

STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH

LET'S CONSULT THE ARCHITECT

GENESIS 2:18–25; PROVERBS 24:3–4



The Heart of the Matter

When we think of institutions, we often think of places where delinquent, defective, or dependent people need help and a place to stay away from society. This could well describe the institution of marriage today—an arrangement to pair together delinquent, defective, and dependent people, not for a lifetime but merely for a time. For many marriages, this definition is all too true. But it doesn't have to describe your marriage. The institution of marriage has fallen on hard times—divorce rates are soaring, men and women are testing the marriage waters by living together first, to say nothing about society's attempts to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples. But marriage is a divinely designed institution, and if marriage is to thrive in an increasingly hostile culture, then we must first consult the architect of marriage . . . God.



Discovering the Way

1. Introduction to the Series

This series on marriage is most applicable for those already married or soon to be married; however, because our study will focus on the Bible, it is practical for anyone—married or not.

2. Statement of the Need

Why a series on marriage? Marriages are hurting. Homes are suffering. Families are fracturing.

3. Observations of Scripture (Genesis 2:18–25 and Proverbs 24:3–4)

God created men and women in His image for the purpose of marriage, which can only be built on the divine foundation of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.



Starting Your Journey

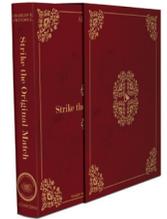
Three applications for the home emerge from this study. The time to start is *now*. The method to follow is *God's*. And the person to change is *you*.



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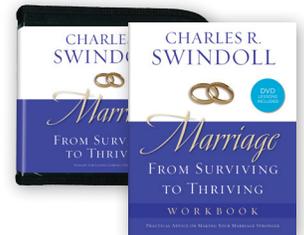


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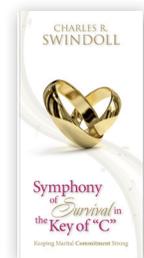
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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
THE PROJECT: LET'S CONSIDER THE COST
 COLOSSIANS 3:1-3, 5-6, 8-10



The Heart of the Matter

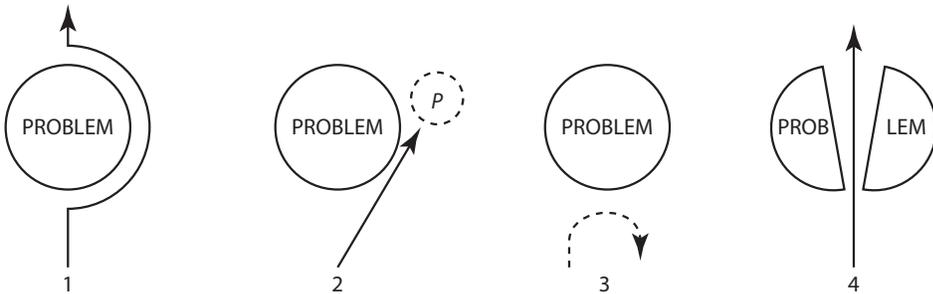
Changes are never cheap. Remodeling a house is expensive . . . but restoring a home is *infinitely* more costly! No one ever worked through a difficult, hurting marriage without paying a very high price. This fact alone causes many partners to refuse the process. The pain of changing is, in the opinion of many, too great to bear. But for those who do change, how sweet it is! God declares that the husband-wife relationship is to portray the deep, close, loving relationship Christ has with His bride, the church. When a Christian marriage is dissolved, God loses one of the greatest theological seminaries in the world. How difficult it becomes to declare the love of Christ when marriages are destroyed!



Discovering the Way

1. Common Resistance against Restoring a Home

When it comes to solving problems we're confronted with four options. We can go around. We can go aside. We can go back. Or we can go through.



2. Costly Responses That Restore a Home (Colossians 3:1-3, 5-6, 8-10)

Changing yourself is costly but worth it. To make significant changes, you must dig in, give up, start over, and carry through.



Starting Your Journey

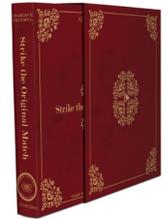
If you do the hard work of changing yourself, you'll reap the common rewards of wisdom (seeing with discernment), understanding (responding with insight), and knowledge (learning with perception).



