

# Building a God-Honoring Marriage

From the staff at Greenville Free Methodist Church  
With Kurt Bruner, The Center for Strong Families

No one plans to become a broken family or a miserable couple. We marry because we yearn for a life-long, thriving relationship. As Tim Keller points out, “even the best marriage cannot by itself fill the void left in our souls by God”. So, 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 it is a picture of “Christ and the church.”

## **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 weren’t faithful in return. In covenant marriage, both spouses are committed for a lifetime—in sickness and health, for better or worse. They don’t threaten divorce or consider it as an option.

## **PRIORITY THREE: Pursue a Passionate Marriage**

Couples aren’t supposed to just stick it out and find a way to make their marriages survive. 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.

## **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.

## **GOING FURTHER – Resources**

### **Recommended Books**

(\*available for checkout at the HomeGrowth Center)

Please check out the Library resource list for more choices.

- ***The Marriage Masterpiece*** (by Al Janssen) unveils the beauty of God’s design for every marriage.
- ***Boundaries in Marriage*** (by Henry Cloud and John Townsend)\* Learn when to say yes, and when to say no- to your spouse and to others, in order to make the most of your 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 Eggerichs)\* 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.
- ***Preventing Divorce*** (McPherson and Biehl) Fun questions facilitating discussion on a variety of issues.
- ***Sacred Marriage*** (by Gary Thomas) Your marriage is more than a sacred covenant with another person. It is a spiritual discipline designed to help you know God better, trust him more fully and love him more deeply.

## GOING FURTHER – Resources Cont’d.

- *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (by Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller) Essential reading for anyone who wants to know God and love more deeply in this life.
- *The Marriage Book* (by Nicky and Sila Lee) Full of practical advice, this book is easy to read, and is designed to help prepared, build and even mend marriages.
- *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) Discover intimacy in a new light using a series of his/her date night ideas.

**Jubilee House** offers marriage counseling. Can be reached at 618-664-2800.

**Websites:** Listen to a free marriage podcast and discover tools for becoming an intentional couple at [HomeGrowth.org](http://HomeGrowth.org). Also, both [family.org](http://family.org) and [familylife.com](http://familylife.com) provide online collections of marriage articles, resources, assessments and referrals representing the best of Christian marriage support.

All the resources listed are intended to give you a thought provoking perspective on Christian marriage. None are intended to replace the Bible and the counsel of Holy Spirit as our ultimate guides.

### GOING FURTHER – GFMC Support

At Greenville Free Methodist Church, we regularly offer opportunities for marriage enrichment. We try to have a course that focuses on marital relationships at least once a year. Keep an eye on the church bulletin for information about upcoming events.

Please see Pastor Greg or Lisa Barber if you have questions about upcoming marriage enrichment courses.

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