

# IDEAS 30

**International Online Teachers Society  
Debate  
Educational Materials For  
Advance and Upper Intermediate  
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society  
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## YES, THERE IS (SUPPOSED TO BE) LIFE IN MARRIAGE

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Watching and hearing about couples who live to their ripe old age in married bliss, we can only react with awe and wonder. With the way marriages have ceased to become the bedrock of solid family ties that transcend all manner of worldly considerations, lasting married relationships seem to be the exception rather than the rule. We can only surmise that people in contemporary times have more nagging considerations, making marriage stand at the bottom of their priorities. But blissful, wedded bliss does exist, and it does not merely exist in glossy magazines and unwritten biographies. It exists for real.

Marriage brings together imperfect people, and this is a concept which this writer has time and again stressed. However, it is upon those two imperfect people to look beyond each other's imperfections and make ways to weld them in unison. The outright refusal to accept one's partner in spite of those differences constitutes direct clashes that will never be resolved; hence irreconcilable differences erupt into broken relationships. It is only through mature and unselfish acceptance that the partner is inherently flawed but easily loved can two individuals ever make the marriage work.

We all have seen marriages/matches that were touted to be made in heaven, only to come apart in shambles after a few (very few!) years down the road. Not wanting to be locked in loveless, worthless marriages such as those, couples break up, citing various reasons for the erosion of love and loss of respect for one another. Most commonly, the culprit is the presence of a third party; still others cite certain "psychological incapacities", whether on the part of the petitioner or the petitioned, it remains virtually unknown. For who can judge which of the partners was of greater "incapacity"?

And then there are those who have most probably (most likely?) rushed into marriage, perhaps (more likely) blinded by love at first sight. Quite oxymoronic, wouldn't you say? The sudden palpitations, the breathlessness, the constant urge to see one's knight in shining armor or damsel in distress, such seemingly strong concepts are easily concluded to be true love. Yet, are they really reliable yardsticks of an oftentimes fickle and playful, and let me add, hurtful, emotion as love? Let me not be the judge of that, for the premise is not only tricky but prone to debate. Censure awaits those who judge too hastily.

Marriages are meant to be made in heaven. Unfortunately, those who fail to find the truth within that concept have not really found reasons why that is so. Is it failure on their part? Perhaps not, perhaps so, maybe not exactly, maybe exactly so. The jury is out on that, I suppose.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are your concepts on marriage?
2. Are there any couples you look up to for having successful marriages? Tell why you think those relationships are successful.
3. In today's modern world, do you honestly think marriage is necessary? Why or why not?
4. What are your opinions on living together without the benefit of marriage? Tell why you believe in those opinions.
5. If you had a son/daughter who asked for your permission to get married, what advice would you give him/her to make the marriage last?



## I WANT TO BREAK FREE

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According to yearly statistical figures, roughly half of the couples who get married actually end up in divorce. However, according to more recent studies, this system is inherently flawed. Cited as evidence is the fact that those who get divorced at a particular year do not really belong to that group which decided to get hitched on that same year. Simply put, the divorced group is not exactly a subset of the married group for the same year.

Going through these findings, I found my earliest assumptions of marriages and divorces taking a slight detour. I concluded that there was hope, after all, for marriages to continue being the fundamental factor for successful families.

Surprising as it may seem, such findings point to the fact that the world has probably taken a fresher perspective about marriage and divorce. Maybe, we have been exposed to too many showbiz marriages that start up strong and eventually fizzle out when the challenges come forth. Whatever happened to “till death do us part”? Well, it probably got up and flew out the window.

That’s exactly what happens when couples break apart—promises are broken, vows exchanged are flung in each other’s faces, and worse, children are caught in the crossfire. It is always the children who suffer greatly in divorces. Although there have been documented instances where the children of divorced couples manage to grow up and face the world even more normally than those in successful marriages, those are considered few and far between.

The question looms large therefore: Should partners try to stay married for the sake of their children, even when doing so entails great sacrifice? A follow-up question would be, “What happens when they meet someone else?” And still another, “Won’t divorce be a better alternative down the road?”

It’s not easy to stay married, especially when everything seems to be so wrong and what seems right is getting out quickly. When confronted with challenging circumstances, what are partners supposed to do?

