

Marriage Crossroads
Why Divorce Is Often Not the Best Option
(Rationale, Resources, and References)

BRENT A. BARLOW, PhD

*Brent A. Barlow is currently a clinical member of The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and a member of The American Association for Christian Counselors.
This address was given at the 2002 BYU Families Under Fire Conference*

© 2003 by Brigham Young University
Division of Continuing Education.
All rights reserved.

For further information write:

BYU Families Under Fire,
136 Harman Continuing Education Building,
Provo, Utah 84602.
(801) 422-3559
E-mail: conferences@byu.edu
Home page: <http://ce.byu.edu/cw/fuf>

*** Thanks to David Schramm, David White, and Lisa Evans who helped prepare this [pamphlet].*

Not long ago I was talking to a friend I had known for some time. During our conversation she asked if I could help in some way with a difficult situation that had arisen in her family. Her daughter and son-in-law of several years were contemplating a divorce. They had two children. She said the young couple wasn't sure at the time, however, if they should divorce or stay together. They were looking at both options and were, therefore, at the crossroads of marriage. I told my friend that evening I would send her some materials and references that might assist her daughter and son-in-law with this critical decision. Since that time, I have had numerous similar requests from married couples and their friends or family members.

During the past few years, I have also had similar requests for information from several young adults. Many of them are seriously thinking about getting married at the same time their parents are contemplating divorce. The future brides and grooms have asked for information to send to their parents to help them reassess their marital situation.

Therapist and author Michele Weiner Davis has noted: "The decision to divorce or remain together to work things out is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. It is crucial for those considering divorce to anticipate what lies ahead in order to make informed

decisions. Too often the fallout from divorce is far more devastating than many people realize when contemplating the move.” (*Divorce Busting*, p. 25. See references for complete citations.)

It was for this reason "Marriage Crossroads: Why Divorce Is Often Not the Best Option" was written. I want to assist married couples to make "informed decisions" by providing pertinent and recent information. While it is intended primarily for couples with troubled marriages, family members and friends may also find this information useful.

I believe it is in the best interests of many married couples (and their children) for them to stay married, where possible, and work on improving their relationship. The reasons for this belief are included in this pamphlet.

LARGE NUMBERS AT THE CROSSROADS

There are apparently a large number of married couples in the United States who approach the crossroads. At the present time approximately 40–50 percent of couples in first marriages arrive at this point and eventually choose the path of divorce. The divorce rate for couples in second marriages is between 50–60 percent. Many other couples apparently reach the crossroads but decide, for various reasons, to stay married. One report, a Gallup Poll in the United States, found that 40 percent of married individuals had considered leaving their partners, and 20 percent said they were dissatisfied with their marriage about half the time. (Olson and Defrain, p. 6) Stated another way, nearly half the couples in the United States currently divorce, and another 20 percent seriously consider it.

Apparently, many newlyweds reach the crossroads of marriage during the first or second year of marriage:

Even newlyweds face serious problems during the first year of marriage. A study of several hundred newlywed couples found that 63 percent had serious problems related to their finances, 51 percent had serious doubts about their marriage lasting, 49 percent had significant marital problems, 45 percent were not satisfied with their sexual relationship, 41 percent found marriage harder than they had expected, and 35 percent stated their partner was often critical of them. (Ibid. p. 6)

A large number of newlyweds at the crossroads evidently choose to terminate their marriage since divorce most often occurs during the second and third years of marriage. Half of all first marriages that end in divorce . . . end within the first seven years. (Ibid., p. 517)

After several years of marriage another large group of married couples in the U.S. evidently arrive at the crossroads since there is a 16 percent increase in the divorce rate after thirty years of marriage. (Arp and Arp, p. 31) This may be due to “the float of isolation” that begins early in many marriages and often expands as the marriage continues. (Rainey, p. 7)

SOME DIVORCES ARE WARRANTED

While advocating marriage, we must be sensitive to those who have chosen to terminate their marriage. There are legitimate reasons or grounds for divorce. An estimated 30 percent of the divorces in the U.S. involve marital relationships with a high degree of conflict. (Amato and Booth, p. 220.) Sometimes violence, physical and mental abuse, and/or threat of life to spouse and children are also present in these highly conflicted relationships. As such, divorce in these situations is most often in the best interest of those involved.

