

Divorce-Proof Your Marriage **Book Discussion Guide**

Chapter One: When Our Dream Marriage Began to Fade

Review Gary's story about how he felt when his daughter left him out of her crayon picture of the family. How did God use Sarah's drawing to help Barb and Gary's marriage?

Barb explains how she felt so neglected that, at one point, she just quit trying to fix her marriage. In spite of the difficulties, however, what are some key things she did *not* stop doing during this time?

In the Rosbergs' case, Gary's workaholicism was driving them apart. What are some other problems and situations that put pressure on a marriage?

Chapter Two: The Marriage Map

What is "marital entropy"? What is likely to happen if you let marital entropy creep into your marriage?

Consider the seven steps on the Marriage Map:

- Dream
- Disappointment
- Discouragement
- Distance
- Disconnect
- Discord
- Emotional Divorce

If you are married, at what point would you place your marriage today? Where do you *want* it to be? Where do you think your spouse would place it?

Chapter Three: You Can Divorce-Proof Your Marriage

Have you ever known of a marriage that was *not* vulnerable to decay and deterioration? Explain your answer.

The Rosbergs outline three lies that modern culture promotes about marriage, divorce, and love:

"Our marriage is good enough."

"Divorce offers me a better life."

"Our love makes us immune to the threat of divorce."

Have any of these lies affected your thinking about marriage? Do you know any couples whose marriages (or divorces) are based on one or more of these lies?

According to the authors, these are the six key kinds of love needed to divorce-proof your marriage:

- forgiving love
- serving love
- persevering love
- guarding love
- celebrating love
- renewing love

Is the concept of six different kinds of love a new idea to you? If you are married, which kind of love do you think is strongest in your marriage? Which is the weakest?

Chapter Four: The Rocky Road of Hurt and Anger

Have you ever felt let down or betrayed by your spouse (or someone you trusted, if you're not married)? Have you ever let someone else down? If so, welcome to the human race—you're normal! The point is not to never be offended or cause offense—the key to a healthy marriage is what you *do* with those offenses.

Think back to when you were growing up. How was conflict handled in your childhood home? Was a healthy kind of forgiveness modeled there? If not, how would you like conflict to be handled differently in your home?

Review the six myths of forgiveness on pages 82-84. Do any of them sound familiar? After reading this chapter, do you have a new understanding of biblical forgiveness?

Chapter Five: Closing the Loop

Describe the difference between an “open loop” and a “closed loop.” Which one leads to healthy conflict resolution? Can you think of a situation from your own marriage, or a relationship you know, that illustrates the closed loop versus open loop style of relating?

Where are you in the loop, in regard to your own marriage?

Review the steps to closing the loop:

- Prepare your heart
- Communicate your feelings
- Confront your conflicts
- Forgive your spouse
- Rebuild your trust

If you are currently undergoing a problem in your relationship, which step do you need to start with? What actions are you willing to take *today* to begin to close the loop?

Chapter Six: In Honor of Your Spouse

What comes to your mind when you think about “serving love”? How do you think your spouse would define it?

Explain the difference between the 50/50 marriage and the 100/100 marriage. Which kind does our society promote? Which kind is biblical? Why?

Honor is a word we don't hear much these days. What does honor mean to you? What do you think it means to your spouse?

What are some practical ways in which you can show honor to your spouse this week?

Chapter Seven: Communicating Your Needs

Review Robertson McQuilken's story on pages 131-133. What kinds of feelings does this story evoke in you?

Do you and your spouse have a regular time of talking and sharing? If not, how can you make room for a time to get reconnected in your busy day?

Review the list of the top five love needs of men and women on page 141. Do these lists accurately reflect your top love needs and your spouse's top love needs? If not, explain how your personal lists would be different.

What are the possible risks of not meeting your spouse's top five love needs? What are some of the benefits of meeting them?

Think of some practical ways in which you can start meeting your spouse's top five love needs.

Chapter Eight: Love That Endures Tough Times

Have you and your spouse ever had to weather a serious crisis together? Perhaps you're experiencing one now. It seems that undergoing a crisis can either bring a couple closer together, or draw them apart. Why do you think this is?

What are some key elements to surviving a marriage crisis with your relationship not only intact but stronger?

What are some practical ways in which you can “prepare for the storms” during the calm times of your marriage?

Chapter Nine: Weathering the Storms

What God calls a healthy interdependence between spouses, society often calls unhealthy “codependence.” Why do you think that is?

How can you and your spouse make your marriage a safe place?

What are some practical ways by which you can show your spouse that you are committed to stay with him or her, no matter what happens?

Chapter Ten: The Castle of Your Heart

What does it mean to guard your heart, and why is it so important, even if (maybe *especially* if) you think you would be the last person to have an affair?

How might the forces that attack you differ from those that attack your spouse?

Describe how defending your family is like defending a castle. Who or what are the enemies? What are the weapons at your disposal?

Chapter Eleven: Building Walls of Protection

Why do you think it is important to stay accountable to other Christians?

Wives, consider each of the ways you can protect your husband’s heart:

- Honor him and his world
- Avoid sabotage
- Love him unconditionally
- Understand your differences
- Honor his friendships
- Clarify your family roles
- Commit yourself to him and to God

What are some ways in which you can start doing these things today?

Husbands, consider each of the ways you can protect your wife’s heart:

- Listen
- Offer practical help
- Make time just for her
- Give her time for herself
- Love her unconditionally
 - Demonstrate spiritual leadership

What are some ways in which you can start doing these things today?

Chapter Twelve: Rekindle the Joy of Being Married

Why does marital love often seem to fade over the years? Are the marriage doldrums inevitable, or do you think that passion and joy can be reignited?

Review the five keys to celebrating love:

- Put each other at the top of the list
- Confess to each other
- Get to know each other again
- Rethink your thinking
- Rekindle romance and physical intimacy

What are some specific ways in which you and your spouse can start putting these keys into practice this week?

Chapter Thirteen: Building Spiritual Intimacy

What are some things that might hold a couple back from developing spiritual intimacy?

What are some of the benefits of developing spiritual intimacy with your spouse? What are the dangers of *not* doing so?

Do you believe that a marriage should be a cord of three strands: husband, wife, and Jesus? How is this kind of marriage different from other marriages you may know?

What are some practical ways in which you and your spouse can develop spiritual intimacy in your marriage, starting now?

Chapter Fourteen: A Love that is Fresh Day After Day

Do you know personally any couples who have been married fifty years or more? If so, what do you think are some of the “secrets” of their enduring marriage?

Describe how an enduring marriage is more like a potted plant than a bouquet of cut flowers. Which is more exciting? Which is more enduring?

Explain your understanding of “renewing love.”

What are some ways in which you can nurture renewing love in your marriage?

Chapter Fifteen: Nurturing a Lifetime Marriage

After reading this book, has your thinking changed about any aspect of marriage? If so, how?

What do *you* think is the single most important ingredient in a healthy, long-lasting marriage? What advice would you give to a young newlywed couple just starting out?

Where would you place your marriage on the Marriage Map? Is your answer different today than it was back when you read chapter 2? If so, why?