The marriage vow is a sacred pledge which is not to be taken lightly. A great number of women--and in some scattered instances, men--cry on their wedding day, particularly at that particular point of exchanging vows. Thanks to the ingenuity of contemporary times, vows that are exchanged at weddings are no longer as traditional as they used to be. However, the formula is still there: the promise to take the other and care for them until death; the promise of fidelity; the promise of endless devotion. Add all these together and you have a lasting bond that can not be torn asunder, ideally.

Unfortunately, the fact remains. Although yearly divorces do not actually belong to the same married group within the same year, divorces still happen. And of course, their more creative counterparts- annulments and legal separations.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Is divorce legal in your country? What are your opinions on divorce?
2. Do you think that getting divorced is the ideal solution? Why or why not?
3. What can a partner do when faced with the prospect of divorce?
4. What are the possible effects of divorce on the children?
5. What advice would you give to someone contemplating divorce?



## MARRY YOUR BESTFRIEND—OR YOUR COMPLETE OPPOSITE?

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In her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen has this to say about marriage: Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life.

Paula Abdul sings this concept in her 1989 hit *Opposites Attract*, "...seems we never ever agree. You like movies and I like TV. I take things serious and you take 'em light. I go to bed early. And I party all night. Our friends are sayin' we ain't gonna last....She likes it neat, and he makes a mess. I take it easy. Baby I get obsessed. She's got the money, and he's always broke....I take 2 steps forward. I take 2 steps back. We come together 'coz opposites attract. And you know it ain't fiction, just a natural fact. We come together 'coz opposites attract."

But Prince William was given a word of advice by his brilliant mother, Princess Diana. The advice was something he took to heart, "Marry your best friend." It was just the very thing the prince did when he married the elegant Kate Middleton, whom he had been friends with for more than a year at St. Andrews University in Scotland. Then, he started dating her, and the rest is history's ultimate fairytale love story. Accounts of their beautiful love story say that they had a lot in common aside from just being students of the same school and being flat mates. Kate lived one floor below Prince William at St. Salvator's Hall, their university's hall of residence. ([http://abcnews.go.com/International/Royal\\_Wedding/kate-middleton-prince-williams-romance-st-andrews/story?id=13356247#.T2u5hsU7VNQ](http://abcnews.go.com/International/Royal_Wedding/kate-middleton-prince-williams-romance-st-andrews/story?id=13356247#.T2u5hsU7VNQ))

What we can probably surmise from the foregoing opposing views is inconclusive, at best.

Some people are just destined to be meant for each other despite the number of differences that they have. Mills and Boon, England's undisputed leader in romance and fiction books, has virtually had its earliest romance books on this premise: heroine is young and naïve, not taken by the cares of this world; the hero is debonair and dashing and highly powerful and successful. Both characters hate each other from the onset, but end up loving each other so much. Those were the love stories of my younger days. The more contemporary novels from Mills and Boon have less restricting roles for their protagonists. But the conflict between the characters is still present; they have differences that need to be resolved.

But there is still wisdom in marrying someone you know very well, probably because it creates less friction and clashes between personalities. The only problem with such made-in-heaven matches is that, when the marriage doesn't work, you both lose a spouse and a friend.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are your opinions on marrying your best friend?
2. Can opposite personalities eventually find reason to get together and blend? Why or why not?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of marrying someone whom you know very well?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of marrying someone you have a great difference to?
5. What are the rules in choosing a marriage partner, in your opinion? Should there always be rules? Why or why not?



## TO GET HITCHED OR NOT?

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Mignon McLaughlin once said, "A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person." " This has never rung truer than in today's modern times, where 'I do's' are exchanged just as easily as accusations of infidelity and divorce papers. Marriage also requires that each spouse find ways to express their love for one another and find more endearing qualities about the other. Failure to do this often leads to hasty separations that both cost a lot and devastate at the same time.

Unfortunately, the idea of staying together through thick and thin with one and the same partner for the rest of eternity has proven unpalatable for some, thus bringing forth the concept of living together without the benefit of marriage. This option might prove a more practical way of getting a partner, without the hassles brought about by subsequent separation, but who really stands to lose more in such arrangements?

The uncertainties inherent in married relationships have led some to choose to remain single. Such people would rather not go through marriage for fear of getting disappointed a few years down the road. At least, they claim, they wouldn't have to answer to anyone for their decisions and actions, much less account for their mistakes and shortcomings. This group also has a certain grain of truth in their argument. But the fact remains that when many of them fall madly and deeply in love, they will also opt for marriage.

