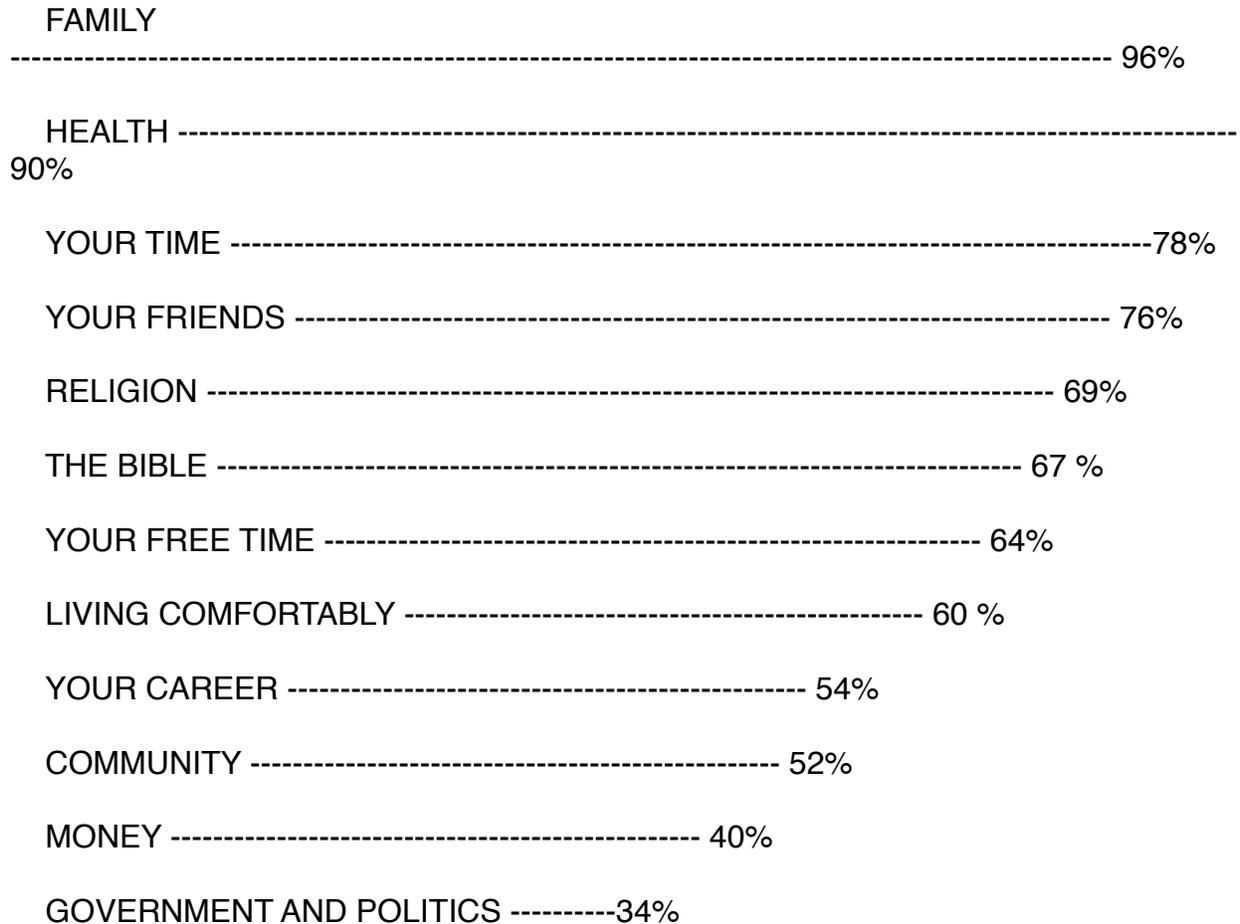


# Introduction

SCRIPTURE: Phil. 2:1-5; Eph. 5:25

The Barna Research Group took a poll of 1,013 adults and found the following results to the question, "Which aspects of life are very important to Americans?"



Consider this ...

1. Interest in our families is probably the highest concern of most of us here today.
2. Marriages do not grow or just last without a concerted effort on our own part to make them grow or last.
3. Marriages that "just exist" are not what God had in mind when He established the family.
4. God planned for the family to be the foundation of the society and not vice versa.

