

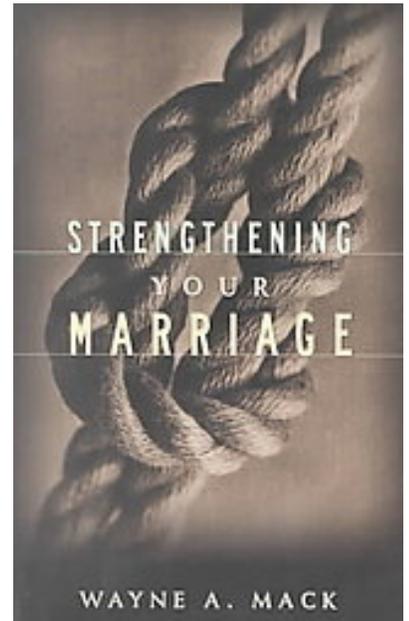
## **Book Review of:**

**Mack, Wayne. *Strengthening Your Marriage*  
(2d ed., Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999).**

*Review by:*  
*Geoffrey R. Kirkland*

## **Overall Summary:**

*Strengthening Your Marriage* is one book that is critically needed in our world today. Many marriages today prove to be on the brink of discord, divorce, and disaster. And lest we think that this is only the case *outside* the local church, it is just as apropos *inside* our church congregations as well. Mack's book helps marriages get back to the *biblical* fundamentals in the covenant relationship instituted by God for one man and one woman. He endeavors to prove that the impossible *can* happen: 1+1=1. This is marriage as God originally intended it. Throughout Mack's treatise, he breaks down the key ingredients into eight units and gives essential biblical advice on each individual component of marriage. The eight units, in order, are: God's purpose for marriage, the wife's responsibilities, the husband's responsibilities, good communication, financial agreement, sexual unity, raising children, and family religion. In a word, this book is Mack's excellent contribution to husbands and wives to learn to be gospel-centered and God-centered in the marriage relationship (as God intended it to be!) rather than focused on or centered on self or unbiblical principles.



## **High points:**

To begin, the book has some very helpful elements in that he formats the book more-or-less in outline format. That is to say, it is easy to see his logic, follow his train of thought, and condense his main principles. Additionally, at the end of each unit (or chapter), he gives pages (!) of very helpful and practical assignments for the husband and wife to each answer and discuss. Scripture is replete in this book—not only in the assignment sections at the conclusion of each chapter but also in nearly every single bullet point. This underlies Mack's work significantly. Everyone has opinions on marriage and how it is “done.” But what God has to say is what counts. It is God who we need to hear from. And because the Scriptures underpin his arguments and principles, we must listen because he is simply elucidating and applying what God has said in His Word.

Unit 2, *The Wife's Responsibilities*, is an excellent chapter because it explains what proper biblical submission is *not* and what it *is*. There are many misconceptions today of what the wife's role is to *biblically* be and this chapter helps clarify much of the common misunderstandings of this wonderful truth.

And lest the husband thinks he gets off easy knowing that wife must *submit* to him, he learns in Unit 3 that his responsibilities are significantly greater than that of his wife because He is the “head of his wife” (Eph 5:23). Leadership, encouragement, teaching from the Word, decision-making, child-rearing, and financial support are components of the marriage relationship that the husband is *primarily* responsible for. Mack shows this and gives biblical support for his suppositions.

Sex is a wonderful part of marriage but it ought never to be the reason for or the center of the marriage relationship. Mack shows how sexual union is good, beautiful, and satisfying. He gives a plethora of Scripture to prove his statements that sex is a wonderful component of marriage but if communication isn’t right, then the marriage bed won’t be right. If there are problems in marriage, sex will be unfulfilling. And Mack clearly shows *why* this is the case and gives practical tips for change.

Finally, the unit on *Raising Children* is marvelous in that he spotlights Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” He gives practical advice to the husband and wife so that the responsibility of parenting does not drive a wedge in the marriage bond but rather draws the family closer together as a bond. This is the way God intended it to be. And Mack helpfully and practically shows how both the father and mother can fulfill his/her God-given role in this regard.

### **Conclusion:**

I would highly recommend this book for *every* married couple and for every *single* person seeking to be married someday. In fact, this book is laid out in such a way (in eight units) that it could easily be a book used for pre-marital counseling so that the couple learns their divinely-appointed responsibilities as they enter the marriage covenant for life. The book can be purchased online for \$9.59 at amazon.com. Don’t wait till problems arise in marriage to get this book. Order it now, read it, study it, look up the Scriptures, and implement the principles in your life. This will save you much heartache and help you honor the Lord more fully and be more gospel-centered in your marriage relationship to God’s glory!

***Your pastor and friend,***

***Geoff***