

Making Marriage: Some Key Ingredients for a More Successful Union

By Caitlin Davis Hornback Sponsored by Dr. Dianne Dentice

Before entering into my own marriage on October 17, 2015, I wanted to discover the factors of what makes a successful marriage to help prevent becoming part of the 50% divorce statistic. When divorce can range anywhere from \$15,000-\$30,000, why would anyone want to leave their spouse?

Top Three Reasons for Divorce

Finances

Essentially the biggest threat to a marriage is finances. Living on a tight budget and worrying about bills can cause tension in a marriage. Typically, the partner earning the most money tries to control spending habits.

- Money spent before the wedding can also be an indicator for divorce
- Men who spend between \$2,000 and \$4,000 on engagement rings are more likely to divorce than men who spend between \$500 to \$2,000
- Men who spend less than \$500 have an increased chance of divorce
- Brides whose weddings cost \$20,000 or more have been found to be 3.5 times more likely to divorce than women who spent from \$5,000 to \$10,000
- The average cost of a U.S. wedding is \$30,000



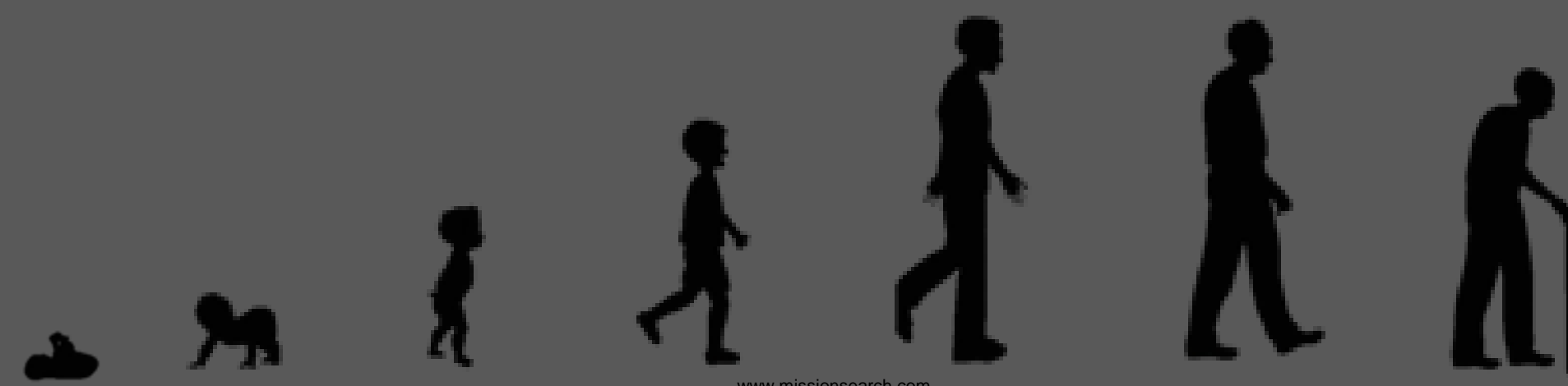
Debt can also cripple a marriage. *New York Times* revealed that 15% of respondents delayed marriage because of student loan debt.

Lower socioeconomic families put off getting married out of fear of penalization of welfare benefits.

Age

The older a couple is when they enter their first marriage, the more likely they will stay together.

A study done by Nick Wolfinger says the best age to get married is between 28 and 32.



The average age of a first marriage in the United States is 27 for women and 29 for men.

Education

The more education a couple has, the more likely they will remain married. When couples receive an education, they often wait until after graduation to get married.

College educated women have an eight-in-ten chance of still being married after two decades.

The National Center for Health Statistics estimate that 78% of college-educated women who married for the first time between 2006 and 2010 could expect their marriages to last at least 20 years. But among women who have a high school education or less, the share is only 40%.



Finances, age, and education correlate with one another. The more education a person has, the older they will be when they get married and the more likely they will find a job to stabilize their finances.

