

WARRIED PEOPLE

how

your church

CAN BUILD

FREE SAMPLER

WARRIAGES

{ THAT LAST }

TED LOWE & DOUG FIELDS

We hope you enjoy this complimentary sample of *Married People: How Your Church Can Build Marriages that Last*, by Ted Lowe and Doug Fields.

This sample contains the first chapter, information about the authors, and the complete table of contents.

For more from Orange Books, visit OrangeBooks.com.

Married People
is available in print and digital versions.

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MARRIAGES

{ THAT LAST }

TED LOWE & DOUG FIELDS

“Years ago, my wife and I had the great benefit of learning about how wonderful a marriage can be from Ted Lowe and the amazing events he produced. That he’s partnered with Doug Fields and created a book to help other marriages is absolutely awesome!”

—**Jon Acuff**, *New York Times* bestselling author
of *Start and Stuff Christians Like*

“If you think marriage ministry is outdated, boring, preachy or feminine, then please read *Married People*. Ted Lowe and Doug Fields do a masterful job of crafting a relevant, fun and engaging marriage ministry strategy for the local church. I know of no other book like it. My hope is that churches will implement their approach and everyone will be FOR marriage.”

—**Ted Cunningham**, founding pastor, Woodland Hills Family Church, Branson, Missouri, and author of *Fun Loving You*

“Every church is filled with couples struggling in their marriage. We want to help couples have an amazing marriage, but most of our time, resources, and energy are given as a reaction to marital crisis. What I love about *Married People* is the holistic vision it provides every church and pastor to gain influence with married people and create irresistible environments for them to grow in their love for God and each other. We can’t change a human heart, but we can provide the space and opportunities for God to transform married couples. This is a must-have resource for all churches.”

—**Justin Davis**, pastor, Cross Point Church, Nashville, Tennessee, and co-author of *Beyond Ordinary: When a Good Marriage Just Isn’t Good Enough*

“Wow, I hope every church leader in America reads this important and helpful book. Marriage ministry in the church is one of those unusual areas where setting up just a few strategic things can make a big difference in the lives of those in the congregation. But church leaders are often so stretched, much of our ministry to marriages realistically ends up happening when trouble hits. Ted and Doug’s

book gives church leaders a vision and simple options for creating an ongoing marriage ministry structure that will prevent much of that trouble to begin with! I am excited to see this resource and know that every church implementing these well-thought-out and easy-to-use ideas will see a great blessing on marriages!”

—**Shaunti Feldhahn**, social researcher, speaker, and author of *For Women Only*, *For Men Only*, and *The Good News About Marriage*

“As culture shifts and marriages continue to struggle, the church at large is desperate to find its voice in engaging, equipping and empowering today’s marriages. *Married People: How Your Church Can Build Marriages that Last* gives words to start conversations and reignite passion within the church to be a voice for this generation and generations to come.”

—**Trisha Davis**, co-author of *Beyond Ordinary: When a Good Marriage Just Isn't Good Enough* and co-founder, RefineUs Ministries
“Ted and Doug provide a refreshing mix of theory, personal stories, humour and hyper-practical implementation tips. Plus, they get men. I can’t wait to see this book unleashed on leaders and the church.”

—**Carey Nieuwhof**, lead pastor, Connexus Church, Toronto
“Beyond the age of 18, the greatest opportunities for a person to come to faith through the local church are marriage, the birth of a child, or death. *Married People* is a principled-based, must-have resource for any marriage champion. Finally, a strategy to strengthen marriages and families inside the church that addresses felt-needs discipleship.”

—**Tim Popadic**, national director, Date Night Works
“Every leader I know wants to better love and serve marriages. Finally a book that gives leaders the road map and practical tools they need to make a lifelong difference in couples and families.”

—**Kara Powell**, executive director, Fuller Youth Institute

A decorative banner with the word "CONTENTS" in a serif font, centered between two curved lines that sweep upwards and outwards from the center.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

DON'T SKIP THIS PART

CHAPTER 1: Three Big Reasons Why Marriage Is the Church's Business

CHAPTER 2: Marriage Ministry in the Local Church: Where Are We?

