

Building a God Honoring Marriage

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

PRIORITY ONE: Discover God's Design for Marriage

We must understand that 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.

PRIORITY TWO: Commit to a Covenant Marriage

Today's civil 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 worse. They do not threaten divorce or consider it as an option.

PRIORITY THREE: Pursue a Passionate Marriage

God calls us to pursue a passionate, thriving marriage. The Song of Solomon expresses the kind of love, joy and celebration God designed for marriage. 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 as a foretaste of the eternal unity, communion and intimacy we can have with God. Prioritize a routine like date nights to fan the flame of intimacy in your marriage.

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

Every couple will mess up. Too often, however, they also choose to give up. 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. Statistics from Gallop and the National Association of Marriage Enhancement reveal that when couples pray together on a daily basis less than one percent would end up getting a divorce.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

The Language of Love and Respect (by Emerson Eggerichs) reveals the secret to couples meeting each other's deepest needs--without love she reacts without respect, and without respect he reacts without love, and a painful, negative cycle begins. Available at amazon.com.

Sacred Marriage (by Gary Thomas) doesn't just offer techniques to make a marriage happier, but, also contains practical tools, to help married Christians in becoming holier husbands and wives. Available at amazon.com.

This Momentary Marriage (John Piper) Reflecting on over forty years of matrimony, John Piper exalts the biblical meaning of marriage over its emotion, exhorting couples to keep their covenant as a display of Christ's covenant-keeping love for the church. Available at amazon.com.

Created for Connection (by Sue Johnson) We all want a lifetime of love, support, and faith. But sometimes we need a little help. The way to enhance or save our relationships with each other and with God is to be open, attuned, responsive, and to reestablish safe emotional connection. Available at amazon.com.

Your Marriage by God's Design (by Scott & Julie Stiegemeyer) shows that God has not left us directionless but instead has a beautiful plan and purpose—His design—for marriage, for your marriage. Available at cph.org.

Each for the Other, Marriage as It's Meant to Be (Bryan Chapell and Kathy Chapell) shows married couples how to emulate the unselfish, sacrificial love of Christ. Available at amazon.com.

GOING FURTHER Immanuel Lutheran Ministries

Free Date Night Idea Cards available at the At Home With God Center.

Information and Resources are available at the At Home With God Center at both campuses or by going to www.ilmtexas.org/AHWG.

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AT HOME WITH GOD
— BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES —