

Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again

by Dr. Gary and Barbara Rosberg

Dedication

To our nephew

Nathan Warren Bedford

September 21, 1978 – January 4, 2003

You honored Jesus, your wife, daughter, and family
both in life and your homecoming.

And now we honor you.

You guarded your heart and finished strong.

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Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again

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Introduction

How to Use This Book

Course Purpose:

To learn what it takes to divorce-proof your marriage.

This eight-week workbook course (including a group get-together for a special celebration) was prepared by Gary and Barbara Rosberg as part of a nationwide campaign to keep marriages alive and well. The campaign is called “Divorce-Proofing America’s Marriages.” This course is designed to help you renew your commitment and love for your spouse. As a result of completing this workbook study together, you will share a deeper resolve to experience God’s dream for your marriage, and you will renew your love for each other. You will study six key kinds of love:

- l Forgiving love
- l Serving love
- l Persevering love
- l Guarding love

- | Celebrating love
- | Renewing love

This is the way God loves us, and it is the way we are to love our spouse. Together, you and your spouse will renew your commitment to these six loves, and, in the process, learn to

- | forgive offenses,
- | serve to meet each other's needs,
- | persevere in trials,
- | guard against every attack,
- | celebrate what makes your marriage unique, and
- | renew the bond that will help you feel rooted and connected.

Thus, this course is not just for people who think they're "on the brink." It's for anyone anywhere on the marriage map (as you read about in chapter 2). You don't need to be embarrassed that you're taking this course—as though people will think your marriage must really be in trouble. You may be in a great marriage and you just want to learn how to keep it that way.

You may be starting to feel your "marriage dream" beginning to fade (as we discuss in chapter 1). You want to bring it back to full strength.

You may indeed be in trouble . . . ready to give up . . . feeling that there's no hope left. You will be given the tools that can help you find the strength to keep going and the hope to drive you on.

Wherever your marriage is at, it takes three to make it work—you, your spouse, and God. And that's one powerful combination! We have found, however, that it takes *work* to make a marriage work. The journey into the next few weeks may be a bumpy ride, but we can guarantee that it will be worth it.

Each person will need his/her own copy of this workbook. Each couple will also need a copy of the book *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage* because the weekly assignments include reading chapters from the book. That book is laid out with an introductory part 1 that helps you focus on where your marriage is at right now. Parts 2 through 7 (two chapters each) focus on each of the six kinds of love noted above.

This workbook is designed to equip you to

1. take a realistic look at your marriage and face any difficulty head on;
2. discover the tools needed to strengthen the love in your marriage;
3. learn and practice the types of love that are needed to build a great marriage; and
4. journal your progress on each weekly assignment.

Each week you will meet with your group for some general discussion (don't worry, no baring of your soul or pouring out your heart in front of others). The group discussion is to guide you to think about the topic. Included in the group time is a time for just you and your spouse to talk as well.

The meat of the study, however, comes in the "homework" assignments. After each group lesson you will find three sections for you to work on during the week.

Day One is a time of **Personal Reflection**. Here you will

- | Write down how each type of love is experienced in your own life first. Then you'll consider how you are giving and can better give that type of love need to your spouse.
- | Determine the godly attitude necessary in your own life to love with these types of love.

Day Two is a time for **Couple Interaction**. Here you will

- | Take turns sharing how the different types of love can be met in your life.
- | Commit to consistently loving your spouse in those ways.
- | Plan a time throughout the week to practice showing those types of love.

Day Three is called **My Assignment**, where you will

- | Complete a reading assignment of a few chapters of *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage* by Gary and Barbara Rosberg.
- | Plan and practice loving your spouse with the focused kinds of love as discussed in the book.
- | Journal your progress by writing down what you did to love in those ways and chronicle your spouse's response.

You are embarking on a marital journey that may very well change the way you love your spouse. Ask God to empower you to be a truly loving husband or wife.

Before the first group session, read *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage, part 1—chapters 1, 2, and 3.* Part of the group discussion will focus on what you read in these first three chapters. Also do the exercises in chapter 2 to help you both determine where your marriage is on the marriage map. Self-tests are available in appendix B.

