

The Numbers Are In, and They Are Good For Marriages - Ron Stullenbarger

I was researching the statistics on marriage and divorce in the United States. What I found was somewhat shocking to me. You've probably heard and even quoted the statistic: *"50 percent of marriages end in divorce, and it's the same — or worse — for Christians."* I have read and quoted that statistic over the years — maybe you have too. But did you ever see the statistics to back that number up? Me either. I just accepted it. Amazingly, the number came from **projections** in the late 1970s and early 80s of **anticipated** rising divorce rates for decades to come. It is like *"Global Warming"* statistics. When you look into it, the statistics are based on *"computer models."* The numbers are *"made up"* and are quite different from the **actual** statistics.

Concerning the marriage and divorce statistics, the actual numbers have never even been close to the *"half of all marriages"* mark. Researcher Shaunti Feldhahn, disappointed at the pervasive *"50 percent myth,"* set out to bring together better data for an accurate story. Her findings? The data is complex, but closer to 20-25 percent of marriages end in divorce, and even less — perhaps as low as the single digits — of churchgoing spouses part ways. The actual average? About 80 percent of marriages are happy, at least happy enough to stay together. Feldhahn said, *"I started coming across all this data that seemed to completely contradict the conventional wisdom. Like that according to 2009 Census Bureau numbers, 72 percent of people are still married to their first spouse — and the 28% who aren't, includes people who were married for years until a spouse died! When I would share some of those numbers with people, the reactions were sometimes dramatic. Standing in front of me, I saw the difference between being defeated and feeling hopeful."*

That is good news! But it does not mean that we should be satisfied and that we do not need to work on our marriage relationships. ***"Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate"*** (Mark 10:9).