In her book, *The Case Against Divorce*, Diane Medved also has a chapter titled “Exceptional Situations: When You Should Divorce.” Chronic addiction or substance abuse, psychosis or extreme mental illness, and physical or mental abuse are among those situations or conditions listed. Medved also gives some additional insights on when it’s time to say goodbye. (Chapter 8, pp. 103–130.)

Couples who divorce, particularly for the reasons noted, often need the help and support of family, friends, neighbors, religious leaders, and others in their respective communities. This is particularly so where children are involved. The adjustment to divorce is often difficult and apparently lasts for a considerable period of time. Legal assistance is needed, and sometimes couples may need counseling or therapy before, during, and after the separation for themselves and their children, if they have them. Competent counselors and therapists are available to assist in this transition. Many couples today are also utilizing the services of divorce mediation organizations that can often help lessen the trauma of divorce both before and after it occurs.

I offer my sincere hope for the future for husbands and wives who have chosen to divorce. But I also offer my encouragement to the numerous married couples at the crossroads to try to stay together, where possible, and work through their differences and difficulties.

POINTS TO PONDER

If you are married and trying to decide whether to divorce or stay married, carefully consider the following sixteen items before you make your “informed decision”:

1. **The Other 70 Percent of Divorces**

When we note that 30 percent of divorces involve couples in highly conflicted marriages, a question arises about the other 70 percent: Should they divorce or stay married? There are, perhaps, legitimate reasons for separating in about 10 percent of these relationships as well.

One study reported that the major reasons marriages failing are (in rank order) (1) infidelity, (2) no longer in love, (3) emotional problems, (4) financial problems, (5) sexual problems, (6) problems with in-laws, (7) neglect of children, (8) physical abuse, (9) alcohol, (10) job conflicts (11) communication problems, and (12) married too young. (Olson and DeFrain, p. 522.)

It is interesting to note that physical abuse was ranked as number eight in reasons for divorce, and “no longer in love” ranked as number two. Many marriages seem to end from burnout rather than blowout. A significant number of these couples could work through their problems, revive their love, and stay married if they desired and worked at it. Only the husband and wife involved

in a particular marriage, however, can make the decision whether to stay married or divorce since they are the ones who must ultimately abide by the consequences of the decision.

It is becoming increasingly evident, however, to those who study marriage trends in the United States, that an estimated 50 to 60 percent of divorces could, and perhaps should, be avoided in the best interests of those involved. Consider the following statements:

The divorce revolution—the steady displacement of a marriage culture by a culture of divorce and unwed parenthood—has failed. It has created terrible hardships for children, incurred insupportable social costs, and failed to deliver on its promise of greater adult happiness. The time has come to shift the focus of national attention from divorce to marriage and to rebuild a family culture based on enduring marital relationships. (“Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation,” 1995, pp. 4–5).

After acknowledging the necessity for some divorces, therapist Diane Medved wrote the rest of her book stating her case against divorce, thus the title of her book. At the beginning she makes the following observation and suggestion:

It is finally time to renounce—openly and clearly—the self-serving platitudes about independence and fulfillment and look at the reality of divorce. We act too frequently as if every infirm marriage deserves to die, based simply upon the emotional report of one distressed partner. Rather than viewing a separation first with alarm, we’re full of sympathy for a divorcing friend, and we offer understanding of the temporary insanity involved in severing old ties. Still influenced by the “do your own thing” era we don’t act constructively. We don’t take a husband (or wife) by the shoulders and shake him. We don’t shout in his ear that he might be making a disastrous mistake. Even if we care immensely about him, we feel it’s too intrusively “judgmental” to do more than step back and say, “Okay if that’s what you want,” and close our eyes to the consequences. My research suggests that this is more cruelty than friendship. (p. 8.)

