

Divorce Up 700%

By Barrington H. Brennen, December 7, 2007

Between the years 1975 and 2005 divorce in The Bahamas skyrocketed 700%. In my recent article entitled "Is Marriage on the Decline?" I shared the figures that may have startled you. To recap a little, in 1975 there were 99 divorces in The Bahamas and in 2005 that figure jumped to 689 divorces. Keep in mind that our population during that same period did not increase 700%. In fact the population on increased about 65%. What is also shocking is that according to the figures less and less Bahamians are getting married each year. The year with the highest number of marriages was in 2000 when there were 2366 marriages. In 2006 that figure dropped to 1731. That means that 635 less couples got marriage in 2006 as compared to 2000.

More tourists are getting married in the Bahamas each year than locals. Isn't it ironical that many people from around the world are attracted to the beauty and magic of the Bahamian sunshine, its beaches and the friendly people but this magic potent isn't working for us.

WHY SO MANY DIVORCES?

Adultery ranks high as a reason for many divorces in The Bahamas. However, a greater number are getting divorced simply because they cannot get along. In North American that is called irreconcilable differences. However, in The Bahamas irreconcilable differences is not a legal ground for divorce. Hence, couples are separating and waiting for 2 years to file on the ground of desertion. Many others are divorcing on the grounds of cruelty. Since they want a quicker divorce they would construe that the mental anguish was to unbearable and seek to end the marriage. Often times the problem was repairable but they just want to end the marriage as quickly as they can. That brings me to the next point.

It is my observation that the real reason for divorce is the lack of humility. Lack of humility has become, in my professional opinion, the number one reason for divorce in The Bahamas and around the world. It is then appropriate to say the humility is the number one ingredient in making a marriage long-lasting and happy. To be humble is to admit that you are wrong, to have a willingness to listen and respect your spouse's opinions, to have a willingness to adjust or change one's attitude or behavior that might be crippling to the marriage. During my training many years ago I did find the word "humility" in professional literature relating to marriage or divorce. However, in recent years more and more professional are discovering and writing about the most valuable ingredient.

Unfortunately, lack of humility is a great problem among Bahamian males. We know all things. We do not listen to our spouses. We have difficulty changing our behaviors or attitudes. A few years ago I pointed out that the real reasons for divorces and why the numbers are increasing so fast is pride, selfishness, egotism, and traditionalism.

Oftentimes one spouse would be complaining to another spouse for years about a behavior or suspicion about a behavior. But because of pride (lack of humility) the other partner refuses to listen and change. After lot's of pleading the faithful partner gets exhausted and frustrated and seeks to end the marriage.

NOT ENOUGH TIME TOGETHER

It is not surprising that a major complaint among spouses is that they are not spending enough time together or not enough romance in the relationship. Oftentimes when these complaints are ignored one partner seeks to end the marriage because one or more of his or her basic needs are not being met. If find it amazing in counseling sessions that so many spouses do not take the

time to stay at home with their partners. The truth is that it is in most cases not the job itself nor too many hours at work. It is what happens after work. One partner does not come home on time and spends long hours recreating with friends or relatives. The marriage is placed daily on the “back burner” of life. When the spouse complains the about coming home late it ends in explosive arguments and over time changes never takes place. One partner, often the woman, is left alone to nurture and care for the children and all their needs.

OTHER REASONS

Believe it or not in The Bahamas we have other ingredients in this recipe for disaster of marriages. 1) We keep out finances apart. Too many Bahamian married couples cannot attain to true “oneness” in marriage because of refusal to work together financially. They do not have a couple harmonious financial plan. The lack of this plan often eats away at the romance in the marriage leading to a premature death of the relationship. Or it prevents an intense, unselfish, passionate bonding that can only come with today self disclosure. Oneness in marriage encompasses the blending of the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical and financial assets of both individuals. Sadly, too many Bahamian married couples leave out the last one—the financial. 2) We do not know each other’s needs and how to meet them. This is really a hot one in marriage. I’ve discovered that knowing each other’s needs is as important as communicating effectively. Too many partners refuse to take the time to understand their spouses. Sometimes one partner is not aware of his or her own needs are is unable to articulate them to his or her spouse. This causes pain which often leads to an avoidable divorce. 3) Another reason there are so many divorces in The Bahamas is because too many couples are moving too fast into marriage without the proper preparation for marriage and knowledge about each other. They become sexually involved too soon and often feel that there is no turning back. Women in particular are having sex for the first time with whom they believe would be their married partner and discovered too late that the sexual experience blinded them from making an objective decision about their choice as a mate. Then they become devastated, depressed or confused. When they get married they quickly discover that things are not changing and the marriage become a nightmare.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We must slow down the rush to the divorce courts in The Bahamas. We must insist the couples take the time to develop wholesome relationships before marriage and see proper pre-marriage counseling at least six months before the wedding day. I encourage individuals not to give themselves sexually to someone you cannot ensure he or she will be yours. Wait until marriage. Become friends.

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