

MAKING YOUR MARRIAGE DIVORCE PROOF

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- (Look up the scriptures & discuss the application together)
1. You made a vow (before "all") to establish this permanent covenanted relationship with your spouse, so follow through with whole hearted commitment to each other & the Lord (Gen. 2:24-25; Eccl. 5:4; Mt. 19:6; Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14; Col. 3:23).
 2. Maintain biblical priorities. Your relationship with Christ is first, then your spouse, then your children... (Mt. 6:33; Lk. 10:38-42; Eph. 5:17-64). Christ is the perfect example that we must follow (1Jn. 2:6; Phil. 2:3-8).
 3. Know the biblical foundation for marriage & work at your part consistently to please God (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:17-25; 1Pet. 3:1-7; Js. 1:22-25). Don't try to change them...pray "Lord change me!"
 4. Develop meaningful communication - share with openness, honesty & truth. Remember listening more than talking creates an atmosphere of sensitivity, understanding, & trust (1Pet. 3:7; Js. 1:19; Eph. 4:25-32).
 5. Cultivate God's love (1Jn. 4:19(4:7-21); 1Cor. 13). God's love is unconditional, self sacrificial commitment to give to the other, benefit them & meet their needs. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Deliberately say & show acts of love & kindness everyday. Make a list of how your spouse needs love to be shown to them, if you don't know...find out! Give up "expectations, demands & manipulations" which show self-centeredness (Phil. 2:3-4)...overcome selfishness by expressing attention, affection, acceptance, affirmation, approval & appreciation to your spouse.
 6. Take personal responsibility, rather than blame shifting, excuse making, rationalizing or justifying yourself (Prov. 28:13). Be the first to say "I was wrong, will you forgive me?" (Eph. 4:31-32). Don't let bitterness & resentment build up (Heb. 12:15; Col. 3:19; Mt. 5:23-24).
 7. Write up a biblical plan for: conflict resolution, finances, children, communication & sex. Don't let problems build up (Eph. 4:26-27). Be prepared with the right resources & responses to problems (Eph. 6:10-18; 2Tim. 3:16-17; Ps. 119:105; Js. 1:5; Mt. 4:4; 2Pet. 1:3-4; Ps. 1:1-6). Don't be picky or make mountains out of ant hills (Prov. 17:9, 19:11, 10:12). "Major on the majors & minor on the minors".
 8. Encourage your spouse (Heb. 10:24-25). Help them be the best they can be in developing their strengths, abilities...build them up daily (Heb. 3:13; Eph. 4:29; Prov. 18:21, 25:11). Avoid anything that would tear down, hurt, offend or be unedifying (1Cor. 8:9-13; Rom. 14:13-15:3).
 9. Channel all your sexual thoughts, expressions, energies...toward your spouse. That's where God has intended your fulfillment (1Thes. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:8; Prov. 5:15-21; 1Cor. 7:1-6; Song of Solomon). Don't compare yourself, your spouse, your marriage...with others in any way (2Cor. 10:12).
 10. Date your mate (at least once a week). Develop common interests. Spend time together. Keep doing fun things (& many things) together. However respect their privacy & need to be alone occasionally - don't smother them. Work at being best friends...that is what a covenant of companionship is all about (Mal. 2:14). Maximize the benefits (Eccl. 4:9-12), making the most of your relationship.

11. Develop your spiritual lives together. Read the word, pray, fellowship with others. Be involved in church, develop your spiritual gifts, reach out to others. Share your resources with those in need, be witnesses together for Jesus Christ & finally disciple, counsel, & help others to get a biblical foundation in their lives (2Tim. 2:2).

ADAPTATION of the MARRIAGE vows...so you can RENEW it
(or be creative & write up your own...but make it special & meaningful)

I _____ solemnly agree before God & these witnesses to receive you _____, to be my lawful, wedded (husband/wife), to love & respect you, honor & cherish you in sickness & in health, in prosperity & in adversity and leaving all others to keep myself only unto you, so long as we both shall live.

I _____ do promise & covenant before God & these witnesses to be your loving (husband/wife) in plenty & want, in joy & in sorrow, in sickness & in health as long as we both shall live. May this RING, that has no end, be a symbolic reminder of my constant love & abiding faithfulness.

SIX PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE

1. Companionship

True companionship grows out of a oneness of spirit. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

2. Enjoyment

The principle behind enjoyment is self-control. "Marriage is honourable [of great worth] in all, and the bed [should be kept] undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

3. Completeness

God designed Eve to complete that which was lacking in Adam's life. "And Adam said . . . she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23).

4. Fruitfulness

God's first command in Scripture is, ". . . Be fruitful [Hebrew parah, make increase after your kind], and multiply [Hebrew rabah, increase with exceeding abundance of children], and replenish the earth [Hebrew male, fill up the world to overflowing] . . ." (Genesis 1:28).

The command was repeated in Genesis 9:1 and explained in 1 Peter 3:7, ". . . as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

5. Protection

The husband is to protect the wife by laying down his life for her. (See Ephesians 5:25.) The wife is to protect the home. (See Titus 2:4-5.) Parents are to protect their children to raise up a Godly seed. (See Malachi 2:15; Psalm 112:1-2.)

6. Typify Christ and the Church

Marriage is to be a human object lesson of the divine relationship between Christ and believers. (See Ephesians 5:31-33.)