Medved also notes:

If you hear someone for whom you have any feeling at all hinting at separation, instead of tacitly endorsing the move, instantly protest. Nearly every marriage has something worth preserving, something that can be restored. Revitalizing a relationship brings triumph and ongoing reward. . . . Avoiding divorce spares those concerned from the greatest trauma of their lives. (p. 11.)

2. What Are the Benefits of a Stable Marriage?

Several researchers and authors have reported the importance of a stable marriage for adults. In his book *Why Marriage Matters*, Glenn T. Stanton has written:

As the researchers have gone to press with their work and produced an enormous literature, one of the most consistent findings is that men and women do markedly better in all measures of specific and general well-being when they are married, compared to any of their unmarried counterparts. Married couples are healthier—physically and mentally—and they live longer, enjoy a more fulfilled life, and take better care of themselves (and each other). This has been shown consistently over decades, but it is rarely mentioned in the popular debate on the family. One of social science’s best-kept secrets is that marriage is much more than a legal agreement between two people. Marriage truly makes a difference in the lives of men and women. (p. 73.)

Three other authors, David Larson, James P. Swyers and Susan S. Larson, also noted the following in their book *The Costly Consequences of Divorce*:

What would you say if someone told you that a particular social bond could add years to your life and ensure your children a better education and economic livelihood? Furthermore, what would you say if you also found out that breaking this social bond was only slightly less harmful to your health than smoking a pack or more of cigarettes per day and could significantly increase your risk of depression, alcohol abuse, and committing suicide? And what would you say if you found out that this social bond that was potentially so beneficial to you and your children’s health and personal well-being was marriage? Truly, the research is striking. For decades, studies have shown that the married live longer and have a lower risk of a variety of physical and psychological illness than the unmarried. (p. 1)

In his article “Marital Status and Personal Well-Being,” Robert H. Coombs from the UCLA School of Medicine similarly noted:

The therapeutic benefits of marriage remain relatively unrecognized by most youths, the media, and some helping professionals who, preoccupied with accelerating divorce rates and variant family forms, question the value of marriage in contemporary society. Media messages have minimized marriage, implying it is an outdated institution, an “uncool” survivor of a simpler society. . . . Family educators can serve an important function by teaching the therapeutic benefits of marriage and that it is in each person’s own best interest to establish and maintain a durable relationship with an emotionally supportive spouse. The lack of this resource is a mental health deficit. (pp. 100–101.)

3. What Can Be the Impact of Divorce on Children?

It is obvious that a large number of children of divorced parents survive the experience and later become capable and stable adults. But it is also becoming increasingly evident that many children of divorce are at risk for developing detrimental behaviors, personality disorders, and disruptive lifestyles. Some of the variables in adjustment of children to parental divorce are (1) age of child at divorce, (2) amount of conflict in the marriage, (3) access to both parents after the

divorce, (4) adjustment to a step-parent, if there is one and (5) access to other nurturing adults during the childhood years. What does the research say about many children of divorced parents? David B. Larson, James P. Swyers, and Susan S. Larson have noted:

Coming from a disrupted family does not necessarily doom a child to later chronic unhappiness or academic or personal failure. Indeed, many resilient children and young people from disrupted families not only finish high school, but go on to college and graduate school and have successful careers, marriages and families. Unfortunately, the preponderance of evidence clearly shows that when compared to their peers from intact families, children, adolescents, and young adults from disrupted families are disproportionately represented among individuals with academic, behavioral and interpersonal problems. (p.136.)

In the executive summary of the forty-nine-page report released June 5, 2000, titled “The Effects of Divorce on America,” authors Patrick F. Fagan and Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation observed the following: [If you have access to the Internet go to the Web site www.smartmarriages.com. Click on “marriage reports” to review the entire article.]

