

**Explanatory Notes:****HOW CAN FELLOW BELIEVERS  
AND CHURCHES STRENGTHEN  
MARRIAGES?**

**Message Title:** How Can Fellow Believers and Churches Strengthen Marriages?

**Topic:** Church support for married couples

**Introduction:**

We have been discussing the topic of marriage and families. Families face many challenges today that people who lived years ago did not face. For example:

- **Societies are changing very rapidly.** Families find it hard to keep up with the many changes taking place.
- **Households are becoming more isolated from each other.** Communities are not as close and supportive of families as they used to be. Many families feel disconnected from the larger community. They face their problems alone. They don't have the help they need to survive.

Who can these families turn to when they face problems in their marriages and homes?

The writers of the New Testament gave a number of commands to the churches to whom they wrote. They told believers to build each other up (strengthen each other's faith and character). Listen as I read a few of these commands.

*We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things.*

Hebrews 10:24, CEV

*We should try to live at peace and help each other have a strong faith.*

Romans 14:19, CEV

*. . . all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.*

1 Peter 3:8, NLT

*Love should always make us tell the truth. Then we will grow in every way and be more like Christ, the head of the body. Christ holds it together and makes all of its parts work perfectly, as it grows and becomes strong because of love.*

Ephesians 4:15-16, CEV

We say we believe in the importance of the family. We say that families are the primary place for the spiritual and moral growth of our children. But how well do we support the families of our churches? Do we leave them alone to get along (survive) for themselves? Do we expect families to survive in the world without our help and guidance?

In this message I would like to give you **ten suggestions** that some churches and communities have found helpful in supporting their married couples and families. You can adapt these practical ideas to fit your own church. Different churches will find some ideas more helpful than others.

**1. Ask your pastor to emphasize practical family issues in his preaching.** Your pastor may be willing to include illustrations in sermons that show families how to apply God's Word to their family situations. He may be willing to preach on topics like faithfulness, forgiveness, communication and listening—topics that are vital for family life.

**2. Encourage long courtships.** People who marry soon after they meet each other and “fall in love” are likely to have serious marital problems and divorces. Churches can show love to their young people by encouraging them to move slowly and get to know each other well before marrying. Couples need time to compare and affirm their Christian values.

**3. Set up pre-marital counseling for all people who will be married in your church.** In pre-marital counseling, a pastor or some other wise, trained person meets with people who are preparing for marriage. This person talks with the couple about important topics such as the following:

- What is marriage? What is a Christian view of marriage, love, sex?
- How well do the future husband and wife know each other? How well do they know themselves? How well do they know each other's families?
- How prepared are they to face the conflicts of marriage? Do they have the ability to listen carefully to each other and to express themselves clearly and kindly?
- How does the couple intend to make their Christian faith an important part of their marriage?
- What will the wedding ceremony include?
- What common Christian goals do they share?

Often young couples who are in love think everything is perfect. They think their future spouse is perfect and that they will have a perfect marriage. That is why the pastor should also have the couple meet with him several months after the wedding. Then he can re-introduce some of the same information when they are more prepared to pay attention to what he has to tell them.

**4. Select older, wiser couples who can serve as mentors for younger couples.** Mentors are people who gently guide, teach and train less experienced people. Mentors answer their questions and give them advice. If churches can provide helpful mentors for newlywed couples, this will assist them as they begin their marriage together. Young couples will have an opportunity to learn about important marriage issues from other believers who have more experience than they do. They develop new models and dreams for the success of their marriage.

**5. Teach and encourage young people to abstain from sex until after they are married.** God forbids all sexual activity outside of marriage. The Bible tells us, "Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people." (Ephesians

5:3, NLT). This is for our good. People who have sexual intercourse with various partners before they marry have added difficulties after they marry. They are more likely to divorce. They are more likely to compare their spouse with their previous lovers. They are more likely to have conflict and be dissatisfied with their marriage. They are more likely to have a weak view of marriage and faithfulness. What can your church do to show your young people the wisdom of keeping sexual activity within marriage?

**6. Another step your church can take to support marriages is to hold marriage enrichment study conferences.**

There are several parts of a marriage enrichment conference. **First of all** it is led by a wise Christian couple. They teach other married couples about strengthening their marriage, communicating better, and loving each other more.

**It is also practical.** Couples take time practicing their listening and speaking skills with each other. They also learn simple, practical ways to help each other and express their love for each other.

**A marriage conference is also fun.** If possible, the conference should be away from the cares and concerns of life.\* There should be games or other fun activities that couples can play together or with other couples. There should be times when each married couple is free to spend time alone together to express their love for each other.

**7. Provide other fun activities for families and couples.**

Church fellowship isn't only for Bible study, prayer and evangelism. It is also for fun! How might your church celebrate and laugh and play together? When we do this we provide relief for tired families and we provide healthy alternatives to worldly amusements for our young people.

**8. Believers can help each other with housework and childcare so that each husband and wife can have some time alone together.**

Many married people feel overwhelmed by the chores and challenges of daily life. They wish they could have a few moments each week to stop and rest and spend time together. A simple way that believers can support each other is to take turn caring for

**\*Producers:** are there inexpensive places where your people go to relax? Parks? Beaches? Campgrounds? Homes or farms of wealthy people?

each others' children for a night. This gives parents some quiet time alone together to build up their marriage.

**9. Believers should seek to support persons who have suffered the pain and loss of divorce.** Too often divorced people are rejected and condemned by their fellow believers. Yes, divorce is a sin. But divorce is also a painful experience. Divorced people are victims just as much as they are sinners. They need loving Christians to help them endure their suffering and find healing and restoration. How can your church train its members to be supportive rather than judgmental?

**10. Believers who are community or business leaders should try to encourage the community to foster an environment which supports marriages and families.** Do businesses take their employees' family needs into consideration? Do government leaders support family concerns? Do schools teach children what they need to know about marriage and the family? How can the community limit the influence of destructive media (TV, radio, etc) messages? \* As believers in Jesus Christ we should take what steps we can to be a positive Christian influence in our neighborhoods, our nations and our world.

### Conclusion:

The Bible says this:

*Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose.*

*Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.*

**\*Producers:** we realize not many churches or individual believers will have the influence or the resources needed to change their communities in these ways. But use your imagination. What small, simple steps can your listeners take to make their communities safer, healthier places for families?

Philippians 2:1-4, CEV

God has been so good to us. He has given us salvation in Jesus Christ. He has given us his Holy Spirit. He has given us a church family who loves us. How can we imitate his goodness? How can we express our thankfulness to God? By caring for each other and looking after each other's families. By loving others just as God has loved us.

*[Conclude with an appropriate prayer for churches, communities and families as they seek to help each other]*