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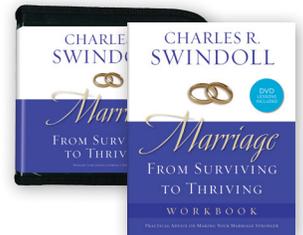


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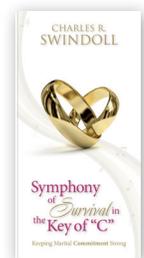
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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
LET'S REPAIR THE FOUNDATION
GENESIS 2:18-25



The Heart of the Matter

Damage to a marriage can begin even before the vows. Among the greatest threats to a new union are the young bride and groom's thoughts about what life with a new spouse will be like. Expectations often lead to broken dreams, as invariably, young couples fall into the trap of looking forward to a non-existent reality. On the doorstep of sealing their marriage bond, many people anticipate that after a few years of hard work and perseverance, they will settle into ideal marriages. However, there is no ideal marriage this side of sin. Instead, marriage promises a lifetime of two people striving together for maturity. Without this realistic perspective, a couple's view of the foundation of marriage becomes fractured and in need of repair.



Discovering the Way

1. The One and Only Ideal Marriage (Genesis 2:18-23)

Adam and Eve had the only ideal marriage, because of the unique way they came together in Eden before sin entered the world.

2. The Three Principles of a Realistic Marriage (2:24-25)

To make a true marriage, the man and woman will sever themselves from their parents, remain with each other permanently, and accept each other unconditionally.



Starting Your Journey

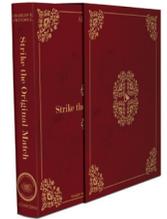
In any marriage, God doesn't expect perfection, though He does expect appropriation. And while you can appropriate the lessons of marriage on your own, it works better when done together with your spouse.



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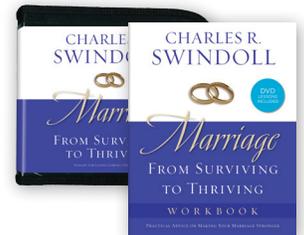


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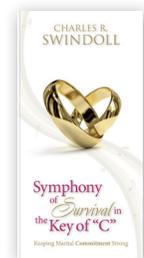


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
IN DEFENSE OF MONOGAMY
GENESIS 1:26–28; 2:24–25; MATTHEW 19:3–6



The Heart of the Matter

The air today is filled with the shrill cry of “my rights.” In the center ring of this loud arena is the home—more specifically, the marriage bond. Mate-swapping, group marriages, and living together without official marriage commitments are realities no longer carried out under the hush-hush blanket of shame and disgrace. Some couples are even accepting practices that just a couple of decades ago were taboo, introducing infidelity and pornography into the marriage bed. In all these alternative lifestyles, the Bible is either ignored altogether or rationalized to extremes. Is monogamy an outdated concept? In this message, we look at what the Bible says about the value of a one-spouse-only relationship so that we might uphold and defend God’s design.



Discovering the Way

1. Some Initial Terms to Clarify

Before we can defend monogamy, we must understand the meaning of three key terms: *monogamy*, *commitment*, and *accountability*.

2. A Study of the Monogamy-Polygamy Conflict

The Bible records the reality of polygamy without a justification of the practice. And while polygamy is never directly condemned, the Bible makes clear its consequences.

3. Back to the Basics of Monogamy

Two realities form the backbone of monogamy. In the context of creation, God uncovered a need—loneliness. And in the context of need, God provided a solution—the woman.

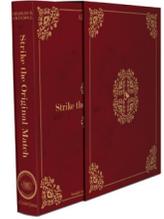


Starting Your Journey

As you reflect on the value of monogamy, remember to ask the Lord to give you the wisdom of grace. And if you are in disobedience? Give serious consideration to change.

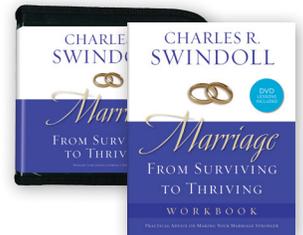


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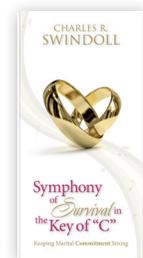
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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
BRICKS THAT BUILD A MARRIAGE
1 PETER 3:1-9



The Heart of the Matter

Everyone expects the dangers of this world to attack from outside the comforts of home. However, with divorces taking place at alarming rates, attacks from without are being replaced with staggering disintegration from within. Divorce stands as the final ruin of a house that has fallen in on itself. If you or a member of your family hasn't fallen victim to divorce, it almost certainly has affected a number of your friends and acquaintances. The reality of crumbling marriages in our world should cause God's people to stand up and take notice. Thankfully, the Bible provides clear direction regarding the proper materials it takes to build a lasting marriage.