Group Session One

Pursue the Dream

You should have already read part 1 of the *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage* book. The first three chapters focus on (1) what to do when your dream marriage has become less dreamy; (2) the marriage map; and (3) the dream you can pursue—the fact that you can divorce-proof your marriage.

And make no mistake about it—every marriage needs to be divorce-proofed. Even the best marriages need to be vigilantly guarded. You see, Satan hates happy marriages—and *Christian happy* marriages, well, he despises those! He may not be able to attack you head-on, but in his insidious way, he'll seek to undermine even the best marriage.

So let's begin this journey into discovering the kinds of love you and your spouse can share in order to put up a shield against Satan and keep your marriage strong and secure.

Describe the first time you met your spouse (or your first date). What was it that drew you to him/her?

When did you know that this person was “the one”?

Every engaged couple approaches marriage with expectations, hopes, and dreams. But did you know that God has a dream about marriage? When he planned it way back at the beginning, he designed it to work a particular way. Read Genesis 2:15-25, then answer the questions:

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it... And the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him.” So the Lord God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird. He brought them to Adam to see what he would call them, and Adam chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, birds, and wild animals. But still there was no companion suitable for him. So the Lord God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place from which he had taken it. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam. “At last!” Adam exclaimed. “She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of a man.” This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame.

1. God designed marriage and has a plan for your marriage. Why did he institute marriage in the first place? Check all that apply.
 - To remove human aloneness
 - To frustrate human beings

- To encourage human beings
- To make life perfect
- To make life difficult
- To give Adam something to do
- To populate the earth
- To meet emotional needs
- To provide companionship
- Other _____

2. Discuss your answers with the group. Then answer True or False to the following statements:

- _____ The dream marriage is perfect.
- _____ The dream marriage is characterized by an absence of problems.
- _____ The dream marriage means we are always in complete agreement.
- _____ The dream marriage is the fulfillment of God's plan for me and my spouse.

The point is, your dream marriage is indeed possible because

- | it doesn't have to be perfect (because it includes two imperfect people);
- | it may still have problems (the key is, how you work to solve them);
- | it doesn't require complete agreement at all times (need we say more?); and
- | it requires an understanding that God put you together in a bond that was part of his dream for you both.

3. In God's plan for marriage, the husband and wife have a relationship characterized by the words listed below. Place a check mark in the boxes next to words that describe your relationship. Circle the words that describe areas in which you would like to see improvement.

- Loving
- Compatible
- Happy
- Permanent
- Companions
- United in purpose
- Emotionally intimate
- Emotionally healthy
- Growing closer
- Content
- Spiritually intimate
- Honest about faults
- Other things that come to mind: _____

Whether your marriage is doing great or could use lots of improvement, you'll both benefit from the types of love Gary and Barb describe in chapter 3.

4. As a group, fill in the blanks below as your leader offers the answers. After filling in the blanks for each section, discuss as a group why this type of love is important in marriage.

Forgiving Love

Forgiving love offers a _____ after you have _____ and _____ each other.

Forgiving love equips you to _____ on such a _____ level of acceptance for one

another that you can _____ from the _____ you occasionally _____ on one another and _____ through your offenses. Forgiving love helps you to _____ after you have _____ one another.

Every marriage needs forgiving love because

Serving Love

Serving love helps you _____ and _____ each other's deepest _____. Serving love is the process of _____ needs and taking steps to _____ them in each other.

Every marriage needs serving love because

Persevering Love

Persevering love _____ you through the _____ of life. As you implement persevering love in your marriage you will _____ with your spouse and _____ a love that will _____ through your years together.

Every marriage needs persevering love because

Guarding Love

Guarding love _____ your _____ from _____ to your marriage. Marriages are _____ by many forces today. If you are not aware of the _____ to your marriage, then you are _____.

Every marriage needs guarding love because

Celebrating Love

Celebrating love _____ you to maintain a satisfying _____, _____, and _____ connection. Celebrating love keeps that _____ alive, not only in the bedroom but in all areas of the _____. As you learn to celebrate your _____, you will fall in love all over again.

Every marriage needs celebrating love because

Renewing Love

Renewing love regards the marriage _____ as _____. Renewing love _____ you from _____ and provides you with _____ as you face your future with your spouse.

