

- Since the mid 1990s the divorce rate has fallen. The fall seems to be due almost entirely to fewer people divorcing in the first six years. (Although it is still expected that over 40% of marriages will end in divorce rather than “to death us do part”)
- The rate of divorce is highest amongst those aged 40 to 44.

Pray

- Pray for Christians to uphold Jesus’ teaching about marriage within society.
- Pray for marriage and for Christian organisations seeking to support it.
- Pray for children and young people nearing the end of a school year and particular for those moving on to new things next year.
- Pray “That whatever our circumstances, our home life would be honouring to Christ.” (St James’ vision statement.)

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Get Wisdom Week 7



Finding a good thing

As stressed in the sermon on 21st June this study is about marriage but much of it applies to any human relationship. In the sermon we looked at four things mentioned in Proverbs chapter 31 that make for good relationships. You could read the whole chapter, v10-12 & v28-end or just the verses below.

1. **Read Prov 31v11** - How important is trust in relationships?
2. What can cause trust to break down and how can it be restored?
3. **Read Prov 31v12** - What do you think it means in practice to do good and not harm? (Indeed, what does ‘goodness’ as a fruit of the spirit mean? Gal 5.22)
4. **Read Prov 31v28** - Do you find it easy to affirm and praise? Why/why not?

5. How important do you think this is in relationships? Is it only really children that need it?

6. **Read Prov 31v30** - How important is faith ('the fear of the Lord') in a close relationship such as marriage?

7. Is faith just more important than charm and beauty, or it is essential in finding a husband/wife and if so, why?

A Good Thing

8. Suppose you had to give some advice on finding the right partner. Which of the above and what other things would you include in your top tips?

9. If you are or have been married did you go through any marriage preparation?

10. Have you taken part in any subsequent events or courses, or read any books? How helpful were these and are there particular ones you would recommend to others?

Read Mark 10.7-9

The teaching of Jesus takes us back to God's purpose in creation and is clearer than what can seem a confusing picture in the Old Testament. The ESV's "hold fast" means to be stuck together or united. Hence the traditional expression "leaving and cleaving".

11. Given Jesus' teaching why are so many in the wider church willing to accept, indeed champion, marriage as being between two men or two women?

12. Jesus explained marriage clearly by quoting from Genesis 1.27 and 2.24. Has the Christian understanding of the significance of marriage been affected by whether or not people believe that Genesis 1 and 2 are describing actual historical events?

13. Why do you think so many western governments have decided that they have the power to change the definition of marriage in the last few years?

Separated

14. Take a look at the official statistics below from Feb 2014. What do you think are the reasons for these things?

- The divorce rate rose steadily in the 1990s. (Two in every 9 marriages begun in 1972 had ended within 15 years, whilst for marriages begun in 1997 it was three in every 9.)