

Digital Natives and Marriage

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is essentially the legal union between a man and a woman. It is a natural, cherished bond that comes from the natural desire of the opposite sex to each other, and with specific terms and conditions. Marriage should be the greatest love that human beings can experience from one another. This paper explores the attitudes of digital natives toward relationships and marriage. Digital natives, who are born before 1980, have a deep affinity with digital technologies, such as computers, the Internet, social media, video games, and smartphones. Their behavioral characteristics and attitudes are unique and may affect their relationships and marriage. These effects are worthy of investigation.

KEYWORDS: *digital natives, digital immigrants, marriage, family, marriage*

INTRODUCTION

Our nation is facing many challenges such as high unemployment, alcoholism, suicides, increasing single parent household, women's empowerment, gender equality, legalization of gay marriage, and the ongoing fight for racial justice. These problems have their toll on individuals and marriages.

As a society, America needs our future generations to be healthy, educated, and productive individuals. Healthy, happy marriages are critical to our society in view of the associated physical, emotional, and financial benefits for families. Government spending to treat the effects of broken families is skyrocketing. A healthy marriage results when two people work together to make their marriage work and are determined to tackle the problems that threaten it. A marriage thrives when both the husband and wife are responsible and are committed to meeting each other's most important emotional needs.

Marriage has changed over the years as the society around it has. The landscape of relationships in general and marriage in particular has shifted dramatically in recent decades in America, from

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cohabitation to same-sex marriage to interracial marriage. Americans are staying single longer. The divorce rate in America affects about half of all marriages. Remarriage is more common among men than women. Interfaith marriage is on the rise. Legalization of same-sex marriage has grown in the past decade [1].

THE DIGITAL WORLD

Technology has spanned the globe, connecting devices, and people of all nations. It has become integrated into personal, professional, social, and marital aspects of our lives.

In schools, workplaces, and homes around the world, technology is becoming increasingly embedded into daily tasks. Not only has technology provided us with new tools to live by; it is also changing many core concepts and values, especially in the areas of relationships and marriage. Digital technologies are at the heart of our economic and social life. They have transformed everything from education and healthcare to social services. The marriage between digital technologies and demographics, make the

digital world inevitable. The digital world is real, and it exists today as their way of life [2]. Digital natives live in the digital world and navigate it with their digital skills.

WHO ARE DIGITAL NATIVES AND DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS?

Today, a revolution is taking place—the shift of culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication. This culture is invariably known as digital culture, cyber culture, Internet culture, information culture, etc. The digital culture is the mixing of culture and computer [3]. It has a far-reaching impact on our lives and marriage. As far as the digital world is concerned, there are two types of people: “digital immigrants” and “digital natives.” While digital immigrants live in two cultures (the pre-digital and the digital), digital natives are only exposed to the digital culture. While those who are born after 1980 are called digital natives, those born prior to 1980 are digital immigrants. While digital natives are assumed to be inherently technology-savvy, digital immigrants often have some difficulty with information technology [4]. Figure 1 shows examples of digital natives and digital immigrants [5].

Because this generation is so well connected, their inspiration and views are drawn from regions across the globe. More time is spent on smartphones or watching TV, and less time is spent cultivating meaningful social relationships.

Not everyone agrees with the idea of the digital native or the digital native evangelists. Some argue that digital native and digital immigrant are myths and labels that oversimplify the classification scheme. All kids are different and not all kids like the same things. Everyone has their own personality and affinity to technology. Not all digital natives are created equal.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGITAL NATIVES

The terms “digital native” and “digital immigrant” were coined and popularized by education consultant Marc Prensky in his 2001 article entitled *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* [6]. He claimed that Digital Natives have spent their entire lives surrounded by computers, social media, videogames, digital music players, videocams, cell phones, and all other toys and tools of the digital age. The concepts became popular among educators and parents, whose children fell within Prensky's definition of a digital native (children born after 1980). The characteristics of digital natives include [7]:

1. They feel familiar with digital devices and have digital skills.

2. They crave interactivity and function best when networked.
3. They are always attached to a mobile phone or other devices.
4. Online information and technologies are second nature to natives.
5. They depend on technological tools for all kinds of daily issues, such as socializing, learning, studying, shopping, getting information, having fun, etc.
6. They are able to multitask or focus on a single medium when needed.
7. Multitasking makes it difficult for them to concentrate for a long time on one activity.
8. They possess a short attention span and have an inability to tolerate a slow-paced environment.
9. They are quick in their actions and decision-making and want immediate results.
10. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards.
11. They question the institution of marriage.
12. They generally take a longer time to tie the knot in marriage and resist being parents.

These characteristics help in relating to the digital natives and determining their attitudes to marriage. Some of them are illustrated in Figure 2 [8]. They are common behaviors and preferences of digital natives around the world.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

Since there are different kinds of marriage and it is hardly possible to cover all of them here, we focus on Christian marriage. Although the US Supreme Court has legalized gay marriages nationwide, 567 federally recognized tribes in the US have outright bans on gay marriage. These communities do not recognize same-sex marriages and have a law that prohibits unmarried couples from living together [9].