How Race/Ethnicity Affect Marriage

Gloria and Emilio Estefan married September 2, 1978



Hispanics focus more on family and tend to have more children. They believe in the more traditional role of a woman taking care of the home. Although income for Hispanics is typically the lowest of all ethnic/racial groups, their dedication to family makes divorce less likely.

Jackie Chan and his wife Lin Feng-jiao married since 1992



Asians and Pacific Islanders believe marriage comes first then love. They also believe men are the head of the household unless they have assimilated to the American culture of women working. Divorce is considered a disgrace in their culture.

Charles "Lala" Evans and his wife Louise married 59 years and 11 months before her passing in 2011.



African Americans are more likely to cohabit and have children out of wedlock. Marriage has many benefits for African American couples such as improving their economic status, social and psychological well-being of both men and women. Unfortunately, one of the biggest reasons for divorce amongst African Americans is mass incarceration.

African Americans are more likely to divorce than Hispanics and whites while Asians and Pacific Islanders are the least likely to divorce.

Today, interracial marriage accounts for roughly 8.4% of all marriages and approval for mixed-race marriages are at an all-time high. However, these marriages have a 41% chance of failing compared to 31% of marriages of the same race.

Interracial Marriage Statistics:

Percentage of mixed race couples (not including mixed marriages of minorities)
White & Hispanic – 37 percent
White & Asian – 13.7 percent
White & Black – 7.9 percent

Percentage of divorce based on mixed-race couples

White Wife & Asian Husband – 59 percent more likely to divorce
White Wife & Black Husband – 50 percent more likely to divorce
Asian Wife & White Husband – 4 percent more likely to divorce
Black Wife & White Husband – 44 percent less likely to divorce
Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic whites were more likely to end in divorce

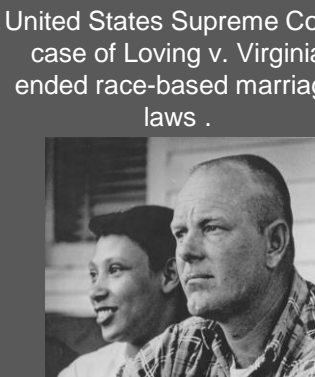
Regalado and Jacque married since 1992



Angel and Rudy married September 17, 1993



Richard and Mildred Loving married June 1968, 1967

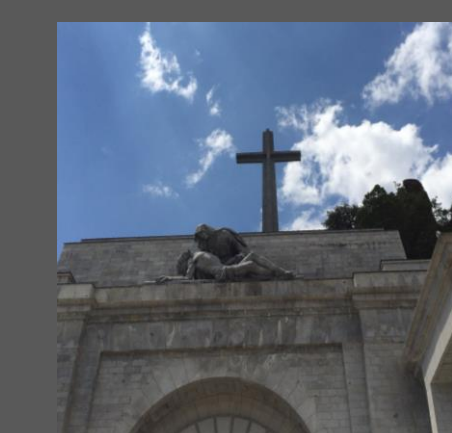


United States Supreme Court case of Loving v. Virginia ended race-based marriage laws

The more times a person marries the more likely they are to divorce.

Having more guests but a less expensive wedding and going on a honeymoon can lead to longer marriages.

Having twins or triplets raises chances for divorce by 17% over couples who have single births.



Active Christians who place God at the center of their marriage have a higher chance of success than those who say they are Christian but do not actively practice their faith.

