Building a Strong Marriage

Curt Grice, Associate Pastor of Educational Ministries

Every couple wants to live happily ever after. No one takes their marriage vows hoping to be miserable, frustrated and unfulfilled. But strong, healthy marriages don’t just happen.

Marriage is a mysterious union, established by God, in which a man and woman willingly bind themselves together in love and become one. Marriage is a sacred covenant. Marriage is a unique partnership. And marriage is hard work!

Family Challenge
By now you know that you didn’t just marry a person… you married a family. To a certain degree, each of us is an expression of our “family of origin.” During our early years, we each pick up habits, absorb attitudes and develop traditions that are still with us. The challenge is for you and your spouse to merge your different backgrounds into a new family.

In order to do that, you must remember that your relationship with your spouse takes priority over all other relationships. Your marriage is more important than your relationship with your parents, siblings or even children. You need to appreciate the impact your individual families have on you. You need to respect and honor your commitments to them. But most of all, you need to protect the health of your marriage.

Physical Challenge
God created sex as a wonderful gift to be enjoyed by a husband and wife. Unfortunately, our sex-saturated society has created a distorted view of human sexuality. Previous encounters, unhealthy habits, and guilt or shame can also undermine a couple’s ability to enjoy a healthy, mutually satisfying sexual relationship.

Physical intimacy is intended to be a powerful bonding experience for a married couple. Genesis 2:24-25 describes it this way: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” Sexual intimacy involves being “naked” – literally and figuratively laid bare before your spouse – and not being ashamed. It’s built on a deep level of trust that allows you to risk and be vulnerable with each other.

Good Communication is essential for a strong marriage! The following suggestions can enable you and your spouse to work through almost any problem that comes along.

1. Be a ready listener and don’t answer until the other person has finished talking.

2. Be slow to speak. Think first. Respond so the other person can understand and accept what you’re saying. The goal is communication!

3. Always share the truth in love. Don’t exaggerate. Avoid phrases like: “You never…” or “You always…”

4. Don’t use silence as a weapon to frustrate the other person. If you don’t feel like talking right now, let the other person know that.

6. Keep the goal in mind. Where do you want this to end up? What are you trying to accomplish here?

7. When you’re wrong, admit it! Don’t be too proud to say you’re sorry and ask forgiveness. Be willing to offer forgiveness when your spouse apologizes to you. Don’t hold a grudge… choose to forgive and forget.

8. Don’t nag. Don’t continue to bring up past failure. Don’t keep harping on the same issue. Express your feelings clearly, then drop it and move on.

9. Don’t blame or criticize your spouse. Try to be an encourager. The goal is to build up and restore… not win an argument! If your spouse attacks or criticizes you, choose to respond in love.

10. Try to understand what the other person is feeling. Work to see things from his or her point of view. It’s OK to disagree sometimes. Respect your individual differences. What really matters is your relationship… not “being right.”

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. Every couple will mess up. The goal is not to give up!

**GOING FURTHER - Resources**

**Recommended Books:**

*It Starts At Home* by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope – explains why marriage is a key path of our spiritual formation and provides practical advice for intentional couples. (Available in the Library)

*The Marriage Masterpiece* by Al Janssen – unveils the beauty of God’s design for every marriage.

*Building Your Mate’s Self-Esteem* by Dennis and Barbara Rainey – shows why one of the most vital ingredients in a marriage today is to build one another’s self-esteem.

*Love and Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerich – discusses a powerful biblical model for each spouse understanding and meeting the other’s most deeply felt need.

*The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman – describes how to discover and serve your spouse’s unique love language.

*A Celebration of Sex* by Dr. Douglas Rosenau – is a guide to enjoying God’s gift of sexual intimacy.

*Simply Romantic Nights Kit* from Family Life Ministries – helps you discover intimacy using a series of his/her date night ideas.
GOING FURTHER – Church Support

Our church offers a variety of Sunday morning Bible study groups for every stage of life. These classes can be a source of spiritual growth and encouragement for couples. You can explore your options at www.fbca.org/sundaymorningbiblestudy.

Additional “Marriage” resources are available on our church’s website at www.fbca.org/marriage.