

Fit to be Tied

Premarital counseling

Amos 3:3 HCSB Can two walk together without agreeing to meet?

A recent study by Barna Research group, based on interviews with 3, 854 adults from the 48 contiguous states, discovered that 11% of the adult population of the US is currently divorced and 25% of the adults have had at least one divorce during their lifetime.

Many Cultural Christian pastors like to believe that the divorce rates are lower among their flocks but the facts reveal that divorce rates among conservative Christians were significantly higher than for other faiths and are in fact much higher than atheists and agnostics!

Variation in divorce rates among Christian faith groups:

Denomination (in order of decreasing divorce rate)	% who have been divorced
Non-denominational (Evangelical Christian congregations that are not affiliated with a specific denomination, typically fundamentalist)	34%
Baptists	29%
Mainline Protestants	25%
Mormons	24%
Catholics	21%
Lutherans	21%

Variation in divorce rates by religion:

Religion	% have been divorced
Jews	30%
Born-again Christians	27%
Other Christians	24%
Atheists, Agnostics	21%

Intriguingly, the Unification Church (Reverend Moon's group) reports a divorce rate of 17.4%. Couples in that church were matched up by Reverend Moon and not by their own choosing.

George Barna commented that the results raise "*questions regarding the effectiveness of how churches minister to families.*" The data challenge "*the idea that churches provide truly practical and life-changing support for marriage.*"

Why is it that some marriages endure and others do not? What are the factors that determine whether or not you and your lover are ready to be married? First, let's begin by looking at **God's pattern for marriage**. Turn please to:

- **Genesis 2:24-25 HCSB** This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. (25) Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

Separation: "a man leaves his father and mother". Both of you must be ready to not only physically but emotionally leave your parents behind and become a separate entity. It is not

that you should cease loving or being loyal to your parents; the human heart is able to stretch and love many people. Having said that, in a successful marriage, the loyalty to the parents and in-laws should never be stronger than the loyalty to our spouses.

Bonding: “and bonds with his wife”. You must be ready to deliberately choose to bond with your loved one. Bonding is a mental commitment to have a faithful, permanent marriage relationship no matter what.

Unity: “they become one flesh”. This goes way beyond the sexual union. You must be able to consider yourselves as a single person; one soul in two bodies. Only when you can do this will you achieve true sexual closeness. Sexual satisfaction is achieved when it is backed by unselfish love. All else is mere animalistic rutting.

Intimacy: “felt no shame”. There needs to be an emotional intimacy. I’m not saying that it’s easy, but there should be a willingness to be vulnerable and transparent with your spouse. You must be already honestly sharing your feelings with one another whether those feelings are positive or negative, comfortable or brutally painful. That’s emotional intimacy. Spiritual intimacy will come as you continue to be open with one another, be honest about your needs, reach out to serve each other’s needs, pray for each other and with each other.

God has **goals for marriage**. There is a point to the relationship. Adonaic Christians want to know and achieve God’s purpose in their marriage. Let me share with you **three**.

Partnership. (Malachi 2:14) God created us as social creatures. Even those with the gift of celibacy remain social creatures. They simply get their “fix” in other ways. God’s intent is never for any of His children to be alone and isolated. He describes us as sheep. Sheep are to be in a flock. The sheep that wanders off alone is a dead sheep. So, there is something deep inside the human heart that seeks companionship and the possibility of marital companionship can only grow wherever there is emotional, spiritual, and physical unity. Malachi 2:14 describes the spouse as our “partner” our spouse “by covenant”. We solemnly enter into a vow before God to dedicate ourselves to this other person as our partner for life.

Parenting. (Genesis 18:19) The very first command Hashem gave us was to be fruitful and multiply, filling the earth with godly offspring. Humans have done too good a job at filling the Earth, but not so good a job at making sure their offspring are godly. Parenting doesn’t mean you HAVE to have children by birth. You may choose to not add any more to the already overburdened planet and adopt one of the millions of orphaned children that are already available. You may enter parenting by giving birth, or through adoption, but either way one of God’s purposes is for you to ensure that the next generation knows Him and will follow His ways. He showed us this when He chose our father Abraham.

- [Genesis 18:19 HCSB](#) For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. This is how the LORD will fulfill to Abraham what He promised him."

Pleasure. (Proverbs 5:18) Marriage is not a business proposition. It is not some drudgery where we are simply trying to fulfill our duty to God and humanity. The God who created sun rises, ocean swells to surf on, roses to sniff, and horses to ride wants you to enjoy yourself. Marriage is His special gift to humanity. It gives us a small glimpse into what it must be like to be the Trinity. He’s not trying to suck the pleasure out of things for you. He wants you to experience true enjoyment that will come with self-control and a servant’s heart.

- [Proverbs 5:18 HCSB](#) Let your fountain be blessed, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth.

Here is my advice; some things I would ask you to consider as you decide whether or not you are truly ready to be married.

