

How to Divorce-Proof Your Marriage

Linda S. Mintle, a licensed Christian therapist, offers helpful advice for safeguarding your relationship from a breakup.

When church or ministry leaders call it quits on their marriages, the outcome “culturally sanctions” divorce and “cheapens grace,” says marriage therapist and author Linda S. Mintle, Ph.D. *Writing in Divorce-Proofing Your Marriage* (Charisma House), Mintle says Christian couples often split over fixable problems while viewing their marriage as a contract instead of a covenant, or “unbreakable promise.”

“What have we done with the transforming power of God?” asks Mintle, who’s also a licensed clinical social worker. “We have it for healings and finances but not for marriage? God’s power can change difficult situations.”

Mintle offers the following advice as a way for Christian leaders to safeguard their marriages and ministries:

Be wise counselors. Clergy need to implement ministry boundaries. Men, in particular, need to be careful “when females, who are vulnerable, are coming in to speak with them,” she says. “Be careful not to do counseling when you’re not trained to, and make sure that your door is open or that another person is present. Avoid even the appearance of evil.”

Resist the power trap. Ministers are not immune to the lure of power that comes with the limelight of ministry. “Everything in the Bible is about humbling yourself and not exalting yourself over God,” Mintle says. “But people are seduced by power, control and sexuality—all of which can lead to marriage problems. It’s wise to have people around who won’t make you vulnerable to these things.”

Break down the barriers. The road to divorce begins with emotional distance and leads to roadblocks of discord that get deeper and wider. “A lot of people tend to get critical of their partner and start thinking they can find a better mate. They become defensive and begin to harbor negative feelings.” At those times, instead of focusing on what that other person isn’t doing, call out to God.

Humbly seek help. When you’re the shoulder others cry on, it’s hard to look for one of your own. “You have to humble yourself,” Mintle says. “People are broken, and it shouldn’t matter who you are. There are lots of organizations that offer help.” Among them is the American Association of Christian Counselors ([aaccounselors.org](#)), which provides resources on family and marital stress.

Rest to restore. Some leaders mistakenly believe they have special divine privileges. “It’s as if they say, ‘I can get a divorce, and come back with a new platform,’” she says. “They don’t think that [the divorce] should have any ramifications on their ministries.”

Ministers who divorce need a mandatory restoration period of at least two years “to figure out what made [the marriage] go south and then to get some help,” Mintle says. Afterward, if they return to ministry, she says, it must be decided whether they should be “at the same level of leadership.”

Linda Mintle is a national expert on the psychology of food, weight and body image and relationships.