

"Starter" Marriages?

It should be no surprise that we live in a society full of divorce. Gone are the days where the majority of couples remained committed to one another for life. Also, gone are the days where divorce is frowned upon by society at large. In fact, some who come out of a divorce wear it as a "badge of honor." It is almost that a person has not lived unless he has spent time in divorce court—haggling over property settlements and custody of the children.

Today, divorce is very common among persons in their twenties. Census Bureau statistics show that in 1998 there were 3 million divorced 18-29 year olds. This compares with only 253,000 divorces among 25-29 year olds in 1962. Statistics also show that the average age of first marriages has risen to 25—compared with 20—in the 1950's. Now, we see young couples that rush into marriage—only to find out they wound up with the wrong person. So, divorce provides an easy way out. Popular culture views this as a way to gain experience and tools that are needed "to make the second trip down the aisle more lasting and rewarding." Alas, some now call the first marriage that ended in failure a "starter marriage." Couples used to buy "starter houses" where they knew they would only be for a short while. Now, we have the "starter marriage." Unbelievable.

In her book, *The Starter Marriage & the Future of Matrimony* Pamela Paul defines starter marriages as those that last five years or less and do not yield children. Paul, an editor at *American Demographics* magazine, asserts that this type of marriage is a growing trend among Gen Xer's. (Americans between 24-36 years of age)

Why have starter marriages become common?

"When people go into their starter marriages, their eyes are focused on the wedding day, and they don't give much thought what is going to happen in the next 50 years," Paul said. "With their eyes fixed on the prize—the wedding day & the reception—they somehow miss the long term commitment that is supposed to follow the walk down the aisle."

Some rush into marriage—just ready to shed dating life. Women talk about a snow ball effect—that when one of their friends got engaged—soon everyone in the group was. In Paul's book one divorced woman says, "I rushed to get married, My marriage was an unfortunate mistake, and it wasn't worth saving because we were not meant to be."

Pop culture does not help either. An excerpt out of Paul's book reads, "Pop culture is packed with new starter marriage icons. Drew Barrymore, Uma Thurman, and Angelina Jolie all jumped in and out of marriage and are already onto their seconds. Courtney Thorne-Smith, former *Ally McBeal* star, divorced her husband after seven short months of marriage while still posing on the cover of *InStyle Weddings* magazine. Milla Jovovich was married for two months, alongside such temporarily committed people as Jennifer Lopez and Neve Campbell. Even Hollywood's reigning bride, Julia Roberts, had a starter marriage. Starter marriages have practically become trendy. *Self* magazine described the phenomenon with the snappy headline 'Just Married, Just Split Up.' And in September 2000 *Entertainment Weekly* included 'divorcing in your 20s' on its list of 'in' things to do. In 2000 more than four million twenty-to-thirty-four-year-olds checked the 'divorced' box. *Jane* magazine heralded the trend in April 2001 with the headline, 'Young, Hot, and Divorced.'

The Scriptures Speak on Marriage:

Jesus said, *What therefore God has joined together let no man separate.* (Matthew 19:6) When two decide to marry they are making a decision that will affect them in many ways throughout life, and this decision may have a very direct bearing on their eternal destiny. Sadly, too many enter into marriage having made a foolish mistake. The results are serious! *Divorce does not correct the mistake! It adds sin to sin and leaves one to reap for sowing to the flesh and reap he must!* (Irven Lee—"Choose Wisely", *The Observer*, March 1, 1964)

Marriage is a matter about which one should pray and act in harmony with the will of God. Marriage is not to be entered into lightly. Couples, KNOW the person you plan on marrying. Know the beliefs, the past experiences, the record of past behavior, the type associates, willingness to work, and many other facts that matter before planning a life together. Having many things in common adds to the process of making a happy home life. "If they like the same people, are happy in the same location, and have the same hopes and ideals, they can be "one." This tie is to be so close that it can be mentioned in the same sentence with the close relationship between Christ and His church." (Lee)

Success in marriage will come when both couples understand their role in the relationship and build a relationship with God. Success in marriage will be had when the couple enters into the commitment knowing it is for life and that divorce is absolutely not a viable option. Yes, there will be problems. Young people must move away from the notion that marriage is like a fairly tale. Problems CAN be worked through! Contrary to pop culture, marriage can last a lifetime—with both partners happy and committed. Just follow God's plan!

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Editor's Note: See "Are Gen Xers Just Trying Marriage on for Size?"
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/GMA/GoodMorningAmerica/GMA020125Feature_starter_marriage.html

and *Choose Wisely* by Irven Lee—*The Observer* 1 March 1964