1. **Commit to work through problems. Don't walk away.** (1 Corinthians 7:27)
 - **1 Corinthians 7:27 HCSB** Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.
2. **Offer love even when you don't feel like it.** (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)
3. **Constantly evaluate your love with 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.** For example, substitute your name for the word "love" throughout the passage. Read it out loud that way. Is it true?
4. **Pray daily for your loved one.**
5. **Forgive and forgive again.** Refuse to keep a record of wrongs. Once a matter has been dealt with appropriately refuse to bring it up again.
6. **Develop a proper, balanced view of marriage.** (Proverbs 27:17)
 - **Proverbs 27:17 HCSB** Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.
No human being can meet all your needs. Only God can do that. However, God chooses to meet many of your needs through this one significant person.
7. **Actively eliminate any emphasis on your rights.** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
 - **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 HCSB** Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body.
Don't enable sin; don't empower wickedness; but don't make the relationship about you. It's not an extended therapy session and the universe does not revolve around you.
8. **Nurture your identity in Christ.** (Philippians 4:13)
 - **Philippians 4:13 HCSB** I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.
Refuse to have your self-worth based on any human – not even your mate. There is an odd tension between becoming "one flesh" and yet maintaining a separate identity based on Christ that you will spend the rest of your life trying to locate and maintain.
9. **Ask God to make you the perfect spouse.** (Psalm 51:10)
 - **Psalms 51:10 HCSB** God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Be willing to acknowledge that there are things in yourself that need change or growth. Do whatever you must to determine where those needs are. Ask your potential mate what they are. Begin the process now that will need to continue later of "confession your sins to one another" and "gently rebuking one another and "exhorting one another to good works". If you are either unwilling to do this or your spouse is unable to do this with you, you need to seriously reconsider marrying them. If you can't help each other grow in Christ, there is no point going any further, from an Adonaic point of view anyway.
10. **Keep your old healthy relationships.** (Exodus 20:12)
 - **Exodus 20:12 HCSB** Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
If this relationship is pulling you away from people who have loved you and served you for years, then it is an unhealthy relationship. If it is causing you to isolate yourself from your godly friends, then it is an unhealthy relationship. If it is causing you to do

things that you would not be willing to do on the front porch, so to speak, then it is an unhealthy relationship.

11. **Turn your expectations of marriage over to God.** (Psalm 62:1-2)

- **Psalms 62:1-2 HCSB** For the choir director: according to Jeduthun. A Davidic psalm. I am at rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. (2) He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I will never be shaken.

12. **Don't be in such a hurry that you don't get as much schooling as you can.** (Proverbs 10:14; 15:14; 23:12)

- **Proverbs 10:14 HCSB** The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of the fool hastens destruction.
- **Proverbs 15:14 HCSB** A discerning mind seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.
- **Proverbs 23:12 HCSB** Apply yourself to instruction and listen to words of knowledge.

13. **Wait till you are emotionally mature enough to marry.** (Proverbs 19:2)

- **Proverbs 19:2 HCSB** Even zeal is not good without knowledge, and the one who acts hastily sins.

14. **Get a good job that will support you before you get married.** (Proverbs 12:11; 21:5; 24:27)

- **Proverbs 12:11 HCSB** The one who works his land will have plenty of food, but whoever chases fantasies lacks sense.
- **Proverbs 21:5 HCSB** The plans of the diligent certainly lead to profit, but anyone who is reckless only becomes poor.
- **Proverbs 24:27 HCSB** Complete your outdoor work, and prepare your field; afterwards, build your house.

The word “house” here means your family; your descendants. In other words, develop your business, your source of income, before attempting to build your family.

15. **Develop the mindset that you are going to be equal partners.** (Genesis 1:18-28; 5:2; Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 5:21-25)

God created both male and female in His image. He did not make man in His image and then woman as a poor substitute. He gave dominion over the universe to both of them. The command to rule was not directed only to Adam. Eve was also commissioned with divine authority. Eve was created to be Adam's helper – not his slave.¹

The Hebrew word for “helper” used in Genesis 2 is sometimes translated as “companion” in more modern Bible versions. It is a word that denotes intimacy and partnership. However through the centuries, “help meet” has been wrongly used to imply that Eve was some type of domestic appendage.

Note too that man was inadequate by himself. The view of the self-sufficient male supporting the weak female is incorrect.

Yahweh called them Adam – the man and woman together.² When He took woman from the side of Adam, He meant for her to walk with Adam in harmony, not to be either subservient or superior to him.

We see sexual equality in the New Testament, with everyone (male and female) behaving with an attitude of humility.³ The submission is to be mutual. She shows him respect for the leadership position he has assumed in their relationship and he sacrificially loves her, voluntarily submitting his life and will to the pursuit of her good.

¹ Genesis 2:18-28

² Genesis 5:2

³ Galatians 3:28-29; Ephesians 5:21-25