CHAPTER 3: A New Approach for Marriage Ministry: A Strategy that Works

CHAPTER 4: Inspiring Larger Group Experiences

CHAPTER 5: Empowering Small Group Experiences

CHAPTER 6: Equipping Individual Couples

CHAPTER 7: Escape from Content Mountain

CHAPTER 8: Remember Our Audience

CHAPTER 9: Getting Started, Part 1

CHAPTER 10: Getting Started, Part 2

CHAPTER 11: On Display

BEFORE YOU GO

APPENDICES

NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Married People
How Your Church Can Build Marriages that Last

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FOREWORD

I am writing this a week before my oldest daughter's wedding day. She is only one of two million who will get married this year. But she's different from the rest. She's my daughter. I could pretend I care about everyone else's marriage as much as I do hers. But I don't. I guess because as a parent, you just feel things more deeply and strongly when it involves your own child. That's why I feel compelled to ask you this question first as a parent: **Do you have a plan to help marriages in your church grow stronger?**

I'm not asking if you have a book, or a sermon series, or a workshop, or a small group study for couples. There are more resources than ever before available to help marriages. But there is a difference between providing information and having a clear, strategic plan to help couples consistently fight for their relationship.

So let me ask the question another way: **If my daughter and her new husband moved to your city, could you explain your weekly, monthly, and yearly plan to help them stay in a dynamic and growing relationship with each other?**

That's why this book was written. Ted and Doug are not only asking you that question as parents; they are asking you as pastors and leaders. Well over half the adults in any given community are married, and nearly 80 percent of them don't attend church. That's why when your church becomes an advocate for marriage, it makes a powerful and positive statement to people inside and outside your church.

When you implement a clear strategy about marriage church-wide, it affects the spiritual health of every couple who attends your church. It provides a model for future generations who happen to be watching. It sends a message to every unchurched couple in your community. (By the way, it also suggests that you actually care

about what happens in the one relationship that is usually most important to a husband or wife.)

Here's another question I would like for you to consider: **If your church doesn't do this in your community, who will?**

Your city government?

The private or public schools in your area?

Random counselors and therapists?

Think about it. Who in your community has the best opportunity to inspire couples to influence other couples to build stronger marriages? There are a lot of us who believe the answer to that question is the church. That's why *Married People* is not just another book about how to build a great marriage. Instead, **it's a book about how to gain influence with married people**. We think the stakes are really high, and that there needs to be a renewed effort to help couples win.

If you haven't had an effective plan to this point for married couples in your church, you do now. Doug Fields and Ted Lowe have spent decades implementing a practical and strategic style of ministry. They have reputations for being impatient with programs that don't lead anywhere and teaching that doesn't engage anyone. These pages are filled with insights from seasoned pastors on how to leverage the church's influence and platforms to make marriages successful. Fields and Lowe have done the work for the rest of us; now it's our turn to respond. So read this book carefully. Then we hope you will analyze, customize, and personalize the ideas in it for your church and community.

Because someone's recently married daughter and her husband could be moving to your city. They just need you to take some time and make a plan to help their marriage win.

Reggie Joiner, Founder and President, Orange

DON'T
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FINISH THIS STORY

Beth Johnson stood at the kitchen window and watched her husband, Blake, drive away for the last time before their divorce was to be finalized. Once his car was out of view, she braced herself against the counter and sobbed. She stopped crying almost as quickly as she had started because she knew the kids would soon be home from school.

Blake was typically strong and composed, so he was surprised his hands were shaking. He pulled into the parking lot of the neighborhood clubhouse, where other parents were parked to meet their children's school bus. He regretted his decision to pull over when he saw Maria, a neighbor who always picked up his kids on Thursdays. Maria got out of her car and walked over to Blake. He lowered his window.

"Is everything okay?" Maria asked.

“Yes,” Blake said. “I’m just picking up the girls because ... uh, well ... I’m taking the afternoon off from work.”

“Oh, that’s great. The girls will be thrilled.”

