

## WARNING SIGNS FOR DADS

Check any of the following that may apply to you:

1. During the last year, I have been with my family for dinner each evening, with the exception of a few nights when I worked late. \_\_\_\_\_
2. During the last year, I have been physically present for at least one birthday, holiday or anniversary celebration with my spouse and/or children. \_\_\_\_\_
3. During the last year, we did have a week-long (or longer) family vacation. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I know the names of my children's best friends. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I do have a weekly date-night with my spouse. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I try to spend at least a half-hour of 1-on-1 time with each of my children on a weekly basis. \_\_\_\_\_
7. When I travel, I attempt to call home to speak to my spouse and/or children. \_\_\_\_\_
8. At least once during the past year my spouse has expressed concern that I might be working too hard or traveling too much. \_\_\_\_\_
9. During the past year I have missed only one special school event for my children and/or grandchildren. \_\_\_\_\_
10. As a rule, when I travel, I always leave an itinerary with contact information for my spouse. \_\_\_\_\_

### Scoring

If you checked them all —you are faultless or you have a poor memory.

- 11-15 Almost Super Dad! Way to go!  
6-10 Fairly typical, so don't feel bad — there is hope!  
1-5 You are in need of a vacation with spouse and family.

### THE TOP 5 BEHAVIORS FOR SAFEGUARDING A LONG AND HAPPY MARRIAGE

- 1—You respect and trust each other.
- 2—You don't go to bed angry.
- 4—You say "I love you" often.
- 5—You always kiss each other good night.
- 5—You have a good argument once in a while.

*Reference:* Susan Lewis "Secrets to Long-Lasting Marriages Revealed in Senior Survey" Reuters, February 4, 2008, pp. 30, 31.

*Reference:* Louis Upkins, Jr., *Treat Me Like a Customer: Using Lessons from Work to Succeed in Life*, Zondervan, 2009, pp. 162-164.

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# the Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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## NEVER GIVE UP!

By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES.

*In this month of love in which as we celebrate marriage, we need to remind ourselves that marriage is a gift from our Creator.*

Last year my wife and I experienced a very important milestone in our marriage. We celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. (Interestingly, fifteen of those years I have had the privilege of writing this monthly

*bulletin.*) To distinguish our four-decade landmark, we decided to take a noteworthy celebration vacation through eight central European countries. Since I knew we would travel through these remarkable nation states by bus, rail and boat, I purposely put into my hand luggage four books to read while I waited for the next mode of transportation. One of the books really impressed me. It was a practical and constructive book about marriage entitled: *Treat Me Like a Customer: Using Lessons from Work to Succeed in Life*. The author, Louis Upkins, Jr., used as his central argument that what is good for the business world; the need to respect and maintain ongoing relationships with our customers, is much more important and valuable within our personal lives with our marriage partner.

As you might expect, each of his chapters used a different situation to compare and contrast between the world of business and the world of one's immediate and extended family, but more importantly with the spouse. He makes it very clear how the exact same principles apply within the interactions of these two

relationship worlds. Here are just a few examples from his 18 chapters:

**Learning on the job:** Just as one learns the ropes in the commercial world so in marriage you must learn on the job what works or doesn't work as you and your marriage partner establish your new home.

Stewardship; a total lifestyle that includes our expenditures of time for our family relationships.

*"Marriage is not a ritual or an end. It is a long, intricate, intimate dance together and nothing matters more than your own sense of balance and your choice of partner." — Amy Bloom.*

### **Do you really know your customer?**

In the field of sales the best way to gain the competitive edge is to actually understand your client. Likewise in marriage, to really identify with your spouse you must truly understand them. To help you do this, **AS YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS**; do you know where your spouse would like to vacation next year? What household chore does your spouse dislike the most? Can you name the last book your spouse read? And finally, men what one thing do you do that annoys your wife and what is the greatest thing that brings her the most happiness?

### **When your customer gets upset:**

Here Upkins deals with how your business clients react to poor service. He compares that situation to moments your wife disagrees with you about the household duties, the children's problems or the best way to handle the in-laws. One of the chapters that impressed me the most was the one entitled "Never Give Up". As a pastor I have seen too many couples just give up and let their marriage fail. Unfortunately, we live in a world where one out of every five marriages ends in divorce. Not only does divorce drag in its wake a great deal of emotional pain, but from an economic or stewardship

viewpoint, it will affect both partners and their children for the rest of their lives.

Let's take an average husband who has been married for nineteen years, has two wonderful children, lives in an elegant home and is director of his department. Suddenly and unexpectedly, he decides he wants to be free of his marriage.

Although the Christian community is not protected from divorce (one out of five), the Scriptures, both in text and with abundant examples, explains why we need to avoid divorce at all cost. If our average husband decides to divorce his wife, just looking at the economic segment, he is going to lose a great deal of money. According to one dispute resolution center the legal fees alone on an average divorce can run as high as \$15,000 or more. In addition, he will have to pay his former spouse child support and healthcare costs until both children reach the age of eighteen. The average annual amount of child support can be \$4,000. Hence, the dollar cost for his two children



could be \$8,000 per year. Whether or not he lives in a 'no fault' state or not, the fact that he is the sole provider for his family means he is obligated to provide monthly alimony payments to his spouse to allow her to continue to maintain her current lifestyle, and that cost is somewhere in the financial neighborhood of \$3,000 a month. Using the same example, the

state of California might order the spouse to pay 25% of his annual income to his wife as spousal support. The amount of years this payment will continue is completely up to the judge's discretion.

But that's just the economic segment. There are expenditures that in no way have a dollar value. He will have to share his children's lives or could even lose custody of his kids. He will

not be able to tuck them into bed or offer a prayer of blessing over them each evening. No longer can he hug and kiss his children awake each morning. All the family traditions will become a fruit salad of misconstrued emotions and confused feelings by both adults and children. Every time he picks up or drops off his two kids

he will be forced to deal with their emotions as well as his own. He may find one child becomes more aggressive and uncooperative, while the other sibling may withdraw and become disheartened and sad. Tragically, the effects of a divorce may continue into the next generation.

Too often both spouses think that separating rather than choosing to work out their differences will bring them happiness. The Institute for American Values conducted a survey and found that divorced couples were no happier five years after their breakup than unhappily married adults who chose to stay together. Interestingly, the data shows that if a couple is unhappy the chances of their being happily married in five years are 64% if they stay and work out their problems, but only 19% if they choose to end their marriage.

In this month of love and as we celebrate marriage, we need to remind ourselves that this fundamental institution was given to us by The Creator. If rightly understood and practiced, we can not only add dimensions to our lives, but we will become *better* people as a direct result of the other person's love and support.

**Bottom line: Never give up on your marriage.**

*"Being a good husband is like being a gardener: You got to give your partner lots of water and sunshine (Love and support)." — Jack Black, Film Star of Gulliver's Travels.*