Marriage is essentially the legal union between a man and a woman. Marriages are based on promises when the couples say their vows. When you got married you vowed to “love, honor and cherish” your spouse “for better or for worse”, “in sickness and in health”, “in poverty and in wealth”, “forsaking all others” till death do you part. Marriage vows are exchanged before family, friends, and God. In such a covenant, both parties agree to uphold the terms of the agreement, regardless of the actions of the other. “Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mark 10:9).

Marriage is often difficult. It is not the bed of roses most of us were expecting. All marriages face problems. Couples must work together in solving the problems and saving their marriage. Each incident, each lesson, each challenge is designed to bring to our awareness that we can do nothing without God's help. God has made adequate provision so that we enjoy a happy, successful marriage. He wants a family to be a place of love and a taste of heaven on earth. But that comes with a price.

Christians generally believe that marriage is a beautiful symbol of God's love for his bride, the church. Getting married is a public demonstration of love and lifelong commitment between two people. All marriages endure difficult moments but Christians believe that marriages are for life. There are some necessary ingredients for a healthy marriage. These ingredients may be summarized by the following seven commandments of Christian marriage [10]:

1. Thou shalt serve one another.
2. Thou shalt love unconditionally.
3. Thou shalt respect one another.
4. Thou shalt put no other earthly relationships before this one.
5. Thou shalt commit beyond feelings.
6. Thou shalt consider the other person's interest ahead of thine own.
7. Thou shalt complete one another.

As mentioned earlier, we have only considered Christian marriage which is prevalent in the US. In the Indian communities, for example, living with someone before marriage is still regarded as a taboo. Arranged marriages are considered better than love marriages. A typical example of arranged marriage is shown in Figure 3 [11]. Few people opt for love marriage in India due to a number of reasons such as religious disputes, cultural differences, and non-agreement of families. Arranged marriages provide equal stature, financial stability, and cultural identity. The only downside is that partners do not know each other or love each other before the marriage.

MARRIAGE AND DIGITAL NATIVES

Our culture loves to give labels for everything. The baby boomers are called Generation X, the millennials are known as Generation Y, while the digital natives are known as Generation Z. The label attached to everyone born before 1980 is the digital native. Digital natives refer to our youths who grew up in a world dominated by television and Internet because they were born within the advent of the Internet. They have had an increased exposure to technology, which has changed the way they interact and respond to digital devices. The digital natives have emerged as a

population increasingly worthy of attention due to their peculiar characteristics and culture. They are less fazed than previous generations by differences in race, sexual orientation or religion.

It is needless to say that technology has a profound impact on individuals, especially digital natives, and modern marriages. Socioeconomic factors play a decisive role in how and how much people use technology. Those with higher incomes tend to use technology and the Internet more often than those in middle and lower income categories. Many digital natives relate to life through mobile phones and other digital devices, causing a range of social and economic problems for themselves and society. They are connected to these devices but disconnected from life. A lot of digital natives or generation Z, do not wish to marry and several of them do not want children. Financial insecurity may be one reason for such decisions. Some of them grew up in a risk society where they saw a high divorce rate in their parents. As a result, they are sort of pulling away from marriage and trying new things such as remaining perpetually single and cohabitation. Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) and dating apps provide a plethora of choices for lifestyles. The digital natives are quickly rendering old habits a distant memory, creating the greatest generation gap in history. They no longer adhere to traditional norms of marriage, parenting, buying a home and car, working in one place, detaching from religion, or being a member of a political party. They have become "global citizens" with far-flung friends or romantic partners they may never have met, as in arranged marriage [12]. We need to teach the value of marriage.

Young adults often put marriage behind completing their education and being financially stable. Many of them are less sure marriage is essential and most of them avoid marriage. Delaying marriage and cohabitation are some of the reasons some young people may end up not marrying at all. Some are less happy and are more likely to fall into substance abuse when they are not married.

There is a kind of ignorance out there about how much marriage matters in people's lives. Is marriage worth it? The benefits of marriage include [13]:

- Marriage is good for the couple; it is also provides the optimal conditions for bearing and raising children.
- On average, husbands and wives are healthier, happier, and enjoy longer lives than those who are not married.

- Being married changes people's lifestyles and habits in ways that are personally and socially beneficial.
- Governments, companies, and schools assume that marriage (nuclear family) is the primary unit of care.
- Society is better off when more people are married.
- Marital status is a better predictor of satisfaction than employment.
- Marital quality is a better predictor of your happiness in life than your job satisfaction.“
- Married couples are more likely to avoid trouble with the legal system and incarceration.
- Marriage makes financial sense. Married couples build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples.
- There are many emotional benefits to being married.

Marriage is worth it. Research and data support it. Marriage can be a blessing if you are willing to pay the price. Getting married for the wrong reasons can have dire consequences.

