



# STUDY GUIDE

BE A MAN.  
GET MARRIED.

---

**KEY TERMS:**

marriage  
identity

transformative  
benefits

premium

<b>NOTE-TAKING COLUMN:</b> Complete this section <i>during</i> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	<b>CUE COLUMN:</b> Complete this section <i>after</i> the video.
<p>What part of Mr. Taulbee's attitude changed after he got married?</p> <p>In what major way does marriage transform a man's social world?</p> <p>Why do employers prefer and promote men who are married?</p>	<p>How does marriage transform a man?</p> <p>Why is marriage so important for men?</p>

## DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Professor Wilcox asks of marriage, “But of what value is it today?” How would you answer his question? Explain. Why do you think that so many younger people today do not necessarily see the value of marriage?
- Later, Professor Wilcox characterizes Mr. Taulbee’s experience as a discovery that, “... Marriage has a transformative effect on the behavior, emotional health, and financial well-being of adults, especially men,” and that, “Men who see no need to marry, or who are reluctant to marry until they make more money, could benefit from Taulbee’s discovery...” In what ways, specifically, might marriage transform a man? What does Mr. Taulbee’s experience reflect? How might unmarried men benefit from Mr. Taulbee’s ‘discovery?’
- Professor Wilcox shares with us that Steven Nock’s study found, “...that marriage engenders an ethic of responsibility among men, as well as a newfound sense of meaning and status in the world.” Why do you think that men need to find a ‘sense of meaning and status?’ Why might marriage be able to be the catalyst for that change, in a way that other life factors may not?
- During the video, Professor Wilcox discusses a premium, or value, that marriage brings to a man. Perhaps the most important is when he states, “...married men benefit from the advice and encouragement of their wives who have an obvious interest in their success.” Why and how can the support from a wife be such a valuable asset to a man? In what other ways can a wife help a man to mature, develop, and achieve his potential?
- Towards the end of the video we learn that, “...despite all the good news we keep learning about the benefits of marriage, the institution is in retreat.” What factors do you think are contributing to the decline of marriage? Do you think that marriage is still an institution that has value? Why or why not?

## EXTEND THE LEARNING:

### CASE STUDY: Commitment

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “5 Things You Need To Know About Black Lives Matter,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What are the two aspects of commitment? How can emphasizing one aspect over another direct a person’s attitude towards their marriage?
- What is the author’s conclusion of why people voluntarily enter into commitments like marriage? Do you agree with his conclusion? Why or why not?
- In what ways do you think a person’s attitude towards marriage informs their sense of value towards marriage as an institution? Do you think that public perception of marriage has impacted its value? Why or why not?



# QUIZ

BE A MAN.  
GET MARRIED.

---

1. What happened to Doug Taulbee after he got married?
  - a. He quickly got divorced.
  - b. He lost his job.
  - c. He made more money.
  - d. He got demoted.
  
2. On average, married men earn almost \_\_\_\_\_ more than their single peers.
  - a. 2%
  - b. 12
  - c. 20%
  - d.42%
  
3. Marriage has a transformative effect on men's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. behavior
  - b. finances
  - c. emotional health
  - d. All of the above.
  
4. In 1960, \_\_\_\_ of all adults ages 18 and older were married. Today, it's\_\_\_\_.
  - a. 72%; 49%
  - b. 93%; 64%
  - c. 38%; 49%
  - d. 61%; 72%
  
5. There is evidence that employers prefer and promote men who are unmarried.
  - a. True
  - b. False



# QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

BE A MAN.  
GET MARRIED.

---

1. What happened to Doug Taulbee after he got married?
  - a. He quickly got divorced.
  - b. He lost his job.
  - c. He made more money.
  - d. He got demoted.
  
2. On average, married men earn almost \_\_\_\_\_ more than their single peers.
  - a. 2%
  - b. 12
  - c. 20%
  - d.42%
  
3. Marriage has a transformative effect on men's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. behavior
  - b. finances
  - c. emotional health
  - d. All of the above.
  
4. In 1960, \_\_\_\_ of all adults ages 18 and older were married. Today, it's\_\_\_\_.
  - a. 72%; 49%
  - b. 93%; 64%
  - c. 38%; 49%
  - d. 61%; 72%
  
5. There is evidence that employers prefer and promote men who are unmarried.
  - a. True
  - b. False



[Mark D. White Ph.D. Maybe It's Just Me, But...](#)

## Why Get Married? The Value of Commitment

Finding the silver lining in commitment...  
Posted Aug 03, 2010

One question that commenters often ask in response to any posts on this site regarding [marriage](#), [divorce](#), or [adultery](#), is "why get married at all?" For instance, one [recent commenter](#) to an [earlier post of mine on adultery](#) wrote:

*If I want to "be with" a man and he with me, why can't we just agree to be together and that's that? Why all of the vows, rings, stigma, [government](#) involvement and harsh rules? Marriage is a business. It's not about [love](#) or emotional connection...it's about feeling like you can rightfully own another person.*

In other words (if I may paraphrase), why isn't love enough? Why do people have to make commitments in front of (take your pick) God, the state, family, friends, the community, and so forth?

