

# 5 Ways to Divorce-Proof Your Marriage

We don't have a perfect marriage. We are not coming at this thing from some arrival point. We are humbled by the magnitude and often difficulty of marriage. Nevertheless, we have found some things that work, so we wanted to share them with you. The list is not exhaustive, but we hope that it blesses you nonetheless.

It all began when my wife asked me a question: "If you could give one piece of advice to a couple about to get married, what would it be?" I didn't even have to think about it. "Die to self," I replied. She found the answer appropriate, if not a bit morbid. My wife is more the flowers and rainbows type, and I am the militant practical type. Our polar natures are both challenging and extremely rewarding. I still like my answer, but hers was better (though ultimately related). She said, "Make God the center of your marriage."

The reason for this question? Today is the five-year anniversary of our wedding day. God has been the focus of our marriage, and so it only made sense that we would hope to honor God in our anniversary celebration by sharing our love with the rest of His people. Certainly, we went out, ate good food and did fun things. However, we also wanted to make sure that we acknowledged God, and so we sat down on the first day of our multi-day celebration and talked—not just about the good times but also the challenges, of which there have been many. As we discussed, we thought it would be a nice to share part of our conversation with you. Without further ado, here are "Five Steps to Marital Success."

## 1. Make God the Center of Your Marriage

As my wife pointed out, God needs to be the foundation of

everything, because God changes everything. He gives purpose, direction, and an ethical foundation. He is the source of all that is good and the solution for all that is not. Whatever you do, do it for God's glory and you will be blessed, as individuals and as a couple. Out of this relationship with God, all the other points flow.

## **2. Die to Self**

Of course, one of the most foundational New Testament messages deals with dying to self. This gets missed so much in our modern culture, which prefers to avoid the difficult and the selfless. We live for ourselves. We die for ourselves. And, of course, we marry for ourselves. So often, in our current day, relationships are all about us. What can this person do for me? What can I get out of this relationship? If you are the priority, the relationship is doomed, because inevitably the other person's utility wears out. What are you left with then? A person, not a product. If you married them for their productive value in your life and not so that you can have your soul knit together with another, flaws and all, then you are in for a disappointing ride.

A God-centered marriage is the opposite of the above description. It is not about "what's in it for me." Marriage is an illustration of God's love for us, which is selfless, sacrificial, even to the point of death (see Ga.l 2:20, Col. 3:5, Luke 9:23-24, 1 Pet. 4:1-2, etc.). In order for marriage to succeed, we must lay down ourselves for the sake of someone else.

We become servants of one another. One simple example of this is the willingness to learn and speak the other person's love language(s). My wife likes quality time and (thoughtful) gifts. While I love quality time, I don't care much about gifts. She will spend hours writing cards to friends and relatives for any and all reasons. This makes little sense to me, but if I neglect to "die to self" and see that her

language is just as valid as my own, then I will miss out on a key component of being able to reach her and bless her. (By the way, here is a short article on the 6th Love Language.)

We hear it at just about every wedding, but take a moment to actually consider the Bible's definition of love: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love flaunts not itself and is not puffed up, does not behave itself improperly, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails."

Spend some time contemplating those descriptors. Does this mirror your definition of love? Is this how you view your relationship with your spouse (and others for that matter)? If this is not the attitude you have going into your marriage, adjust now! It will save and strengthen your marriage and your relationship with God. For more on defining love, check out this short video: [Redefining Love](#).

### **3. Communicate in Love With Truth and Grace**

Disagreement is healthy. Conflict grows us. It shapes us. However, it can also break us. Conflict is part of the territory in relationships. The goal is not to avoid conflict, but rather to face it head-on, with love, grace and how to express your grievances in a way that honors your partner. Be quick to share, and don't let things build up to the point that you explode at one another.

The New Testament gives some valuable insight, “Therefore, putting away lying, let every man speak truthfully with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Do not give place to the devil” (Eph 4:25-27). Always work to calm things down before you go to bed. That doesn’t mean that you will have all the details of your problems worked out, but making an effort to forgive and love one another through disagreement will bring peace to your relationship and guard against doorways that the enemy may seek to exploit!

#### **4. Connect with Community**

We all need support. It can’t just be two against the world. Surround yourself with honest men and women that fear the Lord. Friends, family and a solid community of believers are invaluable. Whether it’s someone to lean on during the hard times, someone to celebrate with during the good times or just a group of people that you can build a life with, community is crucial to marriage. Quite often, we truly are who we surround ourselves with. Therefore, surround yourselves with godly men and women who will help you grow in the Lord and one another.

#### **5. Be Open About Your Sin**

This one has been huge for us. There is a tendency to want to put on our best face for those we care about. We are aware that our sin hurts those around us, especially our spouse, and especially when the sin is against that person. Being open with one another does several things. It shares each other’s burdens. It keeps us from concealing and being divided. It gives opportunity for grace and forgiveness. It gives an opportunity for prayer and wisdom. It keeps us vulnerable with one another. It knits a special bond that is shared privately between two people. When we know each other’s weaknesses, we know each other deeper than the rest of the world, and we create a special, unbreakable bond.

## Closing Thoughts

We are excited to reach five years. We look forward to the future. We hope that these thoughts bless you! If you have any friends that this message may bless, we would be honored if you would share it with them. Comment below. What has helped you in your marriage? As always, feel free to subscribe to this blog through the form to your right.

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