Each year, over 1 million American children suffer the divorce of their parents; moreover, half of the children born this year to parents who are married will see their parents divorce before they turn 18. Mounting evidence in social science journals demonstrates that the devastating physical, emotional, and financial effects that divorce is having on these children will last well into adulthood and affect future generations. Among these broad and damaging effects are the following:

- Children whose parents have divorced are increasingly the victims of abuse. They exhibit more health, behavioral, and emotional problems; are involved more frequently in crime and drug abuse; and have higher rates of suicide.
- Children of divorced parents perform more poorly in reading, spelling, and math. They are also more likely to repeat a grade and to have higher drop-out rates and lower rates of college graduation.
- Families with children that were not poor before the divorce see their income drop as much as 50 percent. Almost 50 percent of the parents with children that are going through a divorce move into poverty after the divorce.
- Religious worship, which has been linked to better health, longer marriages, and better family life drops after the parents divorce.
- The divorce of parents, even if it is amicable, tears apart the fundamental unit of American society. Today, according to the Federal Reserve Board’s 1995 Survey of Consumer Finance, only 42 percent of children aged 14–18 live in a “first marriage” family—an intact two-parent family. “It should be no surprise to find that divorce is having such effects on society.”

Recent research indicates that the majority of children of divorced parents do not manifest the identified problems that can be outwardly noticed or measured. But the absence of an observable behavior disorder does not mean an absence of emotional distress. A significant number of children of divorce apparently do experience a variety of emotional problems that often go

undetected until late adolescence or early and even later adulthood. One of the most prevalent sources of distress reported was the children's distant relationship or infrequent contact with their fathers. Many children blamed their fathers for the divorce, and some were still angry with their fathers later in their adult lives. One-third of the children studied doubted their fathers even loved them. (Laumann-Billings and Emery, pp. 671-687.)

Judith Wallerstein and colleagues also explore two major myths about divorce in their recent book, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, A Twenty-Five Year Landmark Study*:

Two faulty beliefs provide the foundation for our current attitudes towards divorce. The first holds that if the parents are happier the children will be happier, too. . . . Children are not considered separately from their parents; their needs, and even their thoughts, are subsumed under the adult agenda. . . . Indeed, many adults who are trapped in very unhappy marriages would be surprised to learn that their children are relatively content. They don't care if mom and dad sleep in different beds as long as the family is together. . . .

A second myth is based on the premise that divorce is a temporary crisis that exerts its more harmful effects on parents and children at the time of the breakup. . . . The belief that the crisis is temporary underlies the notion that if acceptable legal arrangements for custody, visits, and child support are made at the time of the divorce and parents are provided with a few lectures, the child will soon be fine. It is a view we have fervently embraced and continue to hold. But it's misguided. (pp. xxiii-xxiv)

In their recent book, *The Case for Marriage*, Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher make this summary observation:

Less than a third of divorces are ending angry high-conflict marriages. Here's what the best evidence suggests: most current divorces leave children worse off, educationally and financially, than they would have been if their parents stay married, and a majority of divorces leave children psychologically worse off as well. Only a minority of divorces in this country are taking place in families where children are likely to benefit in any way from their parents' separation. (pp. 147-148.)

4. Many Later Regret Divorce.

Once people have made the decision to divorce, how do they later feel about the choice? There may be some immediate relief in many instances right after the divorce, but how do husbands and wives feel months or even years later? My current estimates are that about one-third of the couples who divorce feel they made the right decision, another one-third are uncertain or have mixed feelings about their divorce, and approximately one-third of divorced couples eventually regret the decision within five years.

In addition, many divorced people in the United States apparently wish they had made a greater effort to make their marriage work. In Minnesota, 66 percent of those who are currently divorced answered “yes” to the question “Do you wish you and your ex-spouse had tried harder to work through your differences?” And in a New Jersey poll, 46 percent of divorced people reported that they wished they and their ex-spouse had tried harder to work through their differences. Research from Australia indicates that of people who divorce “one third regret the decision five years later. Of the individuals involved, two in five (40 percent) believe their divorce could have been avoided.” (William J. Doherty, 1999.)