Discovering the Way

1. Discovering the Biblical Pattern for Marriage (Ephesians 5:22-25)

The Bible sets a marital pattern for both the wife and the husband. While the wife should live in submission to her husband, the husband should live in adoration of his wife.

2. Choosing the Bricks That Are Essential (1 Peter 3:1-9)

The bricks that make up a marriage are unique to the wife and the husband. The Bible calls the wife to properly direct her actions, her adornment, her attitude, and her attention, while the husband needs to live with, know, and honor his wife.



Starting Your Journey

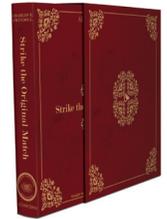
The mortar that holds the bricks of marriage together is made of harmony, sympathy, affection, compassion, and unselfishness.



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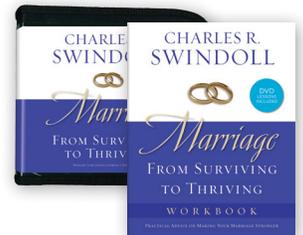


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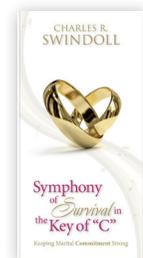
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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
WATCH OUT FOR CHEAP SUBSTITUTES!
1 PETER 3:1-9



The Heart of the Matter

In the previous message, we learned that God's plan for remodeling a house into a home calls for some specific behaviors and attitudes which serve as bricks or building blocks for the relationship. Some of these bricks are contributed by the wife, and some by the husband. Regrettably, both sets of bricks can be substituted with cheap imitations. These may seem to be adequate and acceptable at first, but over the long haul, they cause great damage.



Discovering the Way

1. Substitutes Commonly Used by Wives (1 Peter 3:1-6)

Wives will sometimes substitute secret manipulation for a quiet spirit, external appeal for internal beauty, and learning what is right for doing what is right.

2. Substitutes Commonly Used by Husbands (3:7-9)

Husbands will sometimes substitute providing a living for sharing a life, demanding for managing, and smothering for honoring.



Starting Your Journey

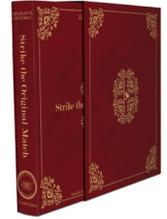
Substitutes in marriage create irritation, resentment, hatred, bitterness, and selfishness . . . the very things Peter challenged us to put aside.



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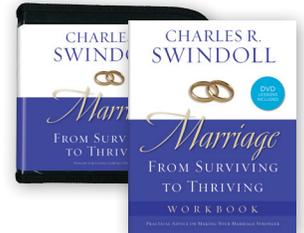


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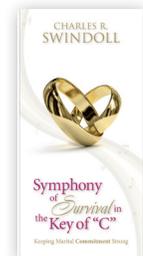
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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
WHO SAYS THE HONEYMOON MUST END?
GENESIS 1:27–28, 31; 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1–5



The Heart of the Matter

Immediately upon the mention of the word *honeymoon*, most people picture a time of intimate romance and unrestrained physical affection between newlyweds. Our culture promotes such a concept. We think of that period of passionate ecstasy as the *beginning* of a marriage—the time between the wedding and the return to the responsibilities of life. There is nothing wrong with such a concept—except for what it implies: namely, that such a show of physical affection is brief . . . is only for newlyweds . . . and is necessarily temporary, passing away with the passing of time. But God’s plan is that married couples enjoy such delights without shame or reluctance until “death do us part.”



Discovering the Way

1. Review of Major Principles (Genesis 2:24–25)

When there is severance, permanence, and acceptance in marriage, intimacy flourishes.

2. Biblical Facts about Marital Affection (Genesis 1:27–28; Proverbs 5:1–4, 15–19; 1 Corinthians 7:1–5)

Five key biblical facts inform our understanding of intimacy. God created intimacy in innocence and declared it very good, He made intimacy for more than just having children, He designed it for the husband and wife only, He deemed that intimacy express unselfish affection rather than selfish desire, and He decided that intimacy should not be interrupted for long periods of time.



Starting Your Journey

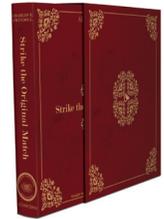
When marital affection wanes, there are many causes, but there are also cures. Seek out the cure for whatever ails your marriage.



