



TOP 10

**REASONS
YOU SHOULD**

GET MARRIED

Why Get Married?

In today's culture, young people are often encouraged to wait and focus on achieving career-related or personal goals before getting married. A recent popular column from a young female writer went so far as to accuse those marrying in their early twenties of immaturity and naiveté.

by Danielle Bean

I'm sure some people who marry young are immature and naive. Heck, we all are those things to some extent in our early twenties. But speaking as someone who did marry at the age of 22 and will be celebrating 20 years of marriage this July, I would suggest that immature people come in all ages.

Marriage is such a good thing, a sacrament and institution that benefits individuals and our whole society, that every person not called to religious life should consider marriage a worthy goal, in their twenties and beyond. A few caveats, before I share my reasons why:

1. In listing these benefits, I understand that some people (in fact many!) are not married despite the fact that they have been pursuing that goal. This is in no way an indictment of those unmarried individuals who, for whatever reason, have not yet found the person they are to marry.

2. These benefits of marriage presume a healthy married relationship between two individuals who, though not perfect, are well-intentioned and seeking to know and do God's will. Not all marriages fit this description, and those that do not will fail to achieve many of these good things.

3. We are all works in progress, and marriage is hard work. After each benefit of marriage listed below, I offer practical suggestions for ways single people and married people can boost these benefits in marriage. Preparing ourselves before marriage and recommitting ourselves to continually working toward improvement even after many years of marriage will pay off with happy relationships and personal satisfaction in the long run.



Top Ten Reasons You Should Get Married

1. You get to have sex.

Before writing this list, when I asked many people—young and old, male and female—what they thought I should include, I heard this answer again and again. Of course it's not quite as simple as that, but one of the benefits of marriage absolutely is the fact that it provides a stable, committed relationship in which sex is a very good thing. It is because sex is so intensely relationship-building, bond-creating, and life-giving that it is destructive to engage in it outside of marriage. But inside of marriage, it reinforces the bond between man and woman and provides a balanced, stable environment for the possibility of children. So...yeah, you get to have sex.

PRACTICE:

Read up on God's plan for sex, authentic masculinity and femininity, and what it means to be in a healthy sexual relationship. St. John Paul II's group of teachings called the "theology of the body" takes on these weighty topics in beautiful ways, but it can be hard to know where to begin learning about them. *These Beautiful Bones: An Everyday Theology of the Body* by Emily Stimpson is a great way to familiarize yourself with what "theology of the body" is and how it can improve your understanding of yourself and the importance of your sexuality, regardless of your marital status.

2. It helps you become a less selfish person.

Of course I'm not saying that all single people are selfish, but marriage provides a uniquely challenging opportunity to sacrifice one's own desires and preferences in deference to another's, pretty

much every single moment of every single day. Everything from what time you get out of bed in the morning, to the brand of coffee you drink, to the way you spend your Saturday afternoon is influenced by your spouse's preferences and (eventually) the children that you have together. It's a long, slow, dying to oneself that makes you a better person in the end.

PRACTICE:

Pray to be a selfless giver. Look for small ways to "let go" and "give in" throughout your days. Is there a disagreement with a co-worker in which you could give in? Could you perhaps give up a small luxury to which you are accustomed in order to benefit someone else? Sacrifice a quiet afternoon to offer free babysitting for a friend who could use it, skip a couple of lattes and put a little extra in the collection basket, visit someone who is lonely and just listen. Pay attention to the ways in which you are attached to your way of doing things and try to work toward letting go of those attachments.

3. Children lead to long-term personal fulfillment.

I know a 50-year-old man without a retirement fund. He tells me his nine children are the "investment" he and his wife have made in their future. While I don't recommend this particular financial strategy, it is true that children give us personal security and fulfillment we can't get anywhere else. They are human beings who love us, that we co-create with God and our spouses. God has a unique plan for their eternal salvation and the role they will play in future of the Church. Giving the irreplaceable gift of eternal souls to the world is a pretty decent accomplishment and investment in the future.

PRACTICE:

Spend some time with children you know (nieces? nephews? neighbors? friends?) and make an effort to get to know them better. You might

volunteer with a youth group at your parish, teach a religious education class, host a cupcake-decorating party, or simply take some kids out for fun at a playground. Get inspired by kids' fun-loving attitudes and easy smiles while giving them the gift of a grown-up who listens and cares.

4. You gain another family.

We all know the jokes about the terrors of in-laws, and learning to get along with new and different people can be a great challenge, but ideally marriage is the joining of two families. That means when you marry, you gain a whole new set of parents, grandparents, siblings, and cousins—a whole new set of individuals who can love, support, and care for you as only family can. Despite the challenges of in-law relationships, more people to love and be loved by is a net gain.

PRACTICE:

Do your best to become a supportive “family” member to someone who needs you. Is there a young mom you know who is struggling? Reach out to her in friendship. Is there a teen you know who is lonely or drifting in his faith life? Offer him companionship and a listening ear. Do you know an elderly person who could use some help with rides to the doctor or lawn care?