Monogamous relationships are looked at by digital natives in terms of what you lose. Monogamy is considered by some as a restriction on personal freedoms, including the freedom to do what you want, when you want, and how they want. Many digital natives would prefer living in an online sexual wonderland to following the traditional, long-term monogamous relationships favored by their parents. They eventually find that the pleasurable virtual sex is fleeting and unfulfilling and they crave for longer-term, more intimate emotional connections.

ATTITUDES OF DIGITAL NATIVES TO MARRIAGE

As mentioned before, the term digital natives was popularized by Prensky as a way of defining someone who has grown up immersed in digital technology and is technologically adept and engaged. This section examines the attitudes of digital natives toward marriage and about becoming parents. Because human beings are social creatures, people have a fundamental desire to belong to a form of society and gain satisfaction from positive social interactions with others. Compared with previous generations, fewer young adults today are married, and the age of first marriage has risen. Living together (or cohabitation) is becoming common. Many young adults are sexually active, causing unintended pregnancies to increase. The majority of

births to 20- to 24- year-olds currently occur outside wedlock. Current relationship status among all young adults aged 20-24 in the US is depicted in Figure 4 [14].

Marriage is an integral foundation of a society that binds people together. In this community of persons, two partners stay together and accept each other [15]. Parents contribute to their children's media use in the early years (0-4). They have a profound influence on the child's acquisition of vocabulary than raw "exposure" to television. They influence the development and behavior of the digital natives in the distinct developmental stages in their ability to use digital devices. Relationships have become shallow and unsatisfying as a result of society's immersion in digital society. The attitudes of digital natives toward relationships and marriage are exhibited in the following ways:

1. Singleness:

Digital natives have personal goals, priorities, values, and roles that differ greatly from previous generations. Some pursue their personal values like politics, education, and religion. They have been shaped by a storm of factors: high divorce rates among their parents, the mortgage crisis, high college debt, and working at home. As a consequence of this storm, digital natives prefer to remain single. Digital natives have been abstaining from marriage, the core institution of society. Just 26% of this generation is married. Digital natives are experiencing marriage as an option instead of a necessity. Led by their desire to focus on their careers, forming a substantial financial foundation upon which to create a family, and even questioning the meaning of marriage itself, most digital natives delay marriage or even remain single indefinitely. A shift in women's role in society is also contributing to putting off marriage for a while, as women pursue college education and careers. They view marriage as a dispensable luxury rather than an indispensable necessity. Whatever the reason for holding off on marriage, these trends show how the digital nations are redefining marriage [16].

2. Dating:

When a technology encourages personal choice and exclusion of others, our flesh will want to capitalize upon that value. Digital natives have always been curious about sex, and when they have questions, the Internet is usually their first stop. They also turn to the Internet for information about relationships, sexual health, and dating. Social media has really transformed the way that dating takes place. There are several dating websites such as eharmony, Zoosk, christian mingle, dating.com, black people meet, etc.

A lot of American teens have met a romantic partner through online dating. These teens have managed to navigate the digital dating scene and find themselves in a relationship.

3. Cohabitation:

Most digital natives are getting married later as they have shown skepticism towards marriage. They think lifelong cohabitation may be a more convenient and realistic option than the binding legal and economic ties of marriage. Cohabitation or live-in relationship is the new and on-going trend among the youths. Cohabitation gives digital natives the freedom to live with their partners without any pressure of getting married. It allows them to enjoy the benefits of a conjugal life without the restrictions posed by the institution of marriage. It helps the couple to know each other better by living together before deciding to get married. In a live-in relationship, one can leave or stay whenever he or she feels things are not working out. Although cohabitation is socially accepted in US, it has its pros and cons and is frowned upon in some cultures. For example, in the Indian society, living with as a couple before marriage is treated as a taboo. If a young women engages in a sexual relationship with a man before her marriage, she loses virginity and she is regarded as impure or unholy. This is why a live-in relationship is highly criticized and not acceptable in the society [17].

4. Marriage:

Marriage is about sharing a life. People of similar beliefs, cultures, and traditions come closer in marriage. This societal institution is not only the bonding between two mature individuals but also their families. Digital natives are marrying at low rates and exhibit high levels of political and religious disaffiliation. Digital natives register the lowest levels of social trust in generations. Most of them go digital with your wedding invitations. From save-the-dates, a personalized invitation cards, and bachelorette invites to engagement and wedding e-vites, some website stocks a massive selection of wedding items a couple may want. Conflict between worker and family roles is exacerbated by additional stressors, such as technological tethering.

5. Gay Marriage/Same-sex Marriage:

One can notice the eroticism of intense same-sex friendships and many bodily contacts, even between gay women (or men) who were not lovers: kisses, caresses, embraces, pressing heads against bosoms, lying and sleeping in each other's arms. Some states in the US do not recognize same-sex marriages. Some are of the opinion that allowing same-sex marriage (or homosexual marriage) will make our society fairer

and more inclusive. Human happiness and social progress depend on such freedom. In the Irish community, for example, women were subject to an overt gender regime of regulation, lesbians, while gay men were subject to particular legal and moral sanction. Lesbians and gay men were policed at every turn. Figure 5 shows two lesbians in Belfast [18].