A recent letter-to-the editor in a large U.S. newspaper reflected the sentiments of one man among the estimated one-third who regretted his divorce. Under the title “Divorce Isn’t Worth the Cost,” he wrote:

I would wish to comment on the letter that ran Jan. 2 concerning the weakening of men and children through divorce. Anne Smart-Pearce was the author. To my great sorrow, I must admit I am a divorced husband and father. Anne speaks of the terrible price that is being paid and then asks, “If a mother had an equal fear of losing her children, would she so readily seek a divorce? Or would she do all in her power to avert such a tragic outcome?”

Might I add this, husbands and wives, if there is even one-half of an ounce of friendliness left in your marriage, take each other by the hand, look at each other’s eyes and then remember of the love that brought you together in the first place! Let each other know, somehow, that you are needed, loved and wanted! If you fail, you will reap the whirlwind, especially you fathers. You will lose all that is important, near and dear to you. And that is your sweet wife, your wonderful children and your home.

Oh, that I had been more wise and not let my pride be my downfall. I can tell you with knowledge that a seemingly endless tragedy does await! The mornings do come when you awake, call her name and then realize that you are alone in a house that is ever silent and does not answer back. Guy M. Bradley, West Point, Utah (*Deseret News*, Wednesday, January 11, 2001, Letters to the Editor, A-10.)

5. Should Couples Work on Their Marriage?

If a large number of couples who do divorce later regret the decision, the logical question arises: Should couples try to restore what they once had in their marriage? The answer to this question is a simple “yes,” in a large number of cases. Many have learned to do so, as reported by Michele Weiner Davis in her book *Divorce Busting*:

It appears that more and more couples are beginning to take a skeptical view of divorce. . . . Some say the growing threat of AIDS is keeping couples together. However, my explanation is different. I believe that people are beginning to realize how devastating divorce is—emotionally, financially, and spiritually—for everyone involved. With enough time under our belts to have observed the results

of rampant divorce, we are beginning to recognize the price we have paid for the freedom of disposable marriages. (p. 27)

Nearly all, if not all, marriages go through peaks and valleys, times of highs and lows. Most of married life, however, is spent cycling between these two extremes. During difficult times, between 40–50 percent of currently married spouses seek divorce and follow through with it. And, as previously noted, about 20 percent of those who stay married consider leaving a marriage partner but later choose not to do so.

Apparently, many married couples seriously contemplate divorce, may even see a lawyer or file for divorce, and then decide not to proceed with the terminating process. In Utah, for example, in the year 2000, 12,574 couples filed for divorce, but only 10,138 divorces were actually granted (CORIS Database, 2000). Thus, for various reasons, one in five couples who filed for divorce decided not to continue the termination process. Their decision may be well-founded. The vast majority of unhappily married couples in the United States apparently do improve their relationship if they stay married.

6. **The Big Bounce Back.**

In their recent book, *The Case for Marriage*, Waite and Gallagher, ask and then answer this question:

How many unhappy couples turn their marriages around? The truth is shocking: 86 percent of unhappily married people who stick it out find that, five years later, their marriages are happier, according to an analysis of the National Survey of Families and Households. Most say, they've become very happy indeed. In fact, nearly three-fifths of those who said their marriage was unhappy in the late 80s and who stay married, rated this same marriage as either “very happy” or “quite happy” when reinterviewed in the early 1990s.

The very worst marriages showed the most dramatic turnarounds: 77 percent of the stably married people who rated their marriage as very unhappy (a one on a scale of one to seven) in the late eighties said that the same marriage was either “very happy” or “quite happy” five years later. Permanent marital unhappiness is surprisingly rare among couples who stick it out. Five years later, just 15 percent of those who initially said they were very unhappy married (and who stayed married) ranked their marriage as not unhappy at all. (pp. 148–149)

In the last paragraph of their book, Waite and Gallagher conclude:

Decades of social-science research have confirmed the deepest intuitions of the human heart: as frightening, exhilarating, and improbable as this wild vow of constancy may seem, there is no substitute. When love seeks permanence, a safe home for children, who long for both parents, when men and women look for someone they can count on, there are no substitutes. The word for what we want is marriage. (p. 203)

