

How to Divorce Proof Your Marriage

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

Do you want to divorce proof your marriage? Do you desire a marriage bond that will stay strong and secure, no matter what trials come your way? Would you like to make sure you never end up like....? Then read on, because we have discovered “the secret” of how to divorce proof a marriage.

Just put on these special shiny red shoes and click your heels three times. Oops...that’s not it! Wouldn’t it be great if it *were* that simple? But it’s not. It requires hard work and a firm commitment to stay on course. But oh, the pain you will avoid...and the joy you will reap!

God explains “the secret” in Malachi 2:16. But first, He prefaces His solution by stating exactly how He feels about divorce. He emphatically says: “I hate divorce!” Hate! God doesn’t say, “I really don’t like divorce.” Or, “Divorce is not good.” No, He HATES divorce. The very thought of it repulses God. Have you ever hated anything that deeply? Felt a hate so palpable that the very thought of something made you sick to your stomach? *That’s* how intensely God feels about divorce.

To understand God’s hatred of divorce, let’s consider his high ideal for marriage found in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (KJV) This is not just a beautiful sentiment the preacher quoted at your wedding. It is a statement of **fact**. It is what actually happens. To cleave means “to be glued.” Husbands and wives are glued together in marriage. So you *can* say, “I’m stuck on him/her,” and actually be speaking truth!

The following visual exercise helps illustrate this concept. Imagine that you took two sheets of paper and glued them together. But after the glue dried, you decided you didn’t want them glued together anymore and tried to separate them. Try as you might to

keep each sheet whole and intact, as you pull them apart both pieces are torn to shreds. That’s what happens in divorce. When a husband and wife pull away from each other in divorce, they both get torn to shreds. No wonder God hates divorce. He loves us too much to want that kind of pain for us.

So here is “the secret”, God’s fool-proof, two-step plan to avoid divorce: ***“So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith [with the wife of your youth].”*** Just two steps...the “easy, two-step plan to marriage bliss”! OK, not so easy, but so important that we need to examine these steps so we can follow them carefully, for they do indeed lead to “marriage bliss.” And they will divorce proof your marriage!

God is talking about more than honoring your vow sexually.

Step 1: Guard your heart. Guard your heart from the lies of the world. The people of this world don’t hate divorce; in fact, they rather like it. It’s the ultimate solution. “If he yells at you, divorce the bum!” “If she’s not the sex goddess you thought she was, divorce her! There are plenty of sexy women out there!” Maybe you’ve heard this advice yourself...from your friends at work...or even at church. The devil has successfully infiltrated our attitudes toward divorce. We know very few people who actually hate it as much as God does.

Christian couples have sat across from us and expressed things like, “I don’t think she is the one God wanted me to marry, so I’m divorcing her and marrying my true soul-mate.” “He just doesn’t make me happy, and God wants me to be happy, doesn’t He?” They have swallowed the lies hook, line and sinker. But divorce is not the solution, dear friends. On the contrary, it is the path of pain.

That’s why God says, “Guard your heart.” When you start buying into the world’s way of thinking, the world’s attitude toward divorce, stop yourself immediately. Reject the lie and say it out loud; “I am not going to believe the lies of the devil. God hates divorce and so do I.”

So guard your heart by refusing to believe the devil’s lies, shielding it from the garbage of this world and learning to hate divorce as much as God does.

Step 2: Do Not Break Faith. Or “always remain faithful.” (NLT) God is talking about more than honoring your vow sexually. Sexual fidelity is not the only thing you vowed, is it? You vowed to love, honor and cherish your mate until parted by death alone.

But if you’re like most of us, you repeated those vows without fully understanding what you were promising. However, if God says that ‘not breaking faith...always remaining faithful’ is the second step to ensure our marriage is divorce proofed, then we’d better know what we promised, so we can keep our promise and not ‘break faith.’