Every marriage needs renewing love because

Gary and Barb say:

As your marriage experiences these six key kinds of love in God's strength, you will be empowered to divorce-proof your marriage. Barb and I are not talking about merely gutting it out in a relationship that is a constant source of agony and unhappiness. That's no dream for marriage; it's a relational nightmare! Rather, we are talking about developing a marriage relationship that results in such a deepened love between you and your spouse that you discover a completeness that could never be attained alone.
(from chapter 3, under heading "A Vision for Divorce-Proofing Your Marriage")

Sharing as a Couple

5. Review the characteristics of marriage in question 3 above. Share with your spouse which ones you felt you were doing well with and which ones you feel you could use some improvement. As your spouse shares, write both categories below. Then compare his/her comments with what you wrote.

We're doing well with: We could improve at:

Preparing for the Week

As a group, discuss the following five ground rules one by one. After each one is discussed, turn to

your spouse to indicate if you are willing to commit to that guideline for this course.

1. Concentrate on Your Spouse's Needs

Take the responsibility to “give” to your spouse and trust that God will meet your own needs however he chooses. By being “other focused” and concerned about meeting your spouse’s needs first, you may be surprised how God will bless you by involving your spouse in meeting each of your own needs. Will you commit to this with your spouse?

Yes No Does this mean it’s not going to be all about me anymore?

2. Avoid Criticism

When it comes time for your spouse to focus on your needs, be careful not to be critical of how he or she hasn’t met your past needs. Express how you personally feel without making statements of accusation. Never criticize your spouse to the group. Will you commit to this with your spouse?

Yes No What happens if I don’t?

3. Keep Your Group Sharing Time Safe

Some, if not all, in your group will want to share the progress that each is making from week to week. Keep your sharing time confidential within your group, and avoid comparing each other’s marriage relationships. Make your group a safe place to share your strengths and struggles. Will you commit to this?

Yes No This means I can’t secretly record our group meetings?

4. Focus on “Being” as well as “Doing”

Meeting our spouse’s needs involves “doing” something. But our “doing” is empowered by our “being” something. As our attitudes are transformed, our behavior changes. So throughout this course you will be asked to focus on certain Christlike attitudes that will direct your actions.

Will you ask God to help you change in attitude and action?

Yes No I didn’t know I needed to be changed.

5. Complete Your Weekly Exercises and Assignments

You will be asked to spend a couple of hours each week between these group sessions in discovering how to better meet your spouse’s needs. Will you commit to at least an hour and a half a week to this course?

Yes No Will I get paid?

Now, close in prayer asking God to give each of you the kind of love you need to move your marriage closer to the “dream.”

Your assignment for the coming week will be to study the first kind of love called forgiving love. You will need to read part 2—chapters 4 and 5 in Divorce-Proof Your Marriage. Then complete the three days of assignments that follow. It is important to try to complete these three days of assignments at the beginning of the week, so that you have the rest of the week to put into practice forgiving love, which will be discussed in the next group session. The homework assignments are strictly between you and your spouse—so be open and honest as you work separately and then share together this week.

No matter how long ago it was, you probably still remember that moment when you said “I do.” Your ceremony may have been simple . . . or sumptuous. Your honeymoon may have been heavenly . . . or more down-to-earth. But in any case, you and your spouse-to-be were drawn to that moment of marriage by a dream—a dream of spending the rest of your days with the love of your life. Your heart was filled with hope, expectation, promise, and a dream that your marriage not only would be good, but would be a love that would last forever.

Since that day, your marriage has probably had its share of ups and downs. You’ve probably done or said some things that hurt your spouse—and vice versa. Perhaps you’re still angry or bitter over harsh words, something done, or something *not* done.

Perhaps rekindling your love just doesn’t seem to be possible.

But bringing back the dream is just what you need to have a great marriage.

The dream can live again, even stronger than ever. That’s the purpose of this process you have embarked upon as a couple—to reawaken the dream and discover the love of your life all over again.

Prior to beginning this study, you were asked to read chapters 1–3 and complete the marriage map self-tests (also located in appendix B). If you have not already done so, you need to complete those questions. You can photocopy the pages from appendix B so that you and your spouse can fill out the charts separately. The marriage map includes seven stops on the marriage journey from that first dreamy love all the way to divorce. Marriages that end in divorce have traveled along the map, unable (or unwilling) to stop and turn around. Decide where you think you are on the marriage map, and then answer the questions below.

