

And they Lived Happily Ever After...

BY LORI JACKSON
ENGLISH 252

Despite the current focus on personal freedom, there is no substitute for the joy and satisfaction of interdependent living. When a couple moves from being independent [me] to interdependent [we], they work together rather than individually, there is growth and development that bonds and unites them in profound ways (Covey 20, 182). Numerous social scientists confirm that marriage has a great impact to the overall well-being of individuals. "In assuring happiness, a lasting marriage proves more beneficial physically, mentally, and economically than exercise pro-

While a fairytale ending seems unrealistic to many, studies show that couples who work to achieve that "type" of marriage benefit in all aspects of their life.

grams, medical treatments, therapy sessions, or financial investments" (VanDenBergh 29).

Married people take fewer risks, suffer less illness and disease, recover more quickly when they do become sick, and show lower rates of depression and psychiatric disorders; in general married people live longer experiencing a greater quality of life. (R. Coombs 100). John Gottman summarized it well when he said: "...working briefly on your marriage everyday will do more for your health and longevity than working out at a health club" (261).

In addition to a healthy life, the marital relationship also contributes to a couples mental health, financial

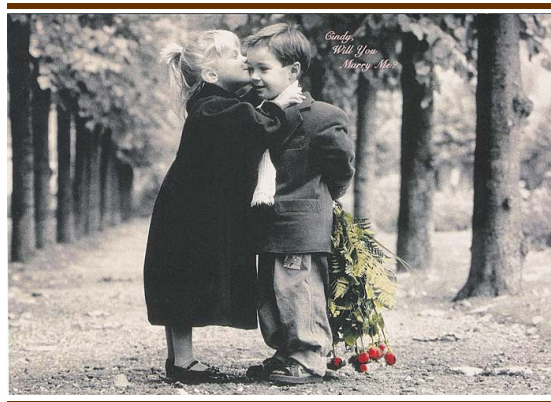
security and sexual fulfillment. Sharing a life with the same person satisfies the deep human need for emotional closeness, and creates a peaceful setting in which two souls can find safety and contentment (Seamons 133). A complete family unit offers safety and economic security that is evident in the direct correlation that research shows between poverty levels and the family structure, or lack thereof (VanDenBerghe 31). Couples who get and stay married are more likely to be stable, secure and fulfilled; they tend to be happier than those who marry and later divorce (Lucas).

A HEALTHY MARITAL ATMOSPHERE

The idea of a happy marriage is easier said than done. Good marriages just don't happen they require hard work, compromise, selfless giving and realistic expectations; this can either turn someone away in discouragement or lead to a new and deeper level of commitment and love (D. and M. Coombs 195). While studies show that people in happy marriages have a high level of satisfaction, there is no guarantee of a perfect life. Research shows that when couples work on common principles to establish a healthy marital atmosphere, success rates rise considerably (Gottman).

The attitude of couples and the way they handle pressure is far more important than what actually happens in their relationship. Misunderstandings, differences of opinion and even crises are normal in marriage, and

can help it to become strong. They are the character building blocks out of which true joy and fulfillment come (Covey 182; Hafen 12; Harper 30). When couples are best friends, they are kind and considerate, sensitive to each other's needs and always looking for ways to make the other happy. They see themselves as partners, working together to build their life. Happy couples don't hold grudges by reprocessing wrongs again and again; they understand that it is vital to repent and seek forgiveness as well as to forgive the other. Above all, healthy marriages have a common commitment to



God and each other, this type of connection creates a higher moral value and protects against infidelity, pornographic addictions and substance abuse. While each of these principles can have an overall effect on the atmosphere of the marriage, it is healthy

to learn to recognize problems and solve them together. "Most people who leave their marriages find the same problems on the other side. Many realize where their first marriage went wrong, and how they could have worked to fix it. With hindsight, many people regret not having worked things out" (Israel). Successful marriages don't expect either person to be perfect; they only require that the couple be committed to strive together toward perfection (Oaks 72-73).

THE JOURNEY

Love, companionship, and stability, with a long life of health and happiness – clearly,

this is the ideal. Not all marriages will achieve it, and not all marriages can or should be preserved. But couples that discard the ideal lose out on the overall benefits marriage offers, while contributing to the tragic consequences of divorce. Society also suffers from the deterioration of marriage in America. Marriage is an essential institution that contributes to society as a whole as it strengthens communities, benefits economies and ensures the positive effects of the family unit to the rising generation (Popenoe and Whitehead 4; VanDenBerghe 32).

America's search for happiness should be inward. Answers cannot be found by leaving when things get hard, but by looking at our own imperfections and finding ways that we can improve. This takes the focus away from the complaining and blaming that often leads to unhappiness, and the eventual disregard for marriage. With any situation that requires change, the most lasting effects occur when we work from the inside out (Chidester 101; Covey 15).

Marriage is not a final destination; it is a journey that allows us to grow together and achieve a satisfaction that is incomparable to any other worldly accomplishment. True happiness comes from success, commitment and follow-through. As Americans realize the importance of their vows and embrace the possibilities that their marriages hold, our society will become stronger and healthier because of the family.

WORKS CITED

Chidester, Richard C. "A Heart of Change." Building a Love That Lasts. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985: 99-106.

Coombs, David and Marva Coombs. "Living Successfully as an imperfect Spouse." Eternal Companions. Ed. Douglas E. Brinley and Daniel K. Judd. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995. 195-211.

Covey, Stephen R. Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families. New York: Golden Books, 1997.

Gottman, John. The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999.

Hafen, Bruce C. "Individual Liberty, Commitment, and Marriage." Building a Love That Lasts. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985: 9-15.

Harper, James M. "Let's Help this Marriage Grow!" Building a Love That Lasts. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985: 29-34.

Israel, Laurie. "Twenty-five Secrets to a Great Marriage." 10 Feb. 2010. [http://www.divorcenet.com/states/nationwide/secrets for great marriage](http://www.divorcenet.com/states/nationwide/secrets%20for%20great%20marriage)

Lucas, Richard E. "Does Happiness Change After Major Life Events?" Current Directions in Psychological Science Apr. 2007. <http://www.psychologicalscience.org>.

Oaks, Dallin H. "Divorce." Ensign May 2007: 70-73.

Popenoe, David and Whitehead, Barbara D. "The State of our Unions: Social Health of Marriage in America," The National Marriage Project. (2003): 4, 20-30. <http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject/pdfs/SOOU2003.pdf>.

Seamons, David T. "Ready or Not - Here we are." Eternal Companions. Ed. Douglas E. Brinley and Daniel K. Judd. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995. 117-135.

VanDenBerghe, Elizabeth. "Happiness, Health and Marriage." Ensign August 2001: 29-32.