6. Parenting:

We have witnessed a massive use of technology at homes. Technology has dramatically changed our homes and social lives. It is not only becoming omnipresent for many families, it is also increasingly invisible. There is an increase in Internet access at homes. Children use technology a lot to text, chat, play games, Facebook, and YouTube. Young adults are the most digitally connected members of our society. They use technology to maintain relationships, communicate, entertain, seek information, and social network. Digital natives may be using technology in ways that transform aspects of parenting. Parents influence, teach, and guide the media use of their children. They struggle with setting rules (such as how long can children be online, which sites they can or cannot visit) and boundaries for their children's use of technology. Parenting styles depend on social class, gender, and ethnicity. Effective parenting requires a balance between parental authority and children's autonomy. Children also intentionally and unintentionally influence the media adoption, media use, and learning of their parents. Since children often learn how to use digital technologies before their parents do, they end up teaching their parents how to use digital technologies, such as computers, mobile phones, and the Internet [19-21].

7. Divorce:

The majority of Americans highly value a successful, happy, and satisfying marriage. Although many marriages fail, they do not all fail for the same reason. Marital breakup is common among digital natives, like any other segment of the society. The divorce rate in America affects about half of all marriages. Divorce could induce drastic physical, mental, and behavioral changes on couples. It could arouse feelings of loss, loneliness, frustration, and hurt as well as lower self-esteem, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. Conventional wisdom says that if your marriage is not going well, the best thing to do is nothing. Just wait, it will get better. This is not always good advice. Most couples divorce without knowing that their marriage problems can be solved. It is wise to figure what causes your marriage to be unhappy and do something about them to prevent divorce. People's reactions after breakups are diverse. People

were more likely to be involved with either actively seeking out or avoiding ex-partners during the termination process of their romantic relationship. Some people also tend to surveil their ex-partners on social media to alleviate the amount of emotional distress and reduce the uncertainty [22-24].

WHAT MAKES A MARRIAGE WORK

Digital couples will come to regret one day if they are not well prepared for marriage. They need to know in advance what works and what does not work in a marriage. We will consider what makes a marriage work in this section and what destroys a marriage in the next section.

To everything in life, there is a secret or principle that must be learned to know how that thing works. God reveals secrets to His people (Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 2:22,28,30; Amos 3:7). As the Author of life and the Institutor of marriage, He reveals the secrets of a happy, successful marriage. These are truths you can count on while building the marriage of your dream. They are wise and practical; they work. A marriage may be considered successful when the couple live together for the rest of their lives. In this section, we will briefly cover seven principles that will make your marriage work and be successful [25].

1. Christ-centered Home:

The hierarchy in a marriage is to place God first, the husband second as head of the household, and the wife subservient to the husband. The wife is regarded as an equal helpmate and partner with her husband. As shown in Figure 6, marriage is a triangular affair— God bringing together a man and woman [25]. Life without God is futile; so is a marriage not centered on Christ. A Christian couple has the best possibilities for a happy, successful marriage because their marriage has a third person—Jesus Christ. To have a happy and successful marriage, a couple must have a Christ-centered home. A family that is committed to Jesus Christ enjoys an advantage over the family with no spiritual basis. To have a family committed to Christ involves three things:

Establishing a divine order: The order in a marriage is to place God first, the husband second as head of the household, and the wife subservient to the husband.

Living according to God's will: For your marriage to be successful, you must let the doctrines of Christ, not traditions of men, prevail in all your decisions.

Making Christ the focus. If Christ is the focus of your life and marriage, we show it by our surrender to His lordship and commitment to His body.

2. Prayer:

They say the family that prays together stays together. This belief has passed the test of time. Several

marriages have been completely transformed by initiating a practice of regular prayer. If a husband and wife read the Bible and pray together, not only will they stay together, they will communicate more effectively with each other and enrich their marital relationship. Prayer is the divine rule for living. A prayerless Christian is a weak believer because prayerlessness is the absence of the work of the Holy Spirit in one. Prayerlessness may manifest itself in our routine life or even in our spiritual service. Prayerlessness is disobedience to God. To fail to pray is to disobey the Lord's command that we watch and pray (Matthew 26:41). Prayer is part and parcel of Christian living. Just as man needs air to survive, a family needs prayer to exist spiritually. Prayer is the key to success in both your spiritual and secular life. It is the key to a happy, successful marriage.

3. Vigilance:

Vigilance is paying attention to what is going on around you. Whether you know it or not, every believer is involved in a global war. We are fighting spiritual warfare with unseen forces. Behind international conflict, social conflict, personal conflict, and family conflict lurks the master agitator—Satan. Peter said, "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour (1 Peter 5:8). In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul warned that we should not be ignorant of the devices of Satan lest he gains advantage over us. We must seek to know what the Scripture teaches about the enemy's person, the enemy's methods of operation, and how to overcome the enemy. You can hardly win a battle when you do not understand your adversary, his philosophy, his plans, his programs, his devices, his strategies, and his methods of operation. In order to gain advantage over Satan, we must be aware of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Satan's war against you and your marriage can be summed up in the phrase wiles (or methods) of the devil (Ephesians 6:11). Satan's methods of operation include: deception, temptation, perversion, imitation, opposition to God's will, and fear [26]. Remember, Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). Most of the conflicts between you and your spouse are instigated by the enemy. The devil's agenda is to steal, kill, or destroy your life and your marriage (John 10:10).

