

How Fireproof lowers the boom.

Dalrock | 3 January, 2013 | by Dalrock

Several commenters to my post [Lowering the boom](#) asked if I could elaborate on my statement that what Joel and Kathy were describing was actually the plot of the movie *Fireproof*. Since the plot is discussed in detail below you won't want to read further if you haven't yet seen the movie and don't want the plot spoiled.

One thing which is crucial to understand about *Fireproof* is that while it is widely considered the preeminent *Christian movie on marriage*, it is not a *movie about Christian marriage*. This subtlety is something the movie's defenders will fairly quickly point out if you ask how the movie managed to ignore (or get backwards) nearly all of the key New Testament instruction on marriage. This they will explain is why Caleb was taught in the movie that his viewing pornography is a form of sexual sin, but Catherine isn't taught that her denial of sex is in fact creating temptation for Caleb to commit sexual sin ([1 Cor 7:2-5](#)). They will further explain that when the movie shows Caleb submitting to his wife, it isn't offering this as a Christian husband's role in marriage but as a way for a man inspired by Christ's sacrifice to win the love of his wife. Likewise, Catherine isn't rebuked and never repents for lining up the doctor for either an affair or as husband #2 (adultery either way you read it) or for her decision to frivolously divorce, because she isn't a Christian when she does all of this and her conversion occurs off-screen. If this were a movie on Christian marriage they will tell you, it would of course *have* to cover the core New Testament instructions on marriage. But it isn't, so it doesn't. If you think I'm making too fine a point of this, note how careful they are whenever describing the movie. For example, from the [outreach page for churches](#) (emphasis mine):

Use this movie to help strengthen marriages and couples in your church and community. FIREPROOF is an unprecedented opportunity to communicate **God's design for relationships**.

They don't say it communicates *God's design for marriage*, because again this would have required addressing *God's design for marriage*.

Fireproof is a movie about *Christian conversion* where the catalyst for God to change Caleb's heart is Catherine initiating divorce.



Divorce is the beginning of something wonderful...

Catherine is of course ultimately rewarded for helping God make Caleb into a better man; she receives a better husband, a new wedding ceremony, a happy marriage, and is inspired to accept Christ herself. But none of these wonderful things could occur before she helped God by putting Caleb in a state of crisis when she decided to divorce him.

This is the core message of *lowering the boom*; wives divorcing their husbands are doing God's work by

creating enough pain for him so that God can then work to make him a better man. As Joel and Kathy [explain](#), crushing a husband with the machinery of no fault divorce won't always work because of free will, but it creates the essential opening God requires for transformation to be possible:

Will every man turn his heart back toward his family? Of course not. If God could control every man, he would. But He can't. This wife's actions have simply given God an open door to deal with her husband.

This uncanny similarity between Joel and Kathy's *lowering the boom* philosophy and the plot of the most celebrated Christian movie on marriage doesn't necessarily suggest that the Kendrick brothers are fans of Joel and Kathy however. The theme of wife initiated divorce leading to winning the cosmic jackpot is a very common one. In this sense *Fireproof* can best be seen as the Christian entry in Hollywood's divorce fantasy genre.

Consider the blockbuster movie and bestselling book *Eat, Pray, Love*. As with *Fireproof* it starts with an unhappy wife who triggers an incredible process of empowerment and spiritual rebirth by divorcing her husband. Where Elizabeth gains spiritual wisdom from a Hindu Ashram as an ultimate result of her frivolous divorce, Cathrine comes to accept Christ as the ultimate result of hers. Likewise, while divorce is Elizabeth's exit out of an unhappy marriage and her path to finding the love of her life, the exact same thing is true for Catherine with the twist that her "new" perfect husband is the result of God fixing the one she already had (and all He needed was a little help from her). In between of course both divorcées are delighted by being [courted all over again](#).

Dalrock's guide to "lowering the boom" in *Fireproof*

Wife has a disobedient husband who doesn't follow her headship.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wife complains, but her husband still doesn't submit to her.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wife threatens divorce.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Threat of divorce is the necessary trigger to enable God to transform the husband.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wife follows through on threat of divorce (delivers signed papers).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wife makes her husband grovel, and her husband completely surrenders to her.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wife knows God has transformed her husband only once she falls back in love with him.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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