5. Marriage connects you to your community.

There's a reason they call it “settling down.” Married people, especially once they have children, are more likely to buy a home and become active members in a community or neighborhood. This is good for each of us personally as we build relationships and make connections with others who share our circumstances and can support and encourage us in our daily lives, but it is also good for civilization as a whole. Our society thrives when it is built on communities and relationships where individuals care about and support one another, as opposed to a sea of disconnected, self-interested individuals.

PRACTICE:

Do you know your neighbors? Are you willing to make the effort to get to know the people who live around you? If you already live in a thriving community, challenge yourself to participate in community activities and events, even those that might take some time and effort on your part. If you do not live in a thriving community, look for ways to encourage personal connections in your area. Consider hosting a fund-raiser or organizing a “meet and greet” in your apartment complex or neighborhood.

6. Your spouse is a built-in support system.

Do you want to go back to school? Are you attempting to care for an aging parent while also caring for your own young children? Do you want to start a small business? Do you have a child with special needs who needs special care and support? Are you planning to run a marathon in the spring? Whatever your personal challenges or goals, a married relationship can give you the kind of support you need to succeed. Life throws crazy challenges at us sometimes, and having a committed relationship with someone you know will be “on your team” can make all the difference between hope and despair.



PRACTICE:

Think of an important goal you have achieved in your life and those who helped you achieve it. Did a high school teacher give you the confidence you needed to apply to college and earn an important degree? Did a friend or coach inspire you to try your best in an athletic competition? Did your parents give you financial support while you started a business? Make a phone call to say “thank you” or write a thank-you note to someone who has supported you and helped you achieve your goals. Let them know how important their support has been.

7. Marriage gives you balance.

Men and women are meant to complement one another. Generally speaking, masculine and feminine perspectives are very different in ways that balance and enhance one another. Nowhere is this more evident than in a married relationship where the balance between masculine and feminine traits and preferences provide daily fodder for both large disagreements and great achievements. Children need both a mother and a father, because the unique gifts and talents of each sex are necessary and good. The daily struggle to bring out the best in ourselves and one another, despite our differences, is precisely the kind of personal challenge we need to make us better people, better spouses, and better parents in the end.

PRACTICE:

Make an effort to get to know members of the opposite sex more personally. If you are a man, you might join a book club that is mostly made up of women and listen carefully to the ways in which their perspectives are different from your own. If you are a woman, you might take a class in a predominantly male field and see what you can learn from the guys there. Challenge yourself to notice and appreciate the differences between the sexes more completely.

8. Marriage keeps you healthy.

According to a University of Missouri expert in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies department, men and women in happily married relationships are generally healthier than their unmarried counterparts. Our physical health is connected to our mental health, and satisfaction in our personal relationships, especially one as important as marriage, reduces stress and increases feelings of confidence and well-being that translate into good physical health. Marriage also provides someone that you must “answer to” with regard to your physical health. Many of us might not eat well, exercise, or schedule regular check-ups without a spouse who reminds us to do so, or without the feeling of responsibility to care for oneself that comes in a committed relationship, especially once you have children.

PRACTICE:

Think of a way you can improve your health, starting today. Enlist a friend as an “accountability buddy” as you take on a new commitment to exercise, lose weight, quit smoking, eat well, or reduce stress in your life. Set goals together and celebrate even small successes as you work toward taking better care of yourselves.

9. Marriage broadens your horizons.

I wouldn't know much about football if I hadn't married a man who never misses a Steelers game, and he wouldn't know much about Jane Austen novels if he hadn't married a woman with a passion for them. Our spouses have their own sets of interests, hobbies, and pursuits that expand and change through the years, and as a result we have ongoing opportunities to grow, change, learn, and broaden our horizons in new and unexpected ways. We might not always share the depths of their passions, but we certainly can challenge ourselves to grow in mutually beneficial ways. Take a surf lesson, bake a soufflé, go to a boat show! Sure, why not?

PRACTICE:

Challenge yourself! Think of something you have never attempted to do because the idea of it is a little bit scary or uncomfortable. It doesn't have to be as crazy as cliff-diving; it might be something as simple as participating in a spiritual study at your church. Whatever it is, make a commitment to stretch outside of your comfort zone and grow a little.