4. Communication:

Through extensive studies, it has been found that the happiest couples are the ones who talk most with each other. Communication is therefore not a dispensable luxury in a successful marriage; it is an indispensable necessity. It is the lifeblood of strong relationships. Communication involves transmitting and receiving

signals or talking and hearing. A couple cannot really know each other unless they talk and confide in each other. Communication is an act of the will. We must understand the mechanism of talking before we can be effective communicators. Honest or open talk is perhaps the best medicine for a shaky marriage, because it helps husband and wife understand what each other is feeling.

Listening is more than hearing. Few people really take the time to listen to others. True listening requires discipline and full concentration. Listening is not our natural preference. You must be willing to give and take, transmit and receive, talk and listen. Listening to a person makes him/her feel loved, respected, and esteemed. In order to communicate effectively, we must overcome certain communication barriers or killers. These include anger, selfishness, silence, wrong words, and wrong timing.

Communication is a learned behavior. Here are some of actions you can take to enhance your ability to communicate and enjoy a happy marriage: tame your tongue, spend more time together, and learn to accommodate. The goal of communication is to bring husband and wife to a point of agreement on an issue. Effective communication is a marriage booster. Married partners increase their understanding of each other through effective communication. The happiest couples are those who talk the most with each other.

5. Understanding:

Understanding is an important aspect of marriage. In a husband-wife relationship, it is important that we understand how and why men and women reason and behave the way they do, what they like or dislike. To have a happy, successful marriage, you need understanding. You need to understand the differences in people, understand your roles as a husband, understand your roles as a wife, understand your husband's needs, and understand your wife's needs. Many times women get hurt unnecessarily because they do not understand their men. If the man's needs go unmet, he becomes frustrated and unfulfilled. There are basically four things your husband needs: significance, sexual fulfillment, an attractive wife, and domestic support. Understanding and meeting your wife's needs is a golden key to a happy, successful marriage. Your wife's basic needs include six things: love and affection, conversation, financial security, honesty, companionship, and family commitment. Women need men and men need women. Learn to stay more at home and enjoy wifely companionship. If you do, your wife will end up being your best friend—the goal of a happy, successful marriage.

6. Love and Appreciation:

Love is a basic need of a man or woman. It is the key that guarantees a happy, successful marriage. Love is the trademark of Christianity. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35). The apostle Paul gives us the characteristics of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8:

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

Love and appreciation are twins; they go hand in hand. Love is at the sending or transmitting end, while appreciation is at the receiving end. If a wife does not express her appreciation of her husband's acts of love, she will have a dissatisfied mate. To show appreciation involves having a grateful attitude and giving compliments. Like love, appreciation must be communicated. Every human being will respond to love. As your spouse begins to sense your love and appreciation, he/she will respond with love and appreciation. Because of the principle of reciprocity, the principle of reaping what you sow, loving will bring you love.

7. Financial Stewardship:

Money ranks high on every family counselor's list of problem areas in marriage. Family friction and frustration are caused directly or indirectly by money. The husband and wife whose finances are a fiasco are a poor testimony to the wisdom and guidance of God. There are proper and improper ways of using money. We are stewards of all God has entrusted to our care—talent, treasure, and time. God is the owner; each of us is a steward or manager. "It is [essentially] required of stewards that a man should be found faithful—proving himself worthy of trust" (1 Corinthians 4:2, AB). These principles will help our financial stewardship: giving God and government their parts first, laying aside for savings, staying out of debts, budgeting and keeping records, investing wisely, and setting goals, plans, and priorities. The parable of the pounds as taught by Jesus in Luke 19:11-27 is a graphic illustration that God wants us to profit with the resources He has entrusted to our care. The principle of the parable is that hoarding causes loss, while investing brings profit. God has given us three things to invest: time, talent, and treasure. The Bible teaches that we should have long-term investments. Without goals and priorities, we waste life. It is not enough to have goals and plans; we must have priorities. A good plan must include a will. If

you are found a faithful steward in whatever God has entrusted to your care, He will entrust more.