5. At the head of the family God placed man.

a. Husband, the buck stops at your desk.

I heard about a desk that had a sign that read, "THE BUCK DOESN'T EVEN SLOW DOWN HERE."

b. FOR MEN: The spiritual leadership is our responsibility.

6. God all the way back to Genesis and we find God blessing Abraham and giving him a promise that he would be a blessing to the world. But he was first a blessing to his family and then his family passed it on to their family. Not by ignoring our families but by paying attention to them. We are first to be a blessing to our own family "before" we are to the world around us.

7. In our first passage, Phil. 2:1-5, we find modeled for us the ingredients that will help make a successful marriage. READ.

8. Our second passage is not the easiest one we have to live up to; it is the hardest one to live up to. Eph. 5:25.

a. Husbands - this is not an option. We should love our wives regardless.

b. When Paul describes our love to be like Christ and the church, then we understand more what our love should be.

9. We find Paul telling us two very important things from these two passages of Scripture.

1. First, we should consistently put our mate first. This is imperative.

This can be seen in the husband who will open the door for his wife even when they are not on a date.

This is so important that he tells us to look out and care for the other person.

a. How should a husband put a wife first? EXAMPLES:

1) Time: Be on time for supper or have the courtesy to call your wife.

I worked with one fellow who thought I was henpecked because I wanted to call my wife if I was going to be late for supper. His wife would have supper on the table and he would not call. Today, he is divorced from his wife and both of them are remarried.

2) Be interested in her needs.

Maybe you heard the minister on the radio tell about the time he was in a counseling session with a couple who were having marital problems. She was trying to get her husband to see that she did not feel he loved her. Of course, he was trying to convince her that he did love her.

In the meantime, the minister received a call from his wife. Now he had told his secretary that he did not want any interruptions unless it was his family. So the minister picked up the phone, and his wife asked him if he would mind picking up a few items from the grocery store on the way home. The minister wrote down the items and before he hung up he said, "I love you!"

With that the lady that he was counseling turned to her husband and said, "That is what I am talking about. He is not afraid to let anybody else know and hear him say that he loves his wife."

The minister went on to say that never has any interruptions from his family hindered his counseling. It has enhanced his counseling because it exemplified what a loving marriage ought to be. His wife knew that she came first.

That doesn't mean a wife should take advantage of her husband. If she loves her husband, she will be considerate of him. She will not purposely want to interfere when it is something that can wait.

What are some other ways you can put your wife first?

- 3) Seek to understand her.
- 4) Regularly show good emotional feelings.
- 5) Seek to be romantic.

b. How should a wife put her husband first?

- 1) Respect him. How? You listen to him.
- 2) Prepare for him. Cook, clean.
- 3) Care for him. Understand his needs. They are often different from yours.

What about the wife working? How can and should a husband help when his wife is working also?

Let's share a few things concerning a working wife:

- \* The Bible speaks very clearly about a wife being a keeper of the home.

\* That is not to condemn you or to say you cannot work, but to state that home should be your first priority.

\* This is something that must be worked out between you, your husband, and the Lord. But please let me say that if you are a mother and wife and you are having trouble in your relationship and there is friction in the home, you need to make some changes.

\* A husband whose wife works should not expect any more out of her than he himself is willing to put in.

\* The wife should not be expected to work two jobs if the husband is not willing to do so.

What are some of the potential problems when the wife works?

\* Too tired to take care about meeting the needs of the husband and family.

\* The emotional needs of both mates are not being met: not enough time to talk. It is easier to unload on somebody else, maybe at work.

\* Friction may develop if responsibilities are not divided.

Fellows, you did not marry a work horse but a help mate. Learn to share in the work.

\* When a wife is submissive to her husband that does not mean she is inferior.

\* As a matter of fact, there are many wives that are far more talented and gifted than the husband.

\* But a good leader will surround himself with people gifted in the area he may be weak in, so a smart husband will look for a wife whose strong points will compliment his weak points.

\* Build him up.

\* Seek to understand him.

