

What is happening with marriage and the family in the U.S. today?

We all hear various statistics. What do they mean for marriage and the family? Is the family unit doomed, is there hope?

Rather than tell the bad news first, I want to tell you **the good news** and show you that there are bright spots:

- ◆ Regardless of the message the media tries to send out, people still value marriage. In a Barna survey from November, 2002, **the primary success factor identified was having a strong family unit.** In a report released by The National Marriage Project (Rutgers University) in 2004 concerning attitudes among high school seniors, 83% of the girls and 72% of the boys said **“a good marriage and family life were *extremely important*.”**
- ◆ Even though the divorce rates are rising, some factors can tremendously raise **a person's chance of success.** According to a report published by The National Marriage Project in 2006, you can lower the chances of divorce (during the first 10 years of marriage) by the following percentages if these factors are in place:
 1. -30% annual income for the family, \$50,000 or above (vs. \$25,000 or below)
 2. -24% having a baby seven months or more after marriage (vs. before marriage)
 3. -24% waiting until age of 25 or over to marry (vs. 18 or under)
 4. -14% growing up in intact family (vs. divorced parents)
 5. -14% some religious affiliation (vs. none)
 6. -13% some college (vs. high school dropout)So, if you are a reasonably well-educated person with a decent income, come from an intact family and are religious, and marry after age 25 without having a baby first, **your chances of divorce are very low.** Other factors that can lower the percent even more are premarital education and not living together first.
- ◆ The same report showed significant **economic benefits to marriage.** Compared to those who were continuously married, those who never married have a reduction in wealth of 75% and those who divorced and didn't remarry had a reduction of 73%. Beyond the economic impact for the married couple themselves, **marriage has a tremendous economic impact on society.** One researcher determined that a single divorce costs state and federal governments about \$30,000, based on such things as the higher use of food stamps and public housing as well increased juvenile delinquency. The nation's 1.4 million divorces in 2002 are estimated to have cost taxpayers more than \$30 billion.
- ◆ According to the National Opinion Center of the University of Chicago, after 25 years of decline, **married persons over 18 who said their marriages were “very happy” is now starting an upward trend (65% of men and 60% of women, 2004)**
- ◆ **The rate of divorce is not 50% at present,** but it is true that for every 100 marriages in any given year, there are 50 divorces, but it is not half of the same people who got married that year. In a Gallup poll from May, 2006, of Americans who have ever been married, **66% have never been divorced.** So, only 1/3 of those who have been married before have divorced one or more times.
- ◆ In the same survey, of all Americans surveyed, **85% believe it is “somewhat important” or “very important” for a couple to marry** if they plan to spend their life together.
- ◆ In the book, *The Case for Marriage* by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher, several benefits of marriage are identified from research, two include:
 1. **Compared to married people, the nonmarried have higher rates of mortality than the married: about 50% higher among women and 250% higher among men.**
 2. **Married men and women report less depression, less anxiety, and lower levels of other types of psychological distress than do those who are single, divorced, or widowed.**