WHAT DESTROYS A MARRIAGE

To stay happily married is getting harder and harder these days. All marriages face problems, such as selfishness, lack of affection, adultery, irresponsibility, worldliness, materialism, etc. These common problems can be avoided, fixed or resolved. They are regarded as enemies of your marriage. These problems do not happen overnight; they creep up on your marriage gradually. In the previous section, we shared seven secrets or principles that will make your marriage work, be happy, and be successful. In this section, we are sharing what will not make your marriage thrive. We have identified seven enemies of your marriage. These are forces working against the success of your marriage. The section helps you identify problem areas of your marriage and how you can overcome them. Couples must work together in solving their problems and saving their marriage. The following seven problems are common in a marriage [27]:

1. Selfishness:

The number one enemy of your marriage is selfishness. As Oscar Wilde said, "Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live." In our society, selfishness reigns. This should not surprise us because the Bible says that in the last days men and women will be "lovers of themselves" (2 Timothy 3:2). There are forces in our culture today that contribute and encourage selfish behaviors. These include pornography, two-career families, and cohabitation. Marriage is not designed for selfish individuals. Selfishness is doing things your own way or insisting on your rights. A selfish person is mainly concerned for his or her own personal welfare without taking into consideration the welfare of others. Selfishness in marriage demonstrates itself in many ways: not praying together, having separate bank accounts, pursuing separate goals, not agreeing on the number of children to have, and living as if the other partner does not exist. Selfishness threatens oneness in marriage. Love is the way to overcome selfishness. Selfishness is insisting on your rights, while love does not insist on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:5). Selfishness is all about getting, while love is all about giving. Like Paul said, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). Love is the antidote of selfishness and it does not insist on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:4).

2. Wordliness and Materialism:

The Christian marriage stands in great danger from the forces of worldliness and materialism. Worldliness is a terrible problem for mankind and for marriage in particular. Worldliness manifests itself in our lives in the following ways: worldly mindset, worldly wisdom, friendship with the world, and Satan's influence. Worldliness has some negative effects on your marriage and your soul. These include loving the world, accumulating materials unnecessarily, and hostility toward marriage. According to 1 John 2:15-17, worldliness is the lust of the flesh (sensuality), worldliness is the lust of the eyes (materialism), and worldliness is the pride of life (egotism). To escape worldliness, we must apply God's way of escape. We must develop a strong faith, focus on things above, share things with others, and be watchful. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Husbands and wives must avoid worldliness in all its forms at all costs.

Materialism is one the greatest enemies of marriages, especially in America. Today, there is an endless lists of things that people want: the latest smart phones, luxury cars, designer shoes, Rolex, etc. Materialism may be defined as a worldview or philosophical system which regards matter as the only reality in the world. No religion is against material success gained the right way. Religion only opposes the wrong way we can use it. For example, if you buy something that you use only once or twice a year, you can do without it. Here are three suggestions to combat materialism. First, you should be grateful for the circumstances that brought your wealth and focus on the community that surrounds you. Second, marital relationships usually fair better when spouses share common goals, priorities, and values. Simplify your life and live a minimalist lifestyle. Third, as believers, we are only a trustee of what God has given us. Materialism is attaching an unhealthy level of importance to worldly possessions. Do all you can to prevent worldliness and materialism from killing your marriage.

3. Infidelity:

Infidelity is also known as cheating, adultery, unfaithfulness, or betrayal. It is breaking a promise to remain faithful to a sexual partner. Infidelity is having sexual involvement with someone other than your spouse. God demands that we are faithful to our spouse and He will judge those who commit adultery (Hebrews 13:4). The person who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he/she destroys himself or herself (Proverbs 6:32,34). If left unchecked, infidelity can cause significant harm to a marriage or even break it. Although both women and men commit fidelity, men

appear to be more prone to affairs. Today, infidelity is regarded as the most important reason for divorces. According to Jesus, sexual immorality is the only ground for divorce (Matthew 5:32). Therefore, we should see infidelity as an enemy of marriage. Infidelity is caused mainly by a number of factors, including lack of satisfaction, workplace temptation, seeking pleasure, pornography, Internet, and cybersex. Men are more likely to engage in extramarital sex if they are unsatisfied sexually in their marriage, while women are more likely to engage in extramarital sex if they are unsatisfied emotionally. After the unfaithful partner is found out, feelings of shame, guilt, despair, betrayal, and confusion are evident. The betrayed partner feels disappointed and grieves. Even a single infidelity event can lead to untold harm and conflict. Infidelity is a violation of a couple's sexual exclusivity expectations. This violation results in feelings of rage, betrayal, jealousy, and rivalry (Proverbs 6:32,34). "Sleeping with another man's wife will cost you your life" (Proverbs 6:26). While adultery is cheating on your spouse, it is also disobeying and sinning against God. Since infidelity is a sin against God and your partner, you need to confess it and ask for their forgiveness. The infidel or unfaithful person should seek forgiveness of the betrayed spouse. It is expedient to get professional help or to talk to friends or relatives who will be less judgmental.

4. Irresponsibility:

Marriage brings financial, legal, social, and spiritual benefits as well as duties and responsibilities. A spouse's irresponsible behavior is a common cause of marital break ups. For a marriage to thrive, you need the ingredients of love, freedom, and responsibility. When two partners are free to disagree, they are free to love. When they are not free, they live in fear, and love dies: "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). The law of responsibility in marriage states that: A husband and wife are accountable to each other (Galatians 6:2,5). An irresponsible husband will neglect his responsibility to love his wife. An irresponsible wife will not submit to her husband and take proper care of her children. Unless the husband and wife take responsibility and change their counterproductive behaviors, they will continue in a vicious cycle. Husband and wife must work together as a team, coordinate and plan their domestic duties. In order for there to be good understanding and unity, a couple should be financially accountable to each other. It is crucial that the couple have a joint financial goal. It is better that you do what works for your marriage and split your financial responsibilities accordingly. Couples should be willing to take spiritual responsibility for their marriage and do what

is necessary to sustain it. A marriage thrives when husband and wife are responsible. So take responsibility for your own actions and stop blaming others.

