman

Encourages married couples to pursue the joys and pleasures of sexual intimacy.