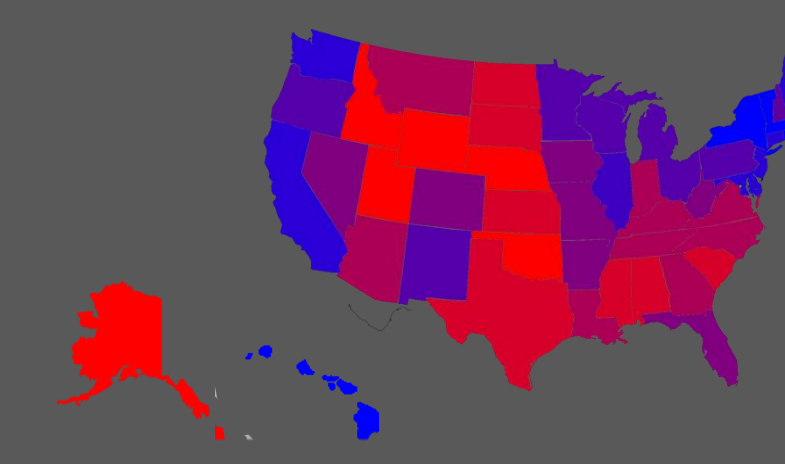
Percentage of likelihood of divorce: Catholic couples 31% less likely to divorce Protestant couples 35% less likely Jewish couples 97% less likely.

Christians who do not actively practice their faith are 20% more likely to divorce than the general population.

If an man is close to his in-laws, it can decrease the risk of divorce by 20%. If a woman is close to her in-laws it can increase the risk by 20%.

Couples who cohabit are more likely to divorce than couples who move in after they are married.

People who live in a red state are 27% more likely to divorce than those living in a blue state.



Many people consider the 1950s to be "the good old days" due to more marriages staying intact, but is that really the case?

Today, the divorce rate is roughly 50% but that has steadily declined. This trend can be attributed to less people marrying and more couples cohabitating. When a cohabitating couple separates it is difficult to record the data. Although more people remained married during the 1950s that does not necessarily mean they were happier. Divorce was seen as immoral, so even when domestic abuse was involved, remaining unhappy was better than divorce.

To better understand the factors that affect marriage I interviewed five individuals. The interviewees include a local divorce lawyer, a minister who has dealt with marriage counseling and performing wedding ceremonies, as well as my husband's paternal grandmother and my maternal grandparents. (All sets of grandparents have been married for over 50 years)

Attorney

In your opinion, what factors contribute to the high divorce rate?

There's a number of factors but the biggest is financial. People will tend to overlook issues in a relationship if they are comfortable. If someone is laid off and finances are low tensions rise. Having money takes care of business.

What would you tell a young couple today who is considering marriage?

Check your partner's credit score!

Michele & Vernon

What would you tell a young couple today who is getting married?

Put your cell phones down and pick up your Bible – Vernon



What do you attribute to the success of your marriage?

God is the number one thing, we try to listen well, and humor is very important. I used to be so serious but he taught me to have fun. We've had our ups and downs and we'd want to walk away, but we would take the time to pray about it and come back together and talk – Michele

Mary

What were some challenges you experienced in your marriage?

When Gordon was in college I had to find a job for living expenses, but it helped that the military paid for his schooling. He always helped with making sure the kids were taken care of. If we ever had any problems we would go to church and pray about it.

What do you attribute to the success of your marriage?

We had to work and it. Our relationship was always give and take; he met me half way and I met him half way. We always talked about our problems. Church was also another important thing in our lives.



Pastor Mark

What role does religion play in the success of a marriage?

Religion has nothing to do with the success of a marriage; it's all about faith. Religion is man's creation while faith is the belief in our Creator and that His Son is our savior. To go beyond just happily married each person must encourage the other to follow in faith and believe wholeheartedly.

What would you tell a young couple today who is considering marriage?

First, I would ask them what they think the purpose of marriage is, then I would ask them what they think love is. Most people think love is a feeling but it's a choice. Our purpose in life and in marriage is to love the way God loves His people, selflessly. In a marriage, you must help build up your spouse in Christ and they need to help build you up in Christ.

My grandparents Barbra and Donald (left) married since March 1958 and Michele and Vernon (right) married since August 1961.

My husband's grandparents Gordon and Mary married in March 1956. They were married for 58 years before Gordon's passing in 2014.

Be sensitive to how the other one feels and be willing to give and take and always be supportive ~ Mary Hornback