5. Mixed Faith:

The three major influences on our lives are culture, religion, and education. Differences in faith between spouses can lead to unnecessary conflicts. Therefore, mixed faith is a major enemy of marriages because it always causes social and marital frictions. Interfaith (or mixed-faith) marriage refers to marriage between partners professing different religions. This kind of marriage was uncommon until the modern age. Today, many people marry across religious lines. Having the same religious faith is crucial for a successful marriage. If you have fundamentally different spiritual beliefs, this usually presents an additional challenge in your relationship for an entire lifetime. Mixed-faith unions are forbidden in Islam and Judaism. Most Christian denominations forbid interfaith marriage based on 2 Corinthians 6:14 and Deuteronomy 7:3. The apostle Paul commands that Christians must "not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Interfaith couples often do not know where to turn to get their problems solved. Your two-religion household can be effective and become a blended family if proper care is taken. Cherish and enjoy your differences. If your partner wants to convert and change their faith, let it come from their personal decision. Do not force, nag, or give ultimatums. If you are in an interfaith marriage, your marriage cannot only survive a faith crisis, but it can thrive as a deeply satisfying friendship.

6. Nagging and Criticism:

Nagging and criticism are enemies of marriage. To nag is to bug or make a big deal out of doing something small. When you complain about or say something over and over again, then it becomes nagging. Nagging in a marriage is a common problem. Nagging is endless scolding, complaining, and faultfinding. It is not conducive to good relationships. It is better to sit on a roof and live in a desert than live with a nagging wife (Proverbs 21:9,19). It is poison to a marriage. It is one of the most common relationship complaints couples express. It is never an effective way to communicate your needs or requests. Although both men and women nag, nagging is mostly done by women. Satan may use nagging and criticism to do some havoc in your marriage. We all hate nagging. Unfortunately, those who nag may not realize that they are nagging. The nagger should understand that there are dangerous consequences for his or her actions. You cannot change someone else, but you can only change

yourself. If after you have tried everything and you cannot fix the problem, you may want to seek outside help. Learn to overlook little, inconsequential things. Don't major on minors.

7. Overcommitment:

Our permissive society allows open marriage, cohabitation, and easy divorce. The Christian life is a life of commitment. Commitment is what the marriage vows are all about. Wedding is an action, while marriage is a process. In a marriage, commitment is what maintains the husband-wife relationship, even when the fires of love have burned low. Experts have cited overcommitment as one of the top relationship killers. Overcommitted individuals are doing way too much, trying to handle too many things at once. You may be a superman or a high-achieving woman, you are probably not be a good material for marriage. Overcommitment is an enemy of your marriage. Causes of overcommitment include overpromising, overextending, and overdoing. Overcommitment is not good for your marriage. It can lead to loss of credibility/integrity, stress, health-related problems, and a bad marriage. To avoid overcommitment, we must apply wisdom on how we spend our precious time and prioritize our commitments. You need to spend more time with God, your partner, and kids. Learn to say no and turn down new opportunities to serve if they would stretch you too thin. Learn to rest more.

CONCLUSION

Marriage is an integral foundation of a society that binds people together. It has changed over the years as the society around it has. The family is also the smallest social unit and a community of persons, where love, affection, appreciation, and commitment are demonstrated in a genuine, biblical way.

The relationship people have with technology is changing, and new social behaviors are appearing. Digital natives represent the first generation to grow up with this new technology. They are "born digital." Technology has not only become a powerful tool for daily use, but has had a great impact on marriage, especially among digital natives [28].

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Figure 1 Examples of digital natives [5].