Blake nodded, ending the awkward conversation by quickly raising the window. Now his hands were really shaking. But why? After all, the divorce was the best thing for everyone, especially the kids, right?

As he waited, he once again began to think through everything he and Beth had tried to make their marriage work. They had seen a counselor three times. They had attended the church marriage retreat. Most of their friends agreed divorce was the right move. What else could they have done? Just then the bus drove up and the girls got off and ran to his car, a little confused to see their dad there on a Thursday, but excited nonetheless. The short ride home was filled with stories about recess and how the eggs in the incubator at school had finally hatched the “cutest chicks in the whole wide world.”

Beth was shocked when she saw Blake pull into the driveway with the girls. Blake stopped the car and wondered if he should make a quick exit or allow the girls to get settled first. Beth wondered what he was doing. A small part of her questioned whether he had changed his mind. No way! That wasn’t possible. They were both certain. Right? The fighting in front of the kids had to stop. It was better for them to grow up in two peaceful homes rather than one chaotic one. Right?

Beth hesitated, then went outside. The girls got out of the car. Jenny, the spitting image of Beth, turned and said, “Get out of the car, Daddy! Mommy, the eggs hatched at school!”

Sara headed straight into the house. She had been quiet and distant for months. Blake and Beth both knew Sara realized

something was not right with their marriage. As Sara went by, Beth said, “Hi, baby, how was your day?” Without breaking stride Sara mumbled, “Fine” and continued to her room.

Dancing around the driveway, firecracker Jenny said, “Daddy, why did you meet us at the bus? Jake’s mom always meets us on Thursdays.” She ran and grabbed him by the hand to pull him out of the car. Blake didn’t move. The situation had left him feeling like deadweight. “Get out, Daddy. Let’s play. Jump on the trampoline with me.”

“No, Jenny. I have to go.”

“Go where?” she asked.

“Honey, I have ... I have to go back to work and I need to ...” His voice trailed off.

Jenny’s face went from exuberant to flat in a millisecond. What had appeared to be a great surprise on a random Thursday was now just a big disappointment.

“Go ahead, Jenny,” Beth said. “Go inside. Daddy needs to go.” Jenny didn’t move.

Blake was taken aback by the way Beth said “Daddy”; no sarcasm, no contempt. Seeing Beth and Jenny standing there together, looking just alike, felt like torture. “Beth, can we talk for just a minute?” Blake was as surprised as Beth to hear those words coming from his mouth.

“Don’t you need to get back to work?”

“Yes, but it will only take a minute. Jenny, can you give your mom and me just a few minutes by ourselves?” Jenny kicked the ground and ran inside.

Then Blake said ...



Let's hit pause on the Johnsons' story.

KEY QUESTIONS THIS FAMILY NEEDS CHURCH LEADERS TO WRESTLE WITH

How do you think their story will end? What is Blake likely to say? How will Beth respond at this point? A better question might be, how would you like this story to end, or at least to re-begin? What would happen if Blake and Beth were regular attendees at your church?

That brings up additional important questions for us as church leaders:

1. What does Scripture really say about what the church's role is when it comes to helping Beth, Blake, Sara, and Jenny?
2. To what extent should the church feel responsible when it comes to empowering all marriages, whether they are struggling, barely surviving, or even growing and healthy?
3. If the church is intentional about strengthening marriages, will it send an alienating message to those who aren't yet married, or who never want to be married?
4. There is only so much time and only so many resources. Does the church let another area of ministry slide in order to help marriages?
5. If we don't do what we can to strengthen marriages, what does that do to the growth and health of our church?
6. Is our church's attempt to help marriages working?
7. Is marriage really the church's business? If not, whose is it?
8. What might result if our church chooses not to be aggressive in helping marriages?

9. What would God have our church do to help build marriages that last?

FROM GREAT QUESTIONS COME ... MORE QUESTIONS

With ministry moving at the speed of light, we wondered how many leaders would pause long enough to consider these kinds of questions when it comes to how our churches approach marriage. Thankfully, you are one of many; there is a wave of marriage awareness building among church leaders.