7. Calculate the Financial Consequences of Terminating Your Marriage.

The financial costs to married couples for divorce are often substantial. These costs include legal or lawyers' fees, which average \$7,000 per couple (\$3,500 per person) in the United States (Nock, 1999). Some divorces cost more; others less. An uncontested divorce involving no children in Utah costs between \$500–\$1,000. If the proceedings go to court and there is litigation, costs go as high as \$10,000–\$20,000 for legal fees. If there is a sizeable amount of property and prolonged litigation, costs could be \$40,000–\$60,000 and even as high as \$100,000 or more in some cases. The hourly wage for many lawyers today is \$200–\$300. The use of accredited divorce mediation services can help reduce the financial costs of divorce.

There will also be additional costs for housing, moving expenses, transportation, potential loss of income during divorce proceedings and transition, additional occupational training—particularly for custodial spouse of children (if children are involved), child care, partial loss of retirement benefits, and sometimes additional costs to state government, extended family members, and charities if initial income is minimal. There may also be considerable financial consequences during retirement for husband, wife, or both.

Also, recall the previous report cited: “Families with children that were not poor before the divorce see their income drop as much as 50 percent. Almost 50 percent of the parents with children that are going through a divorce move into poverty after the divorce.” (Fagan and Rector, “The Effects of Divorce on America.”) Perhaps the greatest costs of divorce, however, are not financial, but the emotional costs that were previously noted.

8. Think About the Long-Term Consequences of Your Decision.

Many who divorce are satisfied with the decision to end their marriage. But it is becoming increasingly evident that a significant number, as many as one-third, later regret their divorce. This is particularly so when the long-term consequences are experienced or actually encountered. Seriously consider not only the apparent immediate benefits of divorce but also the long-term consequences many others have experienced. Divorce is a decision that many make but later regret. And most divorces are forever.

9. Consider Your Children, If You Have Them.

If you do file for divorce in Utah and you have children, you will be required to attend a two-hour class on divorce education before your divorce is granted. This class is not designed to tell you whether you should divorce but rather reviews how to deal with it to have the least negative impact on children. It may be that some couples who file for divorce and attend the required divorce education class are among those who decide not to proceed with the termination of their marriage. Perhaps serious thought of the impact of divorce on children should precede filing for divorce as well. (Reread Points to Ponder #3 concerning children.)

10. Take Time to Make Your Decision.

As noted at the beginning of this article, your decision whether to divorce is one of the most important ones you will ever make. And if you do decide not to divorce right away and want to work on improving your marriage, take several months to do so. Also remember that, as previously noted, 86 percent of unhappily married couples bounce back within five years. Your marriage, however, may not take as long to turn around. Also, be aware of questionable advice you may receive during this time from others, particularly peers who are divorced or unhappily married. Remember, love lost can be regained in time with new skills and effort.

11. Use Discretion When Seeking Marriage Counseling.

If you do seek marriage counseling, be very careful in choosing your therapist. Make sure the therapist understands your desire to work on improving your marriage. Also, make sure the therapist has been trained in helping couples stay together, where possible. Ask your therapist to help you in this endeavor. Professional and competent counselors will honor this request. Discuss the fees in advance, which range from \$60 to \$100 or more for a fifty-minute session. Many Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) currently do not pay for marriage counseling. In addition, if you seek personal counseling, HMO's will often determine who you will see and the number of sessions you are allowed. Choose wisely from among the therapists allowed on your insurance program, if you have one. Remember: they are working for you and your marriage! Before you choose a counselor, review the article "How Therapy Can Be Hazardous to Your Marital Health," by William J. Doherty, PhD. Read his comments about "therapy-induced marital suicide." (Find the article on the home page of www.smartmarriages.com.)