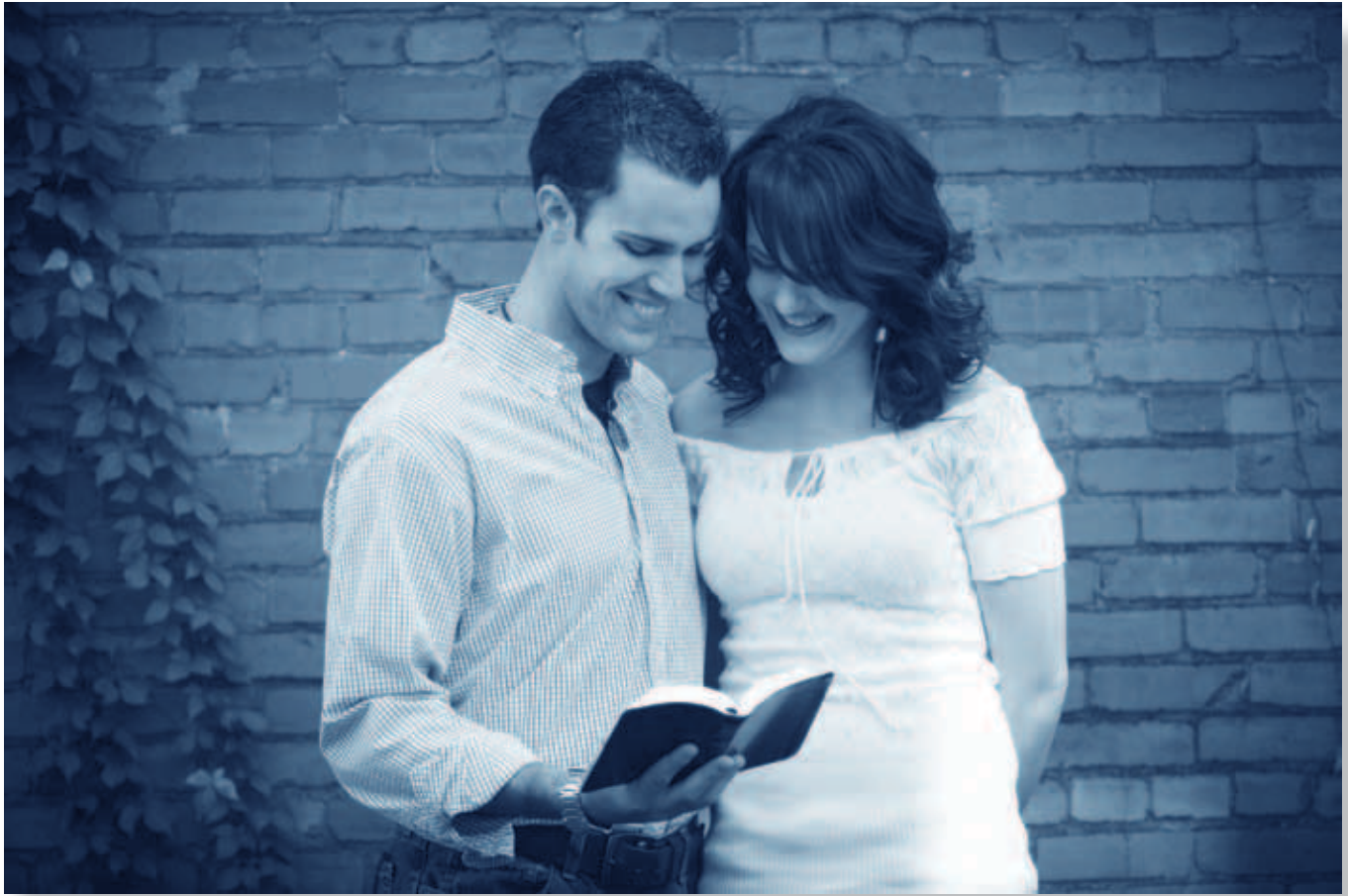
10. You get a partner in prayer.

I love my extended family, but I don't always remember to pray for each of them individually every day. But I do remember to pray for my husband every day, and he prays for me. Marriage and the family life that follows from it creates a unique opportunity for prayerful sacrifice every single day of your life. Before I was married, when I heard people say that married couples help one another get to heaven, I pictured couples holding hands and praying together. While marriage includes some of that, I have come to realize that an even more powerful way that spouses bring one another closer to Christ is through the kind of

.....

***“Marriage
and the
family life
that follows
from it
creates
a unique
opportunity
for prayerful
sacrifice every
single day
of your life.”***

.....



personal sacrifice, prayer, and clinging to Christ that marriage requires of us on a daily basis. It's not always romantic or fun, but it is exactly the kind of self-sacrifice and practice of humility most of us humans need on our way to heaven.

PRACTICE:

If you're single, make it a habit to pray for your future spouse. Pray that God will protect that person from harm and help him or her grow in virtue. Pray for the grace and strength to be a worthy spouse for the mate God has planned for you.

In a culture that too often devalues marriage, it is important for Christians to bear witness to the benefits of marriage for individuals, families, and society at large. Recognizing the importance of marriage, however, does not mean pretending that it's all hearts and roses. Real marriages take real work and need real support in order to flourish.

Working together, we can give voice to the unique joys and challenges of married life, support the institution of marriage, and pray for single and married people alike, that we all might grow closer to the Lord.





Danielle Bean, a mother of eight, folds laundry and loads the dishwasher while taking conference calls. She is publisher of *Catholic Digest* and a contributor for the CatholicMatch Institute. She also hosts a Catholic women's talk show, *The Gist*, now in its fourth season of production, on CatholicTV. Danielle's latest book, *Momnipotent: The Not-So Perfect Woman's Guide to Catholic Motherhood*, is available from Ascension Press.

catholicmatch[®]
I N S T I T U T E

www.CatholicMatchInstitute.com
©2014 CatholicMatch, LLC. All rights reserved.

*To order copies individually or in bulk,
visit CatholicMatchInstitute.com
or call 888-267-8885 x 3.*