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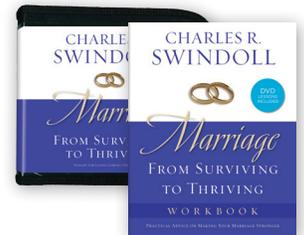


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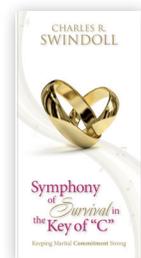


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
TERMITES IN YOUR TROTH
EPHESIANS 5:13–21



The Heart of the Matter

It is a proven fact that termites destroy more structures each year than fire does. Incredible as it may seem, tiny, silent, unnoticed insects create greater havoc than lashing, brutal, destructive flames—but it's always the fire that makes the headlines, not the termites. This is also true in a marriage. Most homes are not destroyed because of enormous, headline-making fires . . . but because of the quiet, gnawing, unnoticed, irritating *insects* that eat away at the troth, or trust, in a relationship year after year. This message exposes five of the more common species of relational termites that weaken and ruin the inner walls of a home.



Discovering the Way

1. Inspection Report (Song of Solomon 2:14–15)

We must make it our habit to examine our marriages, ensuring that they are protected from destruction.

2. Destructive Termites (Ephesians 5:13–21)

Paul outlined five common “termites” that work quietly to destroy marriages: the confused termite, the busy termite, the dull termite, the running termite, and the stubborn termite.

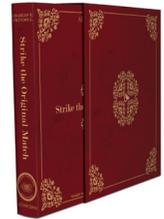


Starting Your Journey

Overcoming the pests that threaten our marriages involves honesty about their presence, a willingness to sacrifice for their removal, and the discipline to start immediately.

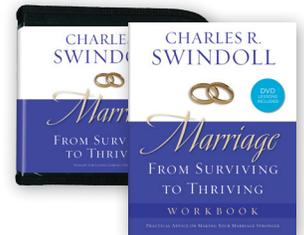


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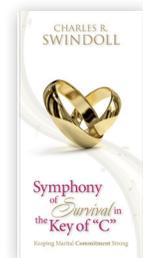


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH

HOW TO HAVE A GOOD FIGHT

EPHESIANS 4:25–32



The Heart of the Matter

“The first nine years of our marriage were constant hand-to-hand combat,” admitted a husband. If the truth were known, not some but *most* marriages are marked by periodic skirmishes—and occasionally all-out war! Frequently, marital warfare occurs in the trenches of belligerence or moodiness or both. Some battles are night ambushes or surprise assaults. Others are cold wars of stoic silence. Cruel methods of torture are also employed: public criticism, fearful threats, intimidation, ugly sarcasm, and hateful remarks designed to put down one’s mate. Such tactics are popular . . . but wrong, because they are unfair and never lead to domestic peace. In this message, we will take a look at why couples fight, as well as the rules that can keep any fight clean, good, and beneficial.



Discovering the Way

1. Round One: Basic Facts about Fights

It’s important to remember that most couples don’t really fight until after they are married. And when there are fights, most of them aren’t fair—meaning, no one wins.

2. Round Two: Rules to Fight By (Ephesians 4:25–32)

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians lays out seven key rules that keep fights fair: be committed to honesty and mutual respect, make sure your weapons aren’t deadly, agree together that the time is right, be ready with a positive solution soon after a negative swing, watch your words and guard your tone, don’t swing at your mate in public, and when it’s over, clean up the mess.



Starting Your Journey

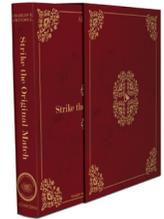
Finally, as fights occur in your marriage, remember how to stop most of them: as soon as you’re beaten, surrender!



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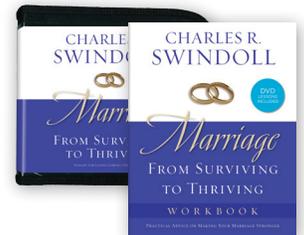


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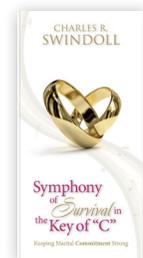


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
'TIL DEBT DO US PART
LUKE 19:11-26



The Heart of the Matter

Like giant containers of volatile gas, money must be managed with great care. Because most of us don't have more than we need, we must be wise and faithful with what we have. Our tendency in marriage, however, is to procrastinate. "Tomorrow we'll get organized," we lie to ourselves and our mates. Or we try to maintain an unrealistic and impractical financial system which ultimately discourages us. No home can escape the clutches of coin and currency—so we must learn how to implement wise policies of earning, giving, spending, saving, investing, and borrowing.



