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*15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

I Timothy 4:15-16

# Faith is Falling Because the Family is in Freefall

40%

of all births in the United States occur outside of marriage.

\*Institute for Family Studies, "How We Ended Up With 40 Percent of Children Born Out of Wedlock," 2017

54%

of children born in the U.S. reach their 17th birthday without a married mom and dad in the home.

\*Fifth Annual Index of Family Belonging, MARRI

Family formation and stability rates in the U.S. remain in steep decline.

## Family Structure is Key for Passing on the Faith to Children

**78%**

Millennials from married homes are 78% more likely to attend church than peers from unmarried homes.

A parents' marriage has a massive, lifelong impact on whether their kids practice Christianity as adults. Those from married homes across the last three generations regularly attend church at nearly the same rate.

Source: 2018 American Political and Social Behavior survey (APRB).



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- **Be intentional in your own marriage**—because you can't lead others where you aren't willing to go yourself.
- **Build healthy marriages in your church**—because a marriage-friendly church is a gospel-centered church.



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# Prioritize Your Spouse Over Your Ministry

- The best thing you can do for your church (and your children!) is love your spouse
- Your first ministry is at home. Don't let the church **get the best of you,** and your spouse get the leftovers
- Keep Intimacy a priority
- Cultivate other mentor couples who encourage you in marriage (double date)



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# Prioritize Your Spouse Over Your Ministry

**Question:** What does our marriage communicate to our church family?

**Practical Step:** Daily Distraction.  
Weekly Withdrawal. Annual Abandon.



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## Communicate Like Teammates, Not Opponents

- Your spouse is not the enemy—you're on the same team.
- Listening is more important than fixing. Sometimes, your spouse just needs to be heard, not pastored.





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# Communicate Like Teammates, Not Opponents

**Question:** What are we doing to ensure we are working as teammates?

**Practical Step:** Practice “safe zone” conversations or rate disagreements on a scale of 1 to 10



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## **Find a Shared Ministry that you can do Together**

- **God designed marriage as a partnership;** serving together strengthens your relationship when you focus on things bigger than yourselves.



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## **Find a Shared Ministry that you can do Together**

Question: *What do you enjoy doing together?*

Practical Step: *Get out there and do something...together!*



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## **Guard against and destroy contempt**

- Contempt doesn't happen in one little moment
- Contempt may develop against your spouse or even the church



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## **Guard against and destroy contempt**

Question: *Where might contempt creep into our marriage if we don't guard against it?*

Practical Step: *Have a "No Church Talk" zone—like during date nights or family vacations*



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- **Be intentional in your own marriage**—because you can't lead others where you aren't willing to go yourself.
- **Build healthy marriages in your church**—because a marriage-friendly church is a gospel-centered church.



of all churches in America lack a substantive marriage ministry.



of all churches have no ministry for newlyweds helping them through their first critical years of marriage.



of churches do not offer any ministries for singles. This is a huge opportunity area to encourage healthy habits around dating or finding the right spouse for marriage.



A large majority of churches report spending 0 percent of their ministry dollars on marriage and relationship ministries.



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## Teach on Marriage Regularly

- Don't wait until there's a crisis—make marriage enrichment a regular part of church life
- Preach about marriage, but also model it

Practical Step: Plan an annual marriage series and highlight testimonies of couples in the church





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## Offer Premarital Counseling - a Must

- Weddings are great, but we're here to build **marriages** that last

Practical Step: **Develop a premarital program that sets couples up for success**



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## Create a Culture of Mentorship

- Young couples need seasoned couples to show them the ropes

Practical Step: **Pair newlyweds with mentor couples for regular check-ins and encouragement**



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## Provide a Rhythm of Marriage Enrichment

- Promote marriage workshops (*Family Life Weekend to Remember*), and small groups focused on marriage

Practical Step: Host a “**Date Nights**” at church

Make it easy for couples to work on their marriage



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## **Make the Church a Safe Place for Struggling Marriages**

- Too many couples suffer in silence because they're afraid of judgment

Practical Step: Establish confidential marriage counseling or support groups



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