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What is marriage? Marriage is “ the institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family” (Marriage 729).

The fact is, marriage, to most of society, is something much more than that. To some, marriage is the uniting of their souls; to others, it is merely an escape from their fear, their pain, and their agony. The sad truth about it is that many of those marriages will end in divorce.

So how do couples know if what they have will last forever? It is impossible to know for sure. No one can tell them that they definitely have what it takes to make a marriage last. Marriage is about compromise and understanding.

It is also about give and take. If one party in the marriage is unwilling to give, and only takes, the marriage will be short lived. Statistics show that in 1998, 2, 256, 000 couples became married, and 1, 135, 000 couples became divorced (Fast 1, 2). For every two couples getting married, there is one that is getting divorced. In fact, half of ALL marriages end in divorce (Ayer 41).

That is a sad reality to face. Those percentage rates increase as the age of the participant's decrease. It seems these days, fewer and fewer teens between the ages of 14 and 18 are getting married. This is a change for the better.

Teens are usually not prepared for marriage. Marriage comes with many responsibilities; most of which teens are not prepared to handle. “ Early marriage, though possessing certain inherent dangers, is widely practiced in contemporary America” (Teenage 1). Even if teens feel they have the

potential for a lasting marriage, they should still wait to become married.

One of many arguments against this is that if the teens feel they are “destined” to be together and they wait to become married, there is a strong potential for pregnancy before marriage. However, just because teens wait to become married does not mean that they wait to share the privileges that married couples share. Today, sex before marriage is widely practiced. Many couples, who are not even considering marriage, have sex.

Chances are that if a teen couple is thinking about marriage, they probably have already had intercourse. Allowing the teens to become married would only encourage sex before they are fully prepared to handle the responsibilities that come along with it, such as pregnancy. Some may argue that if teens feel they have the potential for a lasting marriage, they should not have to wait; however, just because the teens think they have what it takes, does not mean they actually have what it takes. They really do not know what it takes to make a marriage last.

The only thing they know is what they have seen, i. e. in their parents' marriages. Sadly, that seems like a bad place to look for an influence, as so many marriages today are failing. It is unlikely that they will receive useful information out of an unsuccessful marriage. Today, “married couples are so busy managing their marital lives that they tend to eliminate all the fun of being together” (Holt 1).

Teens will not be able to know what is needed to make a marriage work until they have a glimpse of what marriage is really all about. Statistics show that if a seventeen-year old girl waits two years before marrying, it can cut her

chances of becoming divorced in half (Ayer 52). Teens need to wait and see if they can grow with one another. If they can learn to do that, they are on the pathway to finding a happy marriage.

After all, “ change yourself and your partner will change” (Tobin 2). Others may still have the old fashion beliefs. They feel that just cause for teens to get married would be if the teen was already pregnant.

They see it as the right choice to make. They feel that the baby should have a chance to grow up in a caring household with a loving mother and father. The problem with this is that if the teens are not strong enough to work out even the littlest of problems,