Marriage is always a two-way street, where both partners must learn to give and graciously receive, often with the giving part more comprehensive than the receiving. Unconditional love means you never count the costs, and partake unselfishly of the fruits. That marriage requires a balancing act is true. But when the balancing act proves to be too overwhelming for one, there won't be anywhere else to go but out.

Finding the right partner is not really as essential as being the right partner to the one you love. Adoration, even of the ultimate degree, will eventually yield to endless abhorrence if the relationship is not taken care of. Partners should eternally seek ways to make the other feel that he/she has made the perfect choice. Those who are too lazy and caught up to even bother looking their best for their partner will often live to regret it. Responsibilities must be carried out with commitment and dedication to the welfare of the one loved, especially when the children come along.

Marriage is not the easiest relationship to get into. It's also a continuous journey that might have many pit stops along the way, but promises to be fruitful and without end when it is made to work.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What advice will you give someone who is considering getting married? What about for someone contemplating divorce?
2. How different are getting married and simply living together without marriage? What are the possible consequences of living together without marriage?
3. Is there a particular married couple you admire? Why?
4. What are the possible consequences of getting divorced?
5. Would you rather get married or stay single? Why or why not?



## MARRIAGE – A LIFETIME COMMITMENT

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Marriage is not a game that we use to play during our childhood days but it is a lifetime commitment. Definitely, we will never forget the time when we got married and our promises to each other when we exchanged our vows. It is not only described as a big leap that an individual has undertaken but it is also an utmost important step in our life that we cannot take back once we are into it. You would also agree with me when I say that getting married is one of the most crucial decisions that we have ever made in our life. Marriage can be defined as an entering into a commitment of two people into a monogamous relationship, by way of a ceremony and symbolism (that is, the rings that both people wear during the rites and the woman taking the last name of her husband too).

Marriage is a lifetime commitment to only one person. It means making a promise to always love one another no matter what the cost is. Nobody can break that promise and take it away from you and this means that you also committed to act lovingly towards each other. In this case, both parties have set their minds as to the utmost importance of why they have entered into a marriage. They have also promised to do everything to the best of their knowledge for their marriage to work out. Then, as expected, it has all the reasons for this relationship to last for they have opted to love and show it in action and not only through their feelings alone. Moreover, marriage is a commitment to only a person because you make a vow before God to be faithful to that sole person for the rest of your life.

Marriage is more than just a piece of paper or a legal contract. Some people just get married because of foolish reasons, like financial security, physical or sexual attraction or maybe just because they wanted to get away from their family. These and a lot more prove to be irrational. They have the thinking that getting married will solve their problems on money matters. People should not marry because of financial security but it should be because it is done out of love. We pretty well know that money can neither buy us love nor happiness.

Yes, marriage is when two people are very much in love with each other and they are willing to neck it out no matter what they encounter along this stage. That means during the entire time, even if you experience a lot of ups and downs, you manage to stick it out and forbear with one another. Not to mention the times when you undergo a lot of differences, both parties still manage and maintain their relationship for they see to it that these matters should be settled amicably between the two of them. Marriages will be better when the couple try to understand each other and will always be ready to also forgive and forget whenever there are misgivings. We should learn to accept each other's mistakes and try to nurture our relationship more.

Marriage can be a success if and only if both the man and the woman really wanted this relationship to last. It is a give-and-take relationship with an open communication so you could understand each other better and have the best resolution for this state of marital happiness to be attained. Always bear in mind the vow that you had before God to love each other and will be together till death do us part. You were made one in union with God, so we cannot do without our better half. Learn to accept one another's flaws and inconsistencies for your marriage to be a lifetime commitment.

Questions for discussion:

1. Will you do anything for your marriage to work out? How?
2. Do you agree that marriage is a lifetime commitment? Explain your answer.
3. How would you define marriage?
4. Does your marriage define the person that you are? Justify your answer.
5. Do you regret the fact that you have entered into this life-long commitment? Explain further your answer.



