

A Home of Peace or Turmoil?

Happy, productive relationships among members of a family somewhat depend upon a peaceful climate in the home, and a peaceful climate grows out of good, happy relationships. A peaceful home can be the happiest place on earth. Conversely, there is nothing on earth worse than a home full of contention, bitterness and anger. God intends that each home be peaceful, and He has given instructions for achieving that goal. But...

Where are all the peaceful homes?

The simple answer is they are hard to find because relatively few follow the instructions of God. However, the question deserves more discussion. A truly happy, peaceful marriage seems a rarity these days, and as the marriage goes, so goes the family. Interestingly, only a few decades ago the majority of American homes were unbroken, built upon a first marriage with children growing up in a relatively secure environment. The American divorce rate has been increasing slightly since Colonial times, leveled for awhile after World War II, and then in the 1960s began a dramatic rise to almost double today.²¹ The passing of no-fault divorce laws by most states in the early 1970s fueled the increase. Under the new laws a divorce could be obtained for any reason – or no reason. Nine of every 1,000 married women in the United States divorced in 1960. That number rose to over twenty-two in 1980 and then declined to fewer than eighteen per 1,000 in 2004.²² Though there has been improvement, there are still too many divorces. Sad but statistically true, your new marriage will have a 40 to 50 percent chance of ending in separation or divorce.²³

Get Ready, Get Set, I Do!

It can be argued the introduction of no-fault laws opened the gate for some couples caught in an unhappy union. This is no doubt true to some degree, but providing an easy out is not a happy substitute for fixing the problems.

Hand in hand with a rising divorce rate, there has been an alarming increase in depression. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 15% of Americans suffer from major depression at some time in their lives, “and 100 million people are affected any given day.”²⁴ Almost one in ten Americans over the age of 18 suffers from clinical depression each year.²⁵ This is to say nothing of the depressed teens and younger children who face a lifetime of mental anguish in the clutches of depression. In a 1986 article by Joseph Alper, Dr. Elliot S. Gershon, Chief of Clinical Psychogenetics at the National Institute of Mental Health sounded this warning: “The chilling fact is that we may be on the verge of an epidemic like increase of mania, depression and suicide. The trend is rising almost exponentially and shows no signs of letting up. I would go so far as to say this is going to be the public health problem of the 1990’s and beyond if the trend continues.”²⁶ Dr. Gershon’s prediction has largely come true. The article reported, “The rise in depression, suicide, and eating disorders is mostly environmental in nature.” Reasons cited were erosion of sources of an ‘external sense of esteem,’ religious identity, family cohesiveness, patriotism, etc. Mr. Alper further claimed, “There is mounting evidence that other harmful behaviors are linked to depression: suicide attempts, drug abuse, anorexia, bulimia, and juvenile delinquency. Curb the depression, and the others disappear.”

Before 1970, you would not have easily found this dismal lack of peace and happiness in American homes. It was just

How to improve your marriage

not as pervasive as today. Were there problems in homes of the mid-20th century? Yes. Was there unhappiness in families that stayed together? Of course. Still, the dramatic increase in the destructive Ds – depression and divorce – over the past half century or so clearly indicates that marriage and family values have eroded.

Is divorce a godly option?

It is apparent that a great many of those who listen to the minister say the traditional words, “Until death do you part,” actually believe they can get a divorce if their marriage doesn’t work out. In fact, it is not unusual for a couple to change the traditional vow to “as long as love shall last.” There would not be so many divorces if all who entered marriage thought, “This is for life! I must make it work because there is no way out short of death.” Whether one is trying to please God or not, divorce is not a happy option, especially if children are involved. For one who is determined to obey God, it is not an option at all except when his or her spouse is guilty of fornication. Remember, Jesus said, “... whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”²⁷ In order that there is no misunderstanding, sexual immorality in this passage (*fornication* in some translations) refers to any “illicit sexual intercourse,”²⁸ i.e., adultery (sex with one other than your marriage partner), bestiality, homosexuality and any other form of sex outside the sanctity of marriage.

God’s general view of divorce is simply stated and difficult to misunderstand. He hates divorce: “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts.”²⁹ In the context of