These leaders believe, or are starting to believe, that it is absolutely the church's role to help Beth, Blake, Sara, and Jenny. They are realizing that the time to equip couples through the local church is now. They are seeing the need to intersect with the lives of married couples long before the point their marriages are likely to come apart. They are sensing that while marriage is messy and comes with a lot of baggage and sensitivity, they can no longer ignore the mess.

Even though they are busy creating programs and sermons and all manner of content every week, they are beginning to consider that maybe changes need to be made in order to make marriage a priority. They are having meetings (sometimes awkward ones) in order to ask whether what they are doing to help married couples is working. As kids flood the church each week, they are wondering what hangs in the balance for these children if they simply let nature take its course with their parents' marriages. In terms of tithing, attendance, and volunteerism, it is becoming clearer every day that, practically speaking, the growth and the health of their church depends greatly on how they answer this question: How do we empower marriages?

While these thoughts and questions are not easy to digest, the benefits that come from the answers (and from the hard work of digging for answers) are nothing short of life altering for the health of individual families, the local church, and society as a whole. What if the church could really get this empowering married couples thing right? The implications are massive.

WHERE WE ARE HEADED (AND WHAT THIS BOOK WILL DO FOR YOU)

Because you are reading this book, we are guessing you not only care about marriages, you care about the church “being the church” to people. That is, people relating to others in ways that strengthen one another’s marriages and make it less likely that couples will call it quits. We are also betting you have some good ideas for how to get there, but haven’t been able to implement them for one reason or another. Or, it may be you feel overwhelmed at the thought of creating and implementing such a ministry. We’ve been there, and thankfully, we’ve been staring at these kinds of questions long enough that we are at a point to help answer them.

While we hope this book inspires you with God’s purposes and plan for marriage, we also pray that, in a relatively short amount of time, this book gives you ...

- A proactive strategy to strengthen all marriages.
- Practical steps for launching and implementing the strategy.
- Principles and steps you can employ if you want to develop your own strategy.
- Tools to impact marriages, both in and outside the church, while strengthening your church in the process.

- A marriage ministry “manual” that you can come back to again and again.

People have asked if this book is for married couples. We say yes, it is, but not in the usual way. The purpose of this book (and the heart and passion behind it) is to equip churches to help build marriages that last. While that may sound idealistic, the way we hope to help you accomplish that will actually be very practical.

We are honored you are reading this book. But more than that, we are excited that you might join us and become a pioneer in the movement to minister to married people. We are thrilled with this new tribe of people in the church who are passionate about the local church helping marriages, and who want the church to be known as THE place in the community that strengthens marriages. You are about to enter into something rewarding and life changing. Buckle up and let's go.



TED LOWE

Ted Lowe is a speaker, a blogger, and the founder of MarriedPeople (**MarriedPeople.org**), the marriage division of Orange (**WhatIsOrange.org**), a company devoted to influencing the next generation. After serving as the director of MarriedLife at North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, Ted joined the Orange team to create MarriedPeople. The mission of MarriedPeople is to help churches help marriages by giving them a proactive strategy and the resources to empower that strategy.

Ted is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary, in Pasadena, California. He lives in Cumming, Georgia, with his four favorite people: his wife, Nancie, and their three children. For more information about Ted and MarriedPeople, visit **MarriedPeople.org** or join them on Facebook at **facebook.com/marriedpeople** or Twitter **@Married_People**.



DOUG FIELDS

Doug Fields is the Executive Director for the HomeWord Center for Youth and Family at Azusa Pacific University (**HomeWord.com**). He's an award-winning author of more than 50 books, including *7 Ways to Be Her Hero*, *Refuel*, and *Getting Ready for Marriage*. He's the co-founder of **DownloadYouthMinistry.com** and is in constant demand as a speaker and ministry consultant. He has also served on staff at two incredible churches in Southern California for a combined 30 years (Mariners Church and Saddleback Church).

He is happily married to his wife of 30 years, Cathy, and they are parents of three young adults: Torie, Cody, and Cassie. More information about Doug is available at **DougFields.com**.

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