Discovering the Way

1. Biblical Facts That Correct Wrong Attitudes (Luke 19:11-26)

Seven key facts serve to correct incorrect attitudes we have about money: everything we have comes from God, our business life is important to God, doing business God's way is contrary to human nature, wise management of money pleases the Lord, poor management greatly displeases Him, management and disciplined planning go hand in hand, and financial losses and gains provide eternal lessons.

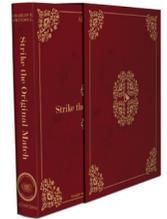


Starting Your Journey

Doing the right thing regarding money comes only when we recognize that Christ and Caesar are essential, buying and borrowing call for short accounts, saving and securities require planning, and things and treasure are temporal.

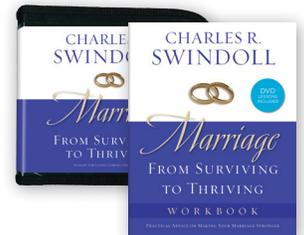


Tools for Digging Deeper

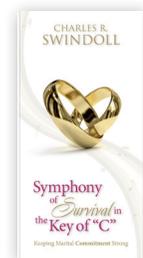


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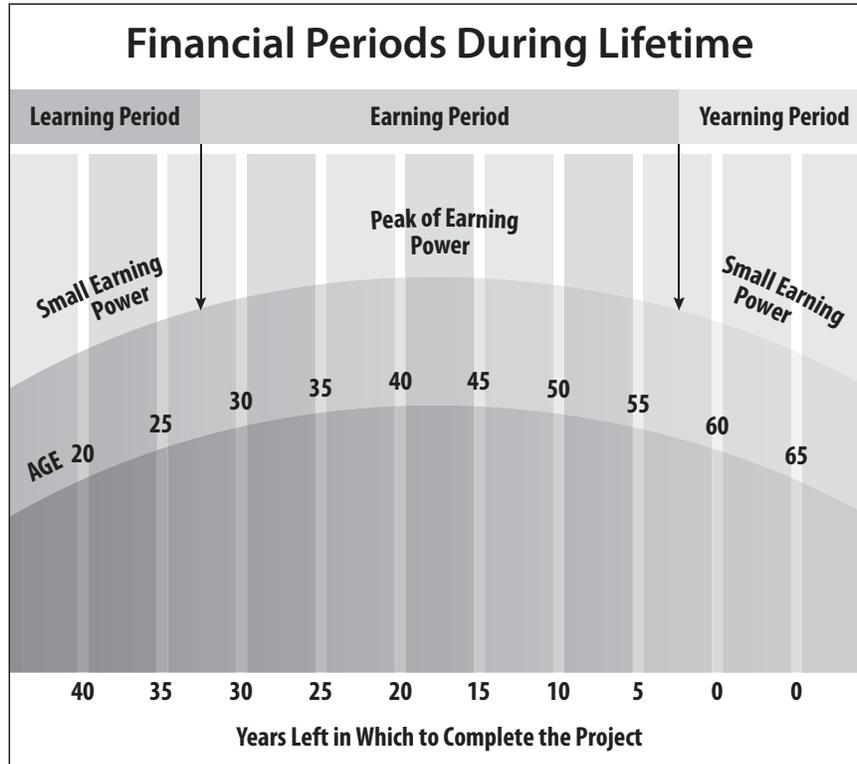


