

5 Things to Consider Before Getting a Divorce

Dear (Insert Celebrity Couple's Name Here),

I was watching TMZ the other day and I heard that the two of you were splitting up. It literally broke my heart. As I followed your courtship on E!, marveled at your (unofficial and blurry) wedding photos in the tabloids, and watched your kids grow up on the pages of People Magazine, I truly believed your marriage was something special.

It must be incredibly difficult maintaining a marriage with the celebrity life you lead. The rest of us have no idea of the challenges you face, doing family under the scrutiny of the public eye. But we SO wanted you to succeed. In our day-to-day suburban lives, we want to believe that your life truly is as charmed as it appears.

While I could never assume to know what difficulties your marriage has endured, I wanted to encourage you to hang in there; to try again to make it work. That's why I wrote you this letter.

This letter is for Blake and Miranda. And Ben and Jennifer. It's for Gwen and Gavin. And for Reba and Narvel. I would throw Will and Jada in there, as rumors recently circulated that they were divorcing, too. But Will took to social media to assure us they were fine. (Mr. And Mrs. Smith, I encourage you to file this letter away and pull it out if you need it sometime down the road.) It's for any person who has ever considered giving up on marriage. It's for all of us.

Sure, the pressures you face as a celebrity are overwhelming, but the difficulties you face in marriage are common to every couple. With that in mind, I wanted to ask you to remember 5 important things before you sign those divorce papers. The

rest of us married people would do well to remember these things, too.

1. Remember that divorce is still the exception, not the norm.

With all these high-profile splits, it's easy to forget that most marriages make it. Even that statistic we have all heard that "50% of marriages end in divorce" isn't true. In reality, 72% of the people who have ever been married are still married to their first spouse. The bottom line: in spite of what you see on TV, most marriages make it. Yours can, too.

2. Remember that marriage is going to be difficult at times.

A few years ago when Ben Affleck won the Academy Award for *Argo*, he publicly declared to his wife that "Marriage is work." Today, all the celebrity commentators look back on that as a sign that the marriage was in trouble. Wrong. Affleck was speaking for all of us, whether our marriages are thriving or withering: Marriage IS work. Nobody stumbles into a great marriage. It always requires tireless effort and limitless sacrifice. My dear celebrity couple, as hopeless as your marriage might be right now, you can probably work to change things for the better. There is no such thing as a soul mate (a partner with whom marriage is easy), so don't kid yourself into thinking that the next one will be better. It won't be.

3. Remember your kids.

Without fail, every time one of you announces your divorce, your statement to the press includes the required "We are committed to parenting our kids together" sentence. It sounds good and I know you have great intentions, but you can't find any psychologist who will say that divorce is good for

children. In fact, most research declares the exact opposite. Your divorce will likely leave in its wake some devastated children who will be affected for life. Here's a reminder: the minute you had kids, you were accepting a new reality that your life is about far more than you. Your kids are counting on you.

4. Remember to do life with people who have a high opinion of marriage.

It may be too late, but I encourage you to hang out with people who honor marriage and all it represents. I'm talking about people who have a reverent awe of marriage as one of God's most cherished creations. (Because it is.) Maybe friends like that are scarce in Hollywood and New York, but they can be invaluable to you. It's easy to find a friend who will encourage you to do whatever makes you happy, but a friend who will dig in and fight for your marriage is rare indeed. You want a suggestion on where to find friends like that? You could start with the faith community. On the topic of bad statistics, Barna released a study years ago that said that the divorce rate was as high in the church as it is in the general population. It's just not true. People of faith who are in close community with other people of faith have much lower divorce rates. We would all do well to remember that.

5. Remember that things can get better.

The press release your publicist sent to the Today show mentioned your "irreconcilable differences." These two words come up not just in Hollywood, but in almost every divorce in America. What I want to ask you is this: "What differences do you have that are absolutely irreconcilable?" My wife and I have plenty of that are even heated. But we choose to plow around them. Or even to occasionally agree to disagree. But they are never "irreconcilable."

I know what you are thinking: "What about infidelity?" Obviously, if there has been habitual infidelity or abuse, even God gives you the green light to move on. But that should never be your first response. Even something as awful as infidelity can be overcome if a person is willing to change. The last time I checked, God is still in the business of taking broken people and making them whole again. Sadly, you don't see Him doing that much anymore because most people are unwilling to do what He tells them to do. He doesn't get a real opportunity to work in their lives.

Celebrity Couple that I look up to, I know that you are hurting. I know that you have experienced some dark times. But I want you to know that there is always hope. I want you to know that the vast majority of couples who choose to work through a difficult season are happy a few years down the road. And they are better for it. I so want this to be true for you.

In the meantime, know that your devoted fans are praying for you. Know that we want the very best for you. You inspire us in your movies and in your songs and we really want you to inspire us in your marriage. And nothing would inspire us more than to see you make it.