This is a very good question, and one I struggled with for years myself, so let's take a deeper look. We'll discuss two aspects of commitment, positive and negative, and then two sources of it, external and internal. I argue that the bad rap that commitment and marriage all often get is due to the the combination of the negative aspect of commitment and the external source of it.

Commitment, in this sense, has two aspects, one negative and one positive. The one which commenters like the one quoted above criticize is the negative one, which focuses on constraints and rules. That is the "business" or contractual aspect of marriage, the "thou shalt nots" that get us into so much trouble when we decide "yes, we shall."



Source: <http://www.hubbardphotography.com/vancouver-wedding-photographer.html>

But there is an important but neglected positive aspect that explains why people voluntarily enter into commitments like marriage: it is way of expressing your love and devotion to another person. Not the only way, of course, but a well-established and particularly declarative way.

And these two aspects of commitment are, to a large extent, inseparable: the public declaration of devotion would not mean as much without the promised made therein. The fact that, in a traditional wedding ceremony, a couple stands up in front of the people who mean the most to them in the world and promise to love each other, support each other, and be true to each other, is what gives that public statement its force. It's also what makes it so heartbreaking, especially to those in attendance at the wedding, when those vows are broken (even if for good reason). And it can be safely assumed that no one would make such promises if not to express to the other person his or her devotion; we rarely make commitments for no reason. Rather, the commitments *are* the expression of love and devotion.

Now what I imagine happens with many if not most couples is that they start out emphasizing the positive aspect of the marriage commitment, and then over time the focus shifts to the negative. They take their mutual love and devotion for granted as the passion and lust fade, and the rules and constraints take center stage—and these rules and constraints end up seeming all the more binding and unfair in comparison.

This is where the sources of commitment come in. When a couple first declares their love and devotion to each other, and makes that commitment, it comes from their hearts—they want to make those promises voluntarily in expression of their love. In other words, the source of that commitment is internal. Even during the wedding ceremony, I doubt it seems like the priest, rabbi, justice of the peace, or Elvis is shackling the couple with the wedding vows—they *want* to make them. When the commitment is voluntarily, the positive aspect gets all the emphasis, and the negative hardly seems important. After all, why would I ever want to desert, ignore, or be disloyal to this fantastic person who I'm completely in love with? Perish the thought...

...until later on, when the bloom falls from the rose. Now the promises do not seem so voluntary, the ring seems heavier, and marriage seems more like the list of "thou shalt nots." At this point, commitment seems externally coerced, a institutional legacy of the foolishness of youth that only now made be paid for. This is even more true for marriages that did not start so rosy, that were somewhat contrived or forced by circumstances from the beginning. But even the mostly glorious, romantic marriages can decline over time, and one or both partners may start to resent the promises they once made so freely.

So when partners forget why they said their vows and made their promises in the first place, their meaning is lost, and only the ball and chain remains. One way to avoid this, obviously, is to not forget, to keep the love alive, to celebrate what brought you together in the first place. Then the rules won't seem as important, and the voluntariness of them will almost make them irrelevant—in a sense, the marriage begins anew. (There are many posts by other bloggers here that offer recommendations how to do exactly this.)



Source: <http://www.hubbardphotography.com/vancouver-wedding-photographer.html>

I think part of blame for the excessive emphasis on the negative aspect of commitment must also be laid on the contractual [nature](#) of marriage (with its historical roots in exchange of property rather than affection). Commercial entities commit themselves to certain actions contractually to elicit certain benefits; the constraints are a means to an end, and something they would avoid if it were at all possible. But as I explained above, the marital promises are part and parcel of the expression of love and devotion; the partners want to make these promises because they reinforce to each other their love. Thinking of marriage as just a contract makes this point harder to see, and invites [cynicism](#) and skepticism.

But isn't commitment counterproductive? If your partner is forced to be faithful, how can you know he or she is being faithful out of love rather than out of obedience or [fear](#) of reprisal? This is another product of the external or contractual view of commitment that emphasizes the constraints over what they express. If indeed your partner must be induced to be faithful, then no, he or she is not truly faithful, and if your partner were truly faithful, the rules and constraints would not matter. So, in a sense, external commitment does reduce its expressive value, that's true.

But... no one is perfect. Few people imagine (or at least admit to themselves) on their wedding day that they will ever be tempted to cheat on their beloved, but we know all too well that many do cheat (and presumably more are tