Marriage involves a publicly declared commitment which is a stronger basis for the security which enables children to grow and flourish than uncommitted relationships. Marriage creates a unit that performs better materially and economically. This not only benefits those in the family but also increases the likelihood of a beneficial impact for society. Marriage statistics suggest a correlation with lower rates of violence and domestic violence. These are problems that plague our society.

Marriage is significant for society. Evidence strongly suggests that outcomes for children, on a range of social and emotional indicators, are better when parents are married. And outcomes for adults who are married are generally better than in other co-habiting arrangements. Healthy marriages are a foundation for strong families and strong communities. Healthy marriages are a foundation for strong families and strong communities.
The rate of marriage has declined over recent decades in favour of casual and de facto relationships. This has gone hand-in-hand with a rise in the rate of divorce.

Some people focus on recent challenges to the legal definition of marriage as a factor in the erosion of marriage. But this is more a symptom than a cause of the problem.

Andrew J. Cherlin, Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University, says that two shifts occurred around the start of the 20th century – over 100 years ago – that have had a serious impact on marriage.1

1. **Radical individualism** – making self-interest the top priority
2. **‘Companionate marriage’** – the notion that marriage is just about adult companionship, exacerbated today by the idea that romantic love is sufficient basis to get married.

If the present common attitude to marriage is not changed for a better one that appreciates the importance of marriage, the best we can expect is that the situation will drift along – maybe a bit better at some times, maybe a bit worse at others.

At worst, we may see a continual slide over time away from marriage, from commitment, and from God.

### What do we need to do?

1. **Commit** to doing what you can to change things.
2. **Recognise** that marriage between a man and a woman is part of God’s created order. As such it is relevant for everyone – not just Christians or ‘religious’ people.
3. **Learn** about God’s purpose, plan, and provision for marriage.
4. **Commit** to building your marriage based on God’s plan, as a model and encouragement to others, and a witness to God.
5. **Be available** to help others, especially younger marrieds.
6. **Talk about marriage** – especially to those who don’t know God or who haven’t had good role models.
7. **Celebrate marriage** - in your churches, and even better – outside your churches, in the community.
8. **Work together** – connect to New Zealand Christian Network via the web. If you are able, consider supporting the Network and the work we do promoting Marriage Week.
9. **Check out** [www.marriageweek.org.nz](http://www.marriageweek.org.nz) and mark Marriage Week 7-14 February each year in your calendar.

This is a short paper developed by the Healthy Marriage Discussion group organised by New Zealand Christian Network. Please offer any comments or suggestions you have.