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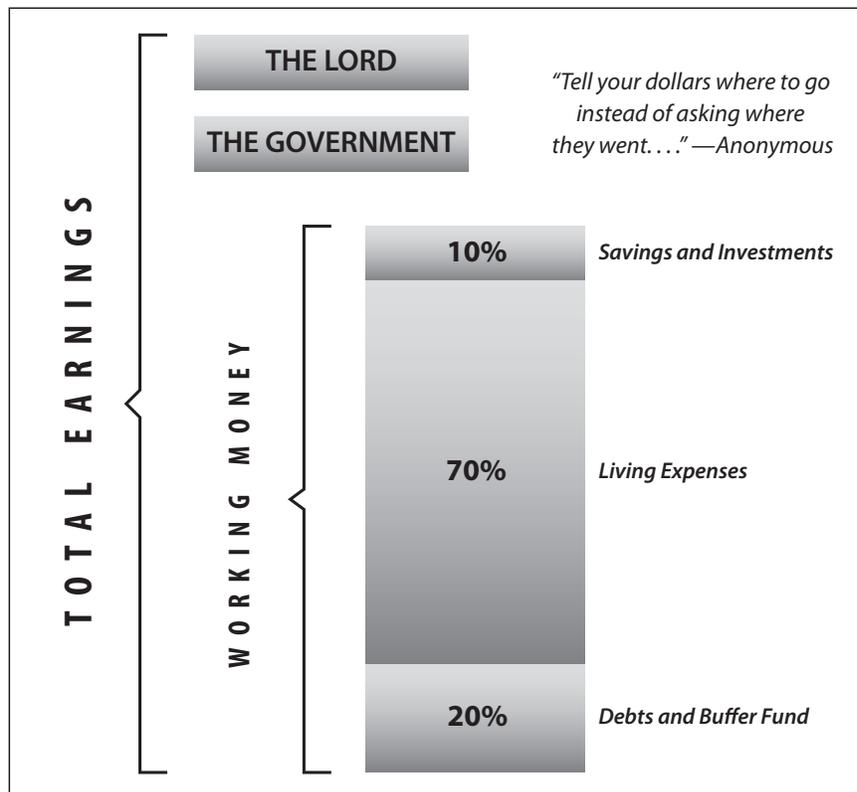
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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH 'TIL DEBT DO US PART



A Suggested Financial Formula: The "10 – 70 – 20" Plan



Taken from George M. Bowman's book, *How to Succeed with Your Money*, (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1960).



STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
COMMITMENT IS THE KEY (PART ONE)
DEUTERONOMY 6:10–15; EZEKIEL 33:30–33



The Heart of the Matter

It's a dangerous world out there! Every which way you turn, the culture, through the ever-present media, launches a new attack on our dedication to the biblical view of marriage. Pornography diminishes our passion for our spouses. Homosexuality demands equal standing in law and ethics as a new form of marriage. Individualism drives our already selfish natures into seeking our own good first before the good of our spouses and family. How can Christian marriages survive such onslaughts? Only through commitment. The good old-fashioned hard work of sticking it out!



Discovering the Way

1. Cultural Pressures on Marital Commitment (Deuteronomy 6:10–12)

The culture gives us permission to be irresponsible when it comes to marriage. And if we believe the lie, then we just might take the escape route and live only for ourselves.

2. The Collapse of Marital Commitment (Selected Scriptures)

The answer to this problem is fourfold. First, public opinion tells us not to commit (Deuteronomy 6:13–15). Second, accommodating theology gives us an excuse not to commit (Ezekiel 33:30–33). Third, delayed consequences convince us that we don't need to commit (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Fourth, Christian approval makes it seem okay to not commit (1 Corinthians 5:1–5).



Starting Your Journey

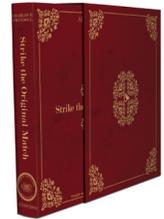
The biblical ideal of marriage, if it is to survive in our homes, requires unconditional acceptance of our spouses and unending commitment to our marriages.



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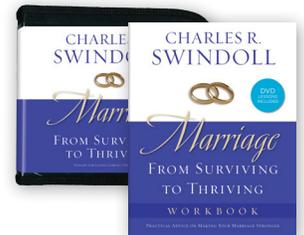


Tools for Digging Deeper

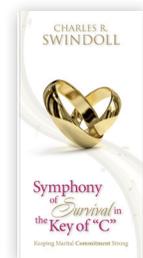


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
COMMITMENT IS THE KEY (PART TWO)
1 CORINTHIANS 7:3-4, 10-13, 24, 27-28, 34-35



The Heart of the Matter

As bombs dropped and enemies threatened to take over his country, Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, understood that the war would not be won by giving up the fight. Surrender is not an option if you plan to win. In a world where marriage is under attack by pressures outside and inside the Christian church, God's people cannot abdicate. We have a responsibility to ourselves, to our world, and to our God to stand strong in our marital commitment. But how can we do that? Let's take a look at what the Bible says we can do to bolster our marriages.



