

MARRIAGE

IT'S ONLY A PIECE OF PAPER

Jesus tells us that the institution of marriage was initiated by God at the beginning of creation (Matthew 19:3-5). Yet, after seeing many of their friend's marriages fail, some people may question its long-term value. A common observation is that marriage is, really, "only a piece of paper." A life-long commitment to a relationship that has a popularly reported 50/50 chance of success makes the prospect intimidating.

THE FACTS ABOUT MARRIAGE

However, recent research is validating the benefits of marriage towards a person's health, happiness and longevity. In a 2012 article "[The Health Benefits of Marriage](#)" on the [Focus On The Family](#) website, the author, Glenn Stanton, summarizes and references recent research. Research confirms that married people are more likely to:

- live longer
- be physically healthier
- be mentally healthier
- to be happier
- recover more quickly and successfully from illnesses
- tend to take better care of themselves and avoid risky behavior

Conversely, research suggests that cohabiting partners do not receive the same health benefits that married partners seem to enjoy. Along measures of financial wellbeing, general health and psychological wellbeing, married couples seem to fare better than cohabiting couples. As Stanton observes, it would seem that marriage carries with it certain benefits that are often overlooked.

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ

In a related article, Stanton addresses the sometimes misleading—yet, oft quoted—statistic that 50% of all marriages end in divorce (Stanton, Glenn. "[What Is The Actual Divorce Rate?](#)" *Focus on the Family*, 2015). His research makes clear that it is important to ask the right questions. The best indicators for the success or failure of a marriage are often apparent at the beginning, before the knot is tied. Further, there are other indicators that predict the likelihood that a marriage will fail. When detected early, many problems can be addressed and resolved with counseling.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

As a general rule, premarital counseling can be helpful for identifying problems at their genesis as personalities and preferences are addressed, compared and contrasted and evaluated for compatibility over time. Another advantage of pre-marital work is that a relationship with a therapist can be useful if and when problems arise in the future. The groundwork has already been done and therapy can be more strategic, addressing the specific issues that surround the difficulty.

BOTTOM LINE

Marriage is a good thing that encourages us to see the world through another person's perspective. As we adjust to this other person with a life-long commitment, there are benefits that can effect more than emotional well-being but also health issues. Premarital work can be a useful tool in helping foster these positive benefits. With the right therapist, couples can capitalize upon their strengths, compensate for each other's weaknesses and complement each other's similarities and differences to build longevity and a unity that truly benefits everyone.