1. Look back over your marks, and write below which “stop” you believe you are at right now in your marriage. Then explain why.

2. Take a few moments to carefully consider the following statements. Circle the number on the lines (1 meaning “never”; 5 meaning “always”) that describes how you feel in your marriage relationship.

I feel accepted by and connected with my spouse.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel understood and honored by my spouse.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel bonded and rooted in this relationship.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel safe and secure in this relationship.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel cherished and deeply loved.

1 2 3 4 5

I feel that my spouse is committed and faithful.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Which of these categories is most important to you?

In my marriage, I need to feel _____

4. Why do you think such a feeling is so important to you in your marriage?

5. Which of these categories would you guess is most important to your spouse?

In our marriage, my spouse needs to feel _____

6. Why do you think such a feeling is so important to your spouse?

Take a few moments to meditate on these categories, and ask God to impress upon your heart how your spouse would feel if the two of you were to be able to love each other in ways that would meet your deepest needs.

7. Conclude this Personal Reflection exercise by praying and writing a prayer that expresses the following:

Lord, I thank you for my spouse, because _____

I pray for my marriage and ask that you will _____

I pray for my spouse and ask you to bless him/her by _____

Please help me to better love my spouse. Show me what I can do to meet his/her needs. Amen.

Remember that during this week you need to read part 2—chapters 4 and 5 of *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage*. Then work together with your spouse to answer the following questions:

1. In Jeremiah 29:11, God told his people:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Do you believe that God’s plans for you—and your marriage—are “plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope”?

Yes At this point, I’m not sure I really believe that.

2. Next, turn back to the Personal Reflection exercise you did on Day One. Each of you share where you think you are on the marriage map, and why.

Turn to your spouse (husband, go first) and say something like,

“I want to know what’s important *to you* in our marriage.”

“I want to listen as you share your feelings.”

“I want to focus on hearing the desires of your heart for our marriage.”

Then share the numbers you placed on the lines, as well as what you thought was the most important to both you and your spouse. Are these the same? Discuss your perceptions. Then on the line below, write what your spouse said was most important to him/her.

The category most important to my spouse was _____

3. Discuss how you currently handle it when one of you hurts the other (intentionally or unintentionally). Could this eventually lead to danger for your marriage? How?

4. Is there unresolved conflict on which you need to “close the loop”? What steps do you both need to take in order to work toward that outcome?

Gary and Barb say:

Forgiving love disposes of the wrongs done against you—and done by you. It allows you to see your spouse as if he or she has done nothing wrong. Can you imagine picking up your relationship as if the behavior never happened? It’s a divine makeover, a fresh chance to make the right choices. You are free to accept and connect with each other again.

(from chapter 4, under heading “What Is Forgiving Love?”)

Remembering that the Bible says, “Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other” (Romans 12:10), take each other’s hands, look each other in the eyes, and share your desire to work toward a forgiving love that will help you heal hurts and help you feel accept and connected with each other.

Conclude this Couple Interaction exercise by thanking God aloud for your spouse and for his good plans for your marriage—filled with hope and a bright future.

Week One — Day Three

My Assignment: Learning to Forgive

You have two assignments this week:

1. Read part 2—chapters 4 and 5 of *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage*.
Have you completed that assignment yet?
 Yes No I've started, but I have more to read.
2. Practice showing forgiving love to your spouse.

Your assignment is to unconditionally forgive your spouse this week for a minor offense. Try this approach: The next time your spouse does something that hurts you, take a brief moment in your heart to forgive him/her. Then, as soon as it is possible, walk up to your spouse, give him or her a hug, and say, “Do you know how much I love you?” Hug your spouse, and then walk away. There is no need to remind your spouse of what he or she has done. Just demonstrate God’s forgiving love. For a more significant offense, the steps of closing the loop are found in chapter 3 of *Divorce-Proof Your Marriage*.

My Journal

How did your Couple Interaction time go? Were there any insights or breakthroughs? Explain.

Here is what I did and how it went when I practiced forgiving love with my spouse.