2. The second thing is Jesus gives us the example of how our relationship in our marriage should be: Jesus had an attitude that was SELFLESS & GIVING.

Things sure have changed, but not always for the best; but many of the changes have caused wrecks in many of the marriages of our day.

Let's begin by looking at some of the changes:

\* In 1960: 60% of all households had a working father and a stay at home mother.

- \* In 1991: only 7% reflect the above picture. This is a very major change.
- \* In 1990, 1 out of every 15 children will be born out of wedlock.
- \* ½ of all adults under the age of 30 will live with someone before marriage.
- \* Households who are headed by unmarried people living together has quadrupled since 1970. (Census Bureau stats suggest that people who cohabitate before marriage are even more likely to divorce than others.
- \* In 1990, 6 out of 10 will live in a single parent household.
- \* 70% of all adults in this country believe that if a couple with young children cannot get along, they should not stay together simply for the children.
- \* Teenagers: on the average people experience sexual intercourse for the first time at age 16.
- \* Children: Spend less than 30 minutes per week in meaningful conversation with their mothers and 15 minutes a week with their father.
- \* By the year 2000, Americans will generally believe that a life spent with the same partner is both unusual and unnecessary.

10. That is why we have a need today in determining what can we do to make our marriages last.

Let's begin by looking at ways to make our marriages strong enough that they will endure the hardships that are sure to come our way.

### **Step 1 — A Strong Commitment To Making Your Marriage Work**

To Have a Marriage That Really Lasts, You Must Have a Strong Commitment To Making Your Marriage Work.

1. Of the marriages that really last, it is known that there is an unusually high commitment to really make it work.

1. One point to remember is even if your marriage was made in heaven, it still needs some down to earth maintenance.

2. Commitment is the key that will unlock a stuck marriage.

Dr. Jim Conway, who has been working in marriage and counseling for over 40 years, did a survey of 186 couples who had good marriages and came to this conclusion: I read, "We don't care what the divorce stats show or what anybody else is doing, we are going to make this marriage work." (A strong level of commitment.)

Dr. Kensy, who is very well known in studying 6,000 marriages and 3,000 divorces said, and I read again: "There may be nothing more important in a marriage than a determination that it shall persist. With such determination individuals force themselves to adjust and to accept situations which would seem sufficient grounds for breakup if continuation of the marriage were not the primary objective."

## 2. What Causes Such Little Commitment In Our Day?

1. Public opinion is causing a breakdown. They are saying, "Get your freedom back."

a. In Deut. 6:10-15a, God warned the Hebrews of the promised land they were about to enter.

b. He warns them of the fact they would be living in a pagan culture where the public opinion would be in conflict with the training under Moses.

c. It is acceptable today to get a divorce and then be happy about it.

2. Personalized theology.

a. Many people fit the Bible into their own lifestyle.

b. Too many alter their theology rather than their lifestyle.

3. Delayed results.

a. Ecc. 8:11

b. Someone said, "God does not pay at the end of every day. But at the end, He pays."

4. Too much Christian approval.

a. Church discipline is rare in our day.

b. In the Corinthian Church there was too much boasting of their broad mindedness and their tolerance of certain sins.

c. The church needs to speak out against a person breaking their marital vow. Love them, but do not condone their sin.

### 3. What Can Be Done To Increase Commitment?

1. Remember your conflicts are not beyond a solution.

2. Work through your problems. It is God's way to work through your problems even though it is harder sometimes than walking out.

3. Surrender your rights. "Commitment" to each other is not how we demand our rights but how we surrendered them.

4. Realize that my ultimate goal in life is not to be happy, but to glorify God.

### 4. How Can I Know If I Have The Strong Commitment That Will Make My Marriage Work?

1. Our talk will include commitment.

2. We will never talk about leaving or getting a divorce.

I knew of one couple who talked divorce; both divorced and remarried. I knew of another couple who had a hard time and they talked divorce, but stopped and worked it out. They are still together doing great.

3. We make plans and take time to get away, alone, to make those serious commitments.

4. We keep close in all areas. Don't keep secrets from each other.

### CONCLUSION:

This first step is foundational. I want each one of us to pray a prayer of commitment to God and then to our companion.

These are words your companion needs to hear often!