12. Consult with Your Religious Leaders or Advisors.

If you and/or your spouse are religious people and belong to a particular faith or denomination, I urge you to seriously consider talking to your religious leaders. They often are a great source of hope and encouragement by adding the spiritual dimension to marriage during difficult times. Consider attending religious services while you are making your decision about divorce. Married couples who do attend religious services on a weekly basis have a one-third lower divorce rate than those who do not. (Larson, et. al. p. 246)

13. Learn from Other Married Couples Who Have Been at the Crossroads.

There are couples in the United States who have seriously considered divorce and then decided to work on their marriages and stay together. Some of these couples are available to conduct seminars and workshops. One such national and nondenominational group is Retrouvaille (A French word meaning "rediscovery" and pronounced "retro-vi.") When both husband and wife attend Retrouvaille meetings and work at their marriage, the success rate of staying together is 85 percent. See their Web site at www.retrouvaille.org. For information on Retrouvaille in Utah, call 801-773-4587.

14. Carefully Consider Reading Any or All of the Following Books:

Diane Medved. *The Case Against Divorce*. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc. 1989.

Michele Weiner Davis. *The Divorce Remedy: The Proven 7-Step Program for Saving Your Marriage*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Michele Weiner Davis. *Divorce Busting; A Step-By Step Approach to Making Your Marriage Loving Again*. New York: Simon And Schuster, 1992.

Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*. New York: Hyperion, 2000.

Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, and Susan Blumberg. *Fighting for Your Marriage*. New York: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.

Glenn T. Stanton. *Why Marriage Matters*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Pinon Press, 1997.

James Dobson. *Love Must Be Tough: New Hope for Families in Crisis*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1996. (This book was written with suggestions for husbands or wives who are in the process of losing a spouse to another person, excessive hours at work, or various kinds of addiction such as drugs or pornography. Written from a Christian perspective, this book has been helpful to many.)

[If the books recommended are not available in your local libraries or bookstores, they can usually be obtained within a week on Web sites such as www.amazon.com, www.half.com and others.]

15. Visit and Review the Following Web Sites.

www.utahmarriage.org This Web site has been created with Utah residents in mind. Married couples and/or individuals can go to this Web site to access information and/or resources that may be helpful. Or, they may phone the toll free number 1-800-472-4716 for additional help and information. People in Salt Lake, Summit, Tooele and Utah counties can simply dial 211.

www.divorcebusting.com This Web site has many tips for helping couples with marriage. Michele Weiner Davis has also created a ten-hour audiocassette program and workbook titled "Keeping Love Alive," advertised on this Web site. It costs \$59.95 plus \$5.95 S&H and is highly recommended. Instructions are also given on this Web site on how to become "Keeping Love Alive" group leaders in your community.

www.smartmarriages.com was created and is maintained by Diane Sollee. This Web site lists a number of current articles on marriage and marriage education programs available throughout the United States. Numerous organizations promoting marriage are also listed.

A few questions are posted to test your knowledge about contemporary marriage. Information on the annual Smart Marriage Conference is provided, and you can also subscribe to the free e-mail newsletter listed on the Web site.

www.marriagemovement.org This twenty-nine-page document describes the current Marriage Movement in the United States. You are invited to read it and be a signer if you care to endorse the document. (I was honored to be one of the thirty individuals who attended the first meeting in New York on January 25, 2000, and was also one of the original one hundred signers of the document.)

www.family.org This Web site has many helpful materials on marriage from Focus on the Family, a Christian organization founded by Dr. James Dobson.

www.divorcereform.org This Web site has fascinating trends in divorce reform legislation in the United States and some interesting statistics on contemporary divorce.

16. Remember the 9/11 Alert!

Almost everyone in the United States will remember September 11, 2001 (ninth month, eleventh day) when the two planes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City; another plane crashed into the Pentagon Building in Washington, D.C.; and fourth in Pennsylvania. We all witnessed over and over the tragic details of these events and the aftermath as it was broadcast again and again on national and local television programs. These vivid images will likely remain with us for many years to come.

What some may not know, however, is that immediately following these tragic events, many married couples withdrew their applications for divorce on file before September 11, 2001. In Houston, Texas, for example: “Dismissals in divorce cases have skyrocketed in the Harris County Family Law courts since the terrorist attack of September 11th. Family-law cases, the vast majority of which are divorces, have been dismissed in nearly three times the volume in the days after the tragedy as in the days before it.” (Mary Flood, *Houston Chronicle*, September 25, 2001.) Similar trends apparently occurred elsewhere.