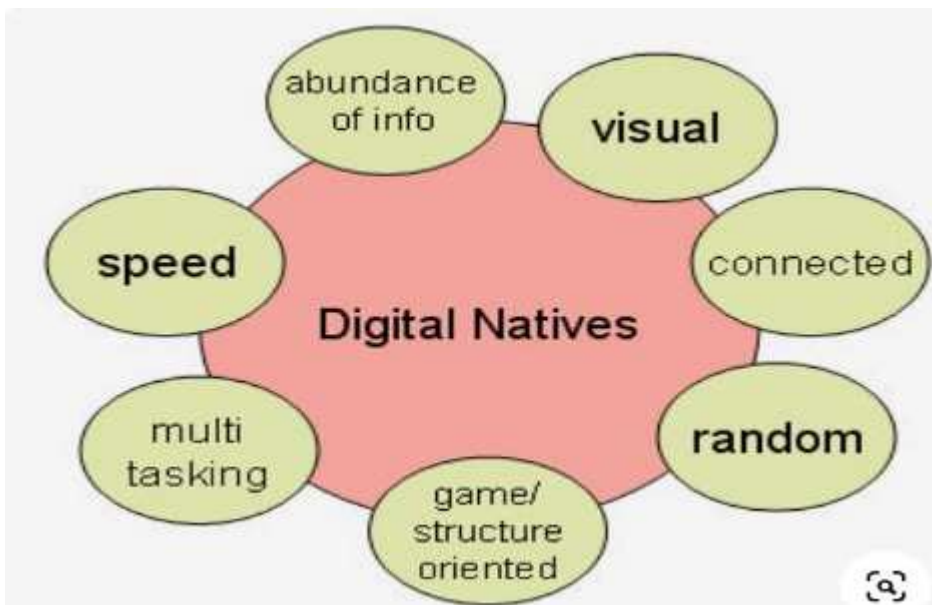


Figure 2 Some characteristics of digital natives [8].



Figure 3 A typical example of arranged marriage [11].

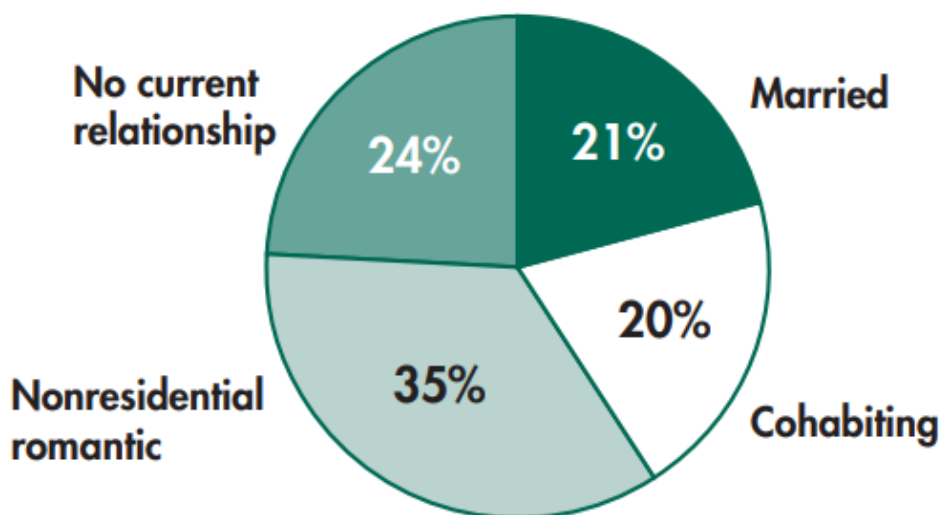


Figure 4 Current relationship status among all young adults aged 20-24 [14].



Figure 5 Two lesbians in Belfast [18]

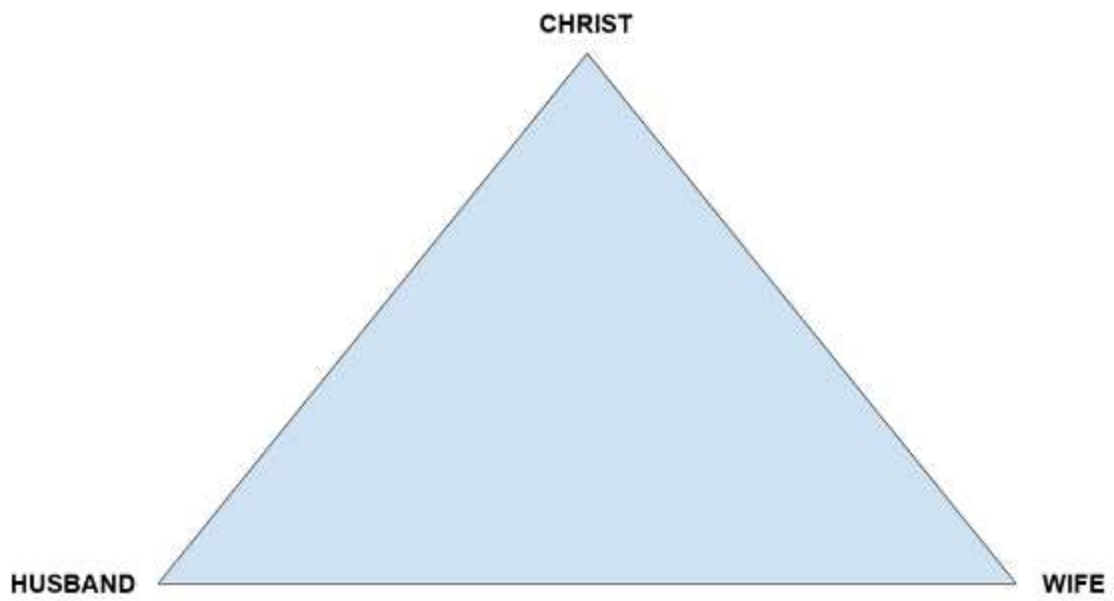


Figure 6 Marriage is a triangular affair [25].