Discovering the Way

1. Review: Characteristics of Our Day

Our day has seen marital commitment weakening in the face of public opinion, accommodating theology, delayed consequences, and Christian approval.

2. Renew: Principles for Our Day (1 Corinthians 7:3-4; 10-13; 24; 27-28; 34-35)

Married Christians, if they hope to stay committed to one another, must realize that no conflict is beyond solution; that God wants us to work through our problems; that commitment is about releasing, not demanding, our rights; and that the Christian's ultimate goal is to glorify God, not be happy.



Starting Your Journey

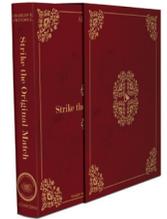
Two qualities will keep marriages strong. First, the Christian home is to model unconditional love. And, second, the Christian home is to maintain unbroken vows.



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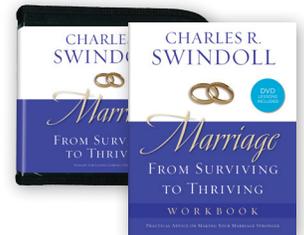


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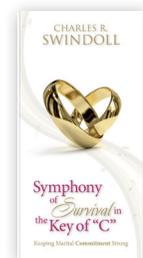


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
DON'T JUST GET OLDER, GET BETTER!
ECCLESIASTES 11:1–8; 12:1–7



The Heart of the Matter

Everybody gets older. Admit it or not. The question is, “Will we grow sweeter, or will we rot?” Once all the children have left the nest and two people who honeymooned together twenty-five or thirty years ago are left to “start over,” how can they resist negative tendencies and stay young at heart? How can they support each other’s growth toward spiritual maturity? Solomon, in the last two chapters of Ecclesiastes, set forth five reminders that couples must heed if they want to get better as they get older.



Discovering the Way

1. Five Reminders for a Better Marriage (Ecclesiastes 11:1–8; 12:1–7)

As couples get older, they must heed these five principles to continually get better: live realistically, give generously, adapt willingly, trust fearlessly, and rejoice daily.

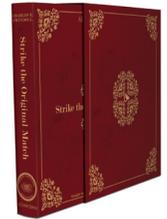


Starting Your Journey

Even though you age, always determine to stay young at heart, to be engaged in the lives of others, and to remain a vital part of God’s work on earth.

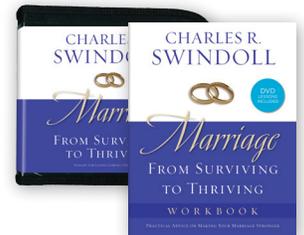


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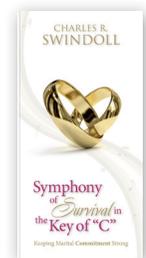


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STRIKE THE ORIGINAL MATCH
WHAT TO DO WITH AN EMPTY NEST
HEBREWS 5:7–6:1



The Heart of the Matter

The last stage of marriage is that period of time when the nest is empty—either empty of the children or of one of the mates . . . or both. This is a critical stage in the home. All sorts of strange and unpredictable feelings transpire, and we find ourselves in need of stabilizing thoughts and direction. God gives that to us in this passage from Hebrews. Though it was not originally written regarding marriage, it has practical overtones that perfectly apply to the domestic scene: *pursue spiritual maturity*.



Discovering the Way

1. Introduction: Stages in Every Marriage

Every long-term marriage with children passes through five stages: family founding, child bearing, child rearing, child launching, and empty nest.

2. The Significance of Maturity in Marriage (Hebrews 5:7–6:1)

Christ's maturity shows in the obedience so evident in His life, while the immature Christian shows his or her true colors through a lack of ministry and wisdom. As followers of Jesus, we should all press on toward the maturity of Jesus.



Starting Your Journey

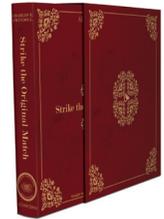
You can find maturity in your marriage when you renew your devotion, receive your situation, realize your promotion, and replace your limitations.



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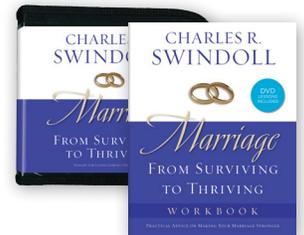


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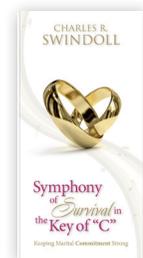
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