What does this trend after September 11, 2001, suggest? Why were so many military personnel married in the following weeks before they were deployed for duty abroad? Why is it that in times of crisis we place higher value on marriage and family relationships? Michael Von Blon, a family law attorney in Texas, stated that in times of tragedy, “people stop and think about the most basic things in life—companionship, love and family.” (Ibid.) Why do we need a national tragedy to remind us, once again, of the importance of marriage and family relationships? Apparently, such events help us realize the value of ancient wisdom:

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him,

two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12.)

In this pamphlet, “Marriage Crossroads: Why Divorce Is Often Not the Best Option,” I have tried to present a balance by first noting there are situations when divorce is warranted. It is evident that some individuals are better off not married to each other. I also have indicated and stated the reasons why I believe it is beneficial for many, if not most, husbands and wives to stay together and work through their differences in their marriage. Hopefully, married couples will take the time to make an “informed decision” when contemplating divorce.

Over two thousand years ago, Roman statesman and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.) stated, “The first bond of society is marriage.” I believe it still is.

References

Amato, Paul R, and Alan A. Booth. *A Generation at Risk; Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Arp, David, and Claudia Arp. *The Second Half of Marriage*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998.

Coombs, Robert H., UCLA School of Medicine. “Marital Status and Personal Well-Being: A Literature Review.” *Family Relations*, Vol. 40, January 1991, pp 100-101.

CORIS Database: 2000 (Court Record and Information System), Information Services Department, State of Utah.

Dobson, James C. *Love Must Be Tough: New Hope for Families in Crisis*. Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing, 1996.

Doherty, William J. “Questions and Answers on the Minnesota Covenant Marriage Option,” University of Minnesota, 1999. Available on the Smart Marriage Home page, www.smartmarriages.com.

Fagan, Patrick R., and Rector, Robert. “The Effects of Divorce on America,” *Executive Summary*, June 5, 2000, The Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. (Available on Smart Marriage Home Page under Marriage Reports. www.smartmarriages.com)

Larson, David B., James P. Swyers, and Susan S. Larson. *The Costly Consequences of Divorce: Assessing the Clinical, Economic, and Public Health Impact of Marital Disruption in the United States*. Published by National Institute for Healthcare Research. Rockville, Maryland, 1995.

Laumann-Billings, Lisa and Robert E. Emery. "Distress Among Young Adults from Divorced Families," *Journal of Family Psychology*, December 2000, Vol. 14 (4) pp. 671–687.

Markman, Howard, Stanley Scott, and Susan Blumberg. *Fighting for Your Marriage*. New York, New York: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.

"Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation" 1995, Council on Families in America. Institute for American Values, 1841 Broadway, Suite 211, New York, New York 10023.

Medved, Diane. *The Case Against Divorce: Discover the Lures, the Lies, and the Emotional Traps of Divorce—Plus the Seven Vital Reasons to Stay Together*. New York, New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc. 1989.

Nock, Steve. "Calculating the Financial Cost of Divorce." The Department of Sociology, University of Charlottesville, Virginia. Presentation at the Smart Marriages Conference, Washington, D.C. 1999.

Olson, David H., and John DeFrain. *Marriage and the Family, Diversity and Strengths*. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1994.

Rainey, Dennis. *Staying Close: Stopping the Natural Drive Toward Isolation in Marriage*. Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1992.

Stanton, Glenn T. *Why Marriage Matters*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Pinon Press, 1997.

Waite, Linda J. and Maggie Gallagher. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. New York, New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Wallerstein, Judith, Julia M. Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, A Twenty-Five Year Landmark Study*. New York, New York: Hyperion, 2000.

David, Michele Weiner. *Divorce Busting: A Step-by Step Approach to Making Your Marriage Loving Again*. New York, New York: Simon And Schuster, 1992.