So let’s unpack what it means to “love, honor and cherish.” Here are six bite-sized facets which can be easily digested. We even applied an easy-to-remember acrostic – FRESSH. Yes, we know there’s an extra S. Just think of it as being reeeeeeeally fresh! Keeping your vows keeps your marriage FRESSH! Chew on these with us:

F – Forgive – Contrary to the popular movie line, love does **not** mean “never having to say I’m sorry.” It means **having to say**, “I’m sorry” and “I forgive you,” and saying them as often as needed. This is simply what is expected of every Christian. “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32 NIV) While this command is to all Christians, it especially applies to you

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and your mate since you have spoken vows before God to love each other forever. Choose to forgive your mate and give your marriage a FRESSH start.

R – Renew – Don't let your relationship stagnate. Choose to keep your love growing and vibrant. When you make the effort to put your love into action by doing things you know your mate yearns for, you can change a Ho-Hum marriage into a Razzle-Dazzle marriage. God desires growing relationships for every Christian. "May the Lord make your love *increase and overflow* for each other..." (1 Thessalonians 3:12 NIV) And here's the promise: "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (Proverbs 11:25) Choose to renew your love and both you and your mate will be reFRESSHed.

E – Encourage – Discouragement overwhelms people and causes them to give up. That's why every Christian is commanded to be an encourager. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up..." (1 Thess. 5:11 NIV) Show your love by encouraging your mate consistently. He/she will more than likely start doing the same for you, for encouragers have a way of creating an environment of encouragement. Choosing to be an encourager will help your marriage to be steadfast and persevere through even the toughest trials. Encouragement – the great reFRESSHer.

S – Shield – Shield your marriage from thoughts that would destroy your relationship. We are all warned to do

this: "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts." (Proverbs 4:23 TEV) We endanger our marriage when we drop our shield and let in thoughts like: "Why do I put up with him?" "She's driving my crazy!" "Why am I always the first to say 'I'm sorry'?" "There are plenty of women who would like me just the way I am!" Nursing thoughts like these is like being nibbled to death by a duck. It's a long, agonizing death for a marriage! Keep your shield up. Don't let thoughts like these find a home in your heart. They are lies, so grab hold of them and kick them out! (2 Cor. 10:5) If you choose to shield your thoughts, it will change your attitude toward your mate and shape your life the right way. It will help keep your relationship FRESSH.

S – Serve – There's just no getting around it...you can't love without serving. Not only is every Christian told to "serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13), but we are commanded to "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10 NIV) God is giving you the opportunity to practice this command every day, right in your own home. When you are both almost too tired to move, who's going to choose to do the loving thing by getting up to get what is needed? You face these kinds of choices every day, don't you? Choose to prove your devotion by serving your mate and you will keep your marriage FRESSH.

H – Honor – Remember your vow to honor your mate? You promised to esteem, to respect and to cherish your

mate. You may not think he or she deserves your respect, esteem and honor, but your promise was not conditional. And neither are the commands in Scripture for husbands to treat their wives with respect (1 Peter 3:7) and wives to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). "If they deserve it" is not tacked on to either of these commands. But, unfortunately, we act like it is. The truth is we can honor a person without honoring their behavior. It's the same principle as God loving us, but not loving our sin. Honoring, like loving, is a choice. Choose to honor your mate...to respect and cherish him/her. Whoever is the more mature can start the ball rolling and create an atmosphere of honor and respect in your home. Talk about reFRESSHing your relationship – your whole family will be reFRESSHed!

Whoever is more mature can start the ball rolling.

Let's go back to the original question: Do you want to divorce proof your marriage? Then above all, **guard your heart**, then choose by the power of the Holy Spirit to **remain faithful to your vows** by Forgiving your mate, constantly Renewing your love, Encouraging your mate, Shielding your thoughts, lovingly Serving your mate, and Honoring and cherishing your mate. The right choices will divorce proof your marriage and keep it FRESSH!

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