

Are Millennials Terrified of Marriage?

The 2020 census is underway, and I suspect one of the most interesting findings will be related to Millennials and marriage. If the trends bear out, we will soon know precisely how much the idea of marriage has declined among the generation of young adults born in the 1980s and early 1990s. These men and women are now in their 30s. Previous generations of adults would have prioritized marriage by this age, but not today.

For instance, compared to the generations that preceded them, Millennials are more likely to live together before marriage. They are also marrying later in life. The average marriage age has inched upward for years. In 1960, men and women got married in their early 20s. Now that age is much closer to 30.

Multiple factors drive these statistics, from changing gender dynamics to economic trends. But one of the most obvious is staring us in the face: A high percentage of Millennials are children of divorce. This taught them to be suspicious of marriage as an institution. They've experienced the pain of their parents' failures, and that makes them anxious about marriage.

In fact, all of us know someone whose marriage has ended. Right now, the lifelong probability that a marriage ends in divorce is just shy of 50%.

Imagine if this frequency of failure didn't apply to relationships, but to flights of commercial airlines. What if nearly half of all commercial flights ended in catastrophe? What if the news was filled with stories about air disasters, passenger deaths and horrific injuries?

We'd all know someone who perished in an airline crash—and

none of us would want to fly. The idea that 50% of planes might crash would certainly extinguish our enthusiasm, even for a potentially wonderful vacation to paradise.

This is the reality with young people and marriage. People like me can talk all we want about how wonderful marriage is, but the bad news is staring them in the face. No wonder they are cynical about their own chances of success!

That's a shame, because God didn't create marriages to fail. He intended marriage to be beneficial for men and women—but only when governed by His guidelines. I call these the Four Laws of Love. Honoring these laws is the solution to the marriage problem in today's society. Even young adults who have soured on marriage can find fulfillment in this relationship that's so central to our civilization.

The Four Laws of Love are contained in a short passage of scripture. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:24-25, NKJV).

These are the first words God spoke concerning marriage. When God opened my mind to the truth in this passage, it transformed my own marriage. I've spent decades teaching these truths all over the world. Here are the Four Laws of Love:

The Law of Priority ("a man shall leave his father and mother"): The special commitment between a man and a woman is more important than any other relationship. Before marriage, the highest position of commitment and devotion in a person's life is to their parents. Of course, this changes upon marriage.

God designed marriage to be the most important human relationship in our lives, second only in priority to our relationship with Him. If we prioritize any other human relationship above the one with our spouse, our marriage will

fail.

The Law of Pursuit (“and be joined to his wife”): Several years into my own marriage, my wife and I both told each other we had fallen out of love. We thought our marriage was a mistake. I hear this from couples all the time. Although our marriage survived, this feeling is common among couples seeking a divorce.

We felt this way because we had stopped working at our marriage. We had been coasting on our early romantic feelings and thought those would last forever. What a huge misconception! A healthy marriage can’t just be fueled by emotions. It has to be based on commitment—and commitment takes work. Day in and day out, a husband and wife must pursue each other.

The Law of Partnership (“they shall become one flesh”): This phrase is an obvious reference to sexual union, but partnership in marriage exists inside and outside the bedroom. It is critical to establishing trust and intimacy. Follow this law and you’ll know unity in marriage. Break this law and the damage can be severe.

More than sex, partnership in marriage means merging everything owned by and associated with two persons into a unified whole. If one spouse refuses to surrender something—from their body to their finances to their future plans—that spouse is breaking the law of partnership and violating the rights of the other spouse.

The Law of Purity (“they were both naked ... and were not ashamed”): Before sin entered the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve experienced complete nakedness with each other. This was obviously physical, but this intimacy was also mental, emotional and spiritual in nature. They revealed everything about themselves to the other. This is the marriage ideal.

Of course, sin corrupted this ideal—it destroyed their

intimacy—and God prepared artificial coverings for Adam and Eve. Sin still does this to marriages today. It takes many forms, including selfishness, unforgiveness and a lustful attachment to pornography. The devil brought sin to the Garden of Eden and is still trying to destroy the institution of marriage. Intimacy only thrives in an atmosphere of purity.

I can't promise that marriage will always be easy. But I've seen couples discover a deeper, healthier marriage relationship by following God's Four Laws of Love. These laws saved my marriage, too.

Wherever you are in your journey—and regardless of your age or generation—I hope you'll apply these guidelines to your own relationship. I still believe in the institution of marriage. You can have a 100% chance of success in marriage if you do it God's way. {eoa}

This is an excerpt from The Four Laws of Love: Guaranteed Success for Every Married Couple by Jimmy Evans. He shares that God created love and marriage, and He created laws to guide and guard them. When God's laws are honored, marriage is the safest relationship on the earth. Available now at .

Jimmy Evans is the founder and CEO of MarriageToday, a ministry and nationally syndicated television program devoted to helping couples thrive in strong and fulfilling marriages and families. He is senior pastor of Gateway Church, one of the largest churches in the nation. He and his wife Karen have been married for 47 years and have two married children and five grandchildren.