

If They Think It, They Will  
Act On It:  
Major Myths About Marriage

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Myth: Marriage doesn't matter.

- Many reasons to believe that marriage matters a great deal.
- Young women have begun to believe, more than young men, that it may not matter.

Children and Marriage

- Many single parents are doing fabulous job.
- However, on average, children not having benefit of stable, two parent home, are:
  - Less likely to go to college
  - More likely to have teen pregnancy
  - More likely to become involved with delinquencies
  - Simply, fewer advantages in life.

Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher:  
The Case for Marriage

- Compared to cohabiters or singles, marrieds do better (on average) in terms of:
  - *Financial foundation*
  - *Health*
    - Effect stronger for men, but holds for women, too
  - *Overall Happiness* in life
  - *Emotional Health*
  - *Better Sex*
    - More frequent than singles. More satisfied than cohabiters
    - People have incentive to learn to please this one person

Myth: Children do just as well,  
on average, if their parents  
divorce or never marry.

- Swinging from view to counter view
  - There is virtually no variable upon which children being raised by their two parents to not have an edge in life.
  - This does not mean that other children are doomed. But the risks are different.
- Areas of controversy
  - The likelihood of harm
  - The mechanism of the harm

Effects of Divorce Per Se?

- Amato and Booth
  - 70% of divorces are in low conflict marriages.
  - ¾ of parents who are divorcing do not say they quarrel often or even disagree much.
  - Are most divorces in context where children are in more peril if the parents to remain together?

Myth: Cohabitation lowers the odds of marital problems and divorce.

- Mythology: cohabitation is a great way to prepare for marriage
- Mythology: cohabitation and marriage are functionally equivalent

**Attitudes and Beliefs About Cohabitation:  
Ages 18 through 24: OSU Survey**

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Believe non-marital cohabitation is acceptable	69%	59%
Believe cohabitation improves chances for good marriage	62%	55%

**Cohabitation and Increased Risks**

- Higher levels of conflict
- Lower levels of happiness
- Lower levels of interpersonal commitment
- Increased risk for dissolution
- Higher risk for domestic violence

Myth: If I just find my soul mate . . .

**Soul Mate Seeking**

**National Marriage Project**

- Many fine reports on their site, such as:

Popenoe, D., & Whitehead, B. D. (2001). Who wants to marry a soul mate? In D. Popenoe & B. D. Whitehead, *The State of Our Unions: The Social Health of Marriage in America* (pp. 6 – 16). Piscataway, NJ: National Marriage Project.

See <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/>

- They conducted a national survey of 1,003 people aged 20 to 29 years old, 61% of whom had never married.
- 94% of never-married singles agree that "when you marry you want your spouse to be your soul mate, first and foremost."

### What People Believe About Soul Mates? A Simple Web-Search (from *The Power of Commitment*)

- Someone who completes you.
- Someone who accepts you no matter what.
- Someone who has the unique capacity to love you more fully than anyone else on the planet.
- Someone for whom you would not have to make major compromises.
- Someone with whom you have a deep connection that is not based on mere infatuation.
- Someone who is your greatest friend.
- Someone you may not spend the rest of your life with.
- You may, in fact, have several soul mates. There is not just one.
- Soul mates have two minds, hearts, and souls that operate as one.
- Someone you quickly know is the one.

### Soul-Mate-ism

- The belief that you will find in a mate the one unique person on the planet who understands your deepest desires and fears, accepts all of who you are unconditionally, and who becomes joined to you, making one complete whole in mind, body, and soul.
- The power of this type of relationship is so great that you will know fully and rapidly when you find "the one."
- Further, if you have not married "the one," you should move on and find them.

### Myth: Religious involvement is associated with divorce.

- It is true . . .
  - Divorce rate is higher in the Bible Belt
  - Pollster George Barna's data drew attention to this, but not attention to why (Barna Research Group, December 1999).

### What Drives Those Data?

- Young age at marriage:
  - For example, Oklahomans marry an average of 2.5 years younger than the national median age at first marriage.
- Poverty and low economic opportunity or development.
- These trends have nothing to do with religious faith and practice.

### Religiosity and marital quality in the large Oklahoma survey: An Empirical Example

- Those who reported being more religious...
  - Higher levels of commitment
  - Higher levels of marital satisfaction
  - Less thoughts/talk of divorce
  - Lower levels of negative interaction
- Association is strongest for frequency of attending religious services

Sobering Finding:  
Whitehead and Popenoe Survey  
(National Marriage Project)

- Less than half (42 percent) of single young adults believe it's important to find a spouse who shares the same religion.

How To Help Faithful Couples  
Actually Build On Their Faith

- 1) Reject "one size fits all models."
- 2) Help couples to see that marriage (and their marriage) is special to God.
- 3) Build thankfulness.
- 4) Consider multiple pathways of spiritual intimacy.

Reject "one size fits all models."

- The Mystery of Oneness

Ephesians 5:31-32 *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." [32]*  
*This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. (NIV)*

What Tolstoy Got Wrong

"All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

Anna Karenina (1873 76), opening words.



Consider multiple pathways of spiritual intimacy.

- Sharing your walk
- Sharing the impact of scripture passages
- Praying together
- Worshipping God together
- Taking communion together
- Sharing a ministry together, especially serving others together (likely to be very powerful)

[www.PREPinC.com](http://www.PREPinC.com)

Resources:

Stanley, S., Trathen, D., McCain, S., & Bryan, M. (1998). *A Lasting Promise*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc.

Stanley, S. M. (2005). *The Power of Commitment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.