

A Celebration of Sex (by Dr. Douglas Rosenau) is a guide to enjoying God's gift of sexual intimacy.

Recommended Website:

Both www.family.org and www.familylife.com provides online collections of marriage articles, resources, assessments and referrals representing the best of Christian marriage support.

GOING FURTHER – Church Support

Simply Romantic Nights Kit (from Family Life Ministries) helps to discover intimacy in a new light using a series of his/her date night ideas. This kit is available to purchase at the Faith@Home Resource Center.

NRHBC offers a variety of Sunday Morning Bible Study classes for married couples of all ages. Connect with like-minded Christ-followers for solid biblical teaching and encouragement in the journey. For specific class information, go to www.nrhbc.org/couples or contact Stuart Pendell at 817-284-9206.

Faith  @ Home

Blueprints

**Building a
Strong Marriage**

Building a God-Honoring Marriage

*From Stuart Pendell, Minister to Couples
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. 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 to check out from the church library)

The Marriage Masterpiece (by Al Janssen) unveils the beauty of God's design for every marriage.

The New 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 Book of Romance (by Tommy Nelson) builds upon the excellent content of Tommy Nelson's Song of Solomon conference, this book is a guide that has much to reveal about finding and keeping the love of your life.

Fit To Be Tied (by Bill and Lynne Hybels) offers creative ways to "court" your spouse and a guide to resolving conflicts instead of driving them underground.

The Five Love Languages (by Gary Chapman) describes how to discover and serve your spouse's unique love language.