## SOME CONCEPTS AND REASONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

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The famous philosopher, Confucius, once said “Marriage is the union of two different surnames, in friendship and in love, in order to continue the posterity of the former sages, and to furnish those who shall preside at the sacrifices to heaven and earth, at those in the ancestral temple, and at those at the altars to the spirits of the land and grain”. There are other definitions of this word. According to the freedictionary.com, it is the state or relationship of being husband and wife. In the context of law, marriage is the legal union or contract made by a man and woman to live as husband and wife. In other words, marriage is the state or relationship of two adults who are married. Does marriage occur without love? People marry for many reasons. These different reasons have something to do with their varied beliefs, traditions and perceptions in life. Marriage is a familiar word to everybody. We have heard and read many times about marriage. We have seen TV programs and movies related to marriage. We have witnessed different wedding ceremonies – a wedding of our brother and sister, a wedding of a friend, a wedding of a relative, a wedding of a famous celebrity, a wedding of a noble person, a wedding of our friendly neighbor and the like. We wished the couples the best for their new life – a life that is shared both of them. We have seen them filled with joy and happiness as they share their vows before and after the ceremony. However, we are not totally sure about the real essence of marriage. Why do people get married? This is one of the questions that perhaps everybody asks seriously.

In a certain article from Wiki Answers about marriage, one simple reason why marriage happens is to avoid loneliness. Some people hate to arrive home, typically in an empty house. They need belongingness and to establish a family who will be responsible and take care of them. Consequently, it is love. It is the most powerful emotion man has ever known. To love somebody is not that easy. Basically you need to feel it. Your mind will work together with your heart. On the other hand, some women marry for financial security. They tediously find a man who can bring their financial status secured and stable. They usually look for rich bachelors who are nice and kind. Some people get married to give an evading basis of acceptance in the society. They avoid the questions “Why are you still single at 40?” “Why don't you have kids or children?”. This may sound subjective because some women with financial security can choose to remain single and pursue their careers. Melissa Mayntz<sup>1</sup>, an author in her online website “love to know weddings.com”, shared that every couple has different reasons to get married that apply to their unique relationship, and many couples share similar reasons for planning the long walk down the aisle. Whether a couple's reasons are purely emotional, legal, financial, or some combination of these or other reasons, recognizing why marriage is important can help them understand the commitment they have to in their long term relationship. Emotional reasons are the most noticeable for people to get married. The companionship, romance, and love a couple shares can compel them to make the commitment to spend the rest of their lives together.

Not all emotional reasons are romantic, however, some people may choose to get married because of fear - fear that they will always be alone or that they will not find someone else to share their life with. Some people may also get married out of anger, either to spite their parents or another individual with whom they've had a relationship. While the positive emotions behind wanting to get married can make the event seem magical, the negative emotions for marriage can be devastating. Couples should carefully examine their emotional motivation for marriage before they commit to their "I do's". Getting married can be very practical for financial reasons. A married couple can take advantage of tax breaks associated with marriage, and the legal commitment of a marriage ensures financial security for providing for children. Sharing medical insurance for couples and families can also be very cost effective, and couples can enjoy financial benefits with regards to communal property, inheritances, retirement accounts, and other financial matters. Many couples also choose to get married for religious reasons. In some faiths, a couple may not be considered married if they only complete a civil ceremony - a religious ceremony is required to confirm their union before the eyes of God. A couple who shares the same or similar faiths may want to honor their relationship with that religious





commitment, or if their faiths are different they may plan an interfaith marriage ceremony to blend their spirituality together. Modern society also puts pressure on couples to marry. While cohabitation and open commitments are more acceptable and more common than ever before, the solid commitment of a marriage ceremony is still sought after as a firm indication of a couple's bond. Many couples feel intense peer pressure to marry from their parents, relatives, or other married friends, particularly if they already have children or plan to start a family. Single individuals may also be pressured to "settle down" and get married, and for some people, the appeal of a party to celebrate their union is incentive enough to get married.

With so many reasons to get married, it is important for couples to truly examine their relationship and decide why they want to make this commitment to one another. Some reasons are good, some reasons are bad, and some reasons are irrelevant to the way a couple may feel about a long term relationship. Every couple who is planning their wedding should carefully consider just why do they want to get married, and they should consider those reasons with realistic expectations. For example, a couple who is deeply in love needs to realize that the fresh romance of a new relationship will not feel the same after a lengthy marriage, and a couple who marries purely for tax benefits needs to realize that the financial reasons for marriage should not be the only reason for tying the knot. We should not forget a certain verse about love which has an important role in marriage. It says "love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things". Whatever reasons do people have in mind to get married; happiness is the sweetest fruit they could ever have. On the contrary, unhappy married life brings sadness. The feelings are hurt and need much time before it heals the damage.

Questions for discussion:

1. What springs to mind when you read / hear the word "marriage"?
2. Why do people get married? Give an example.
3. Why do some people remain single?
4. Describe a happy marriage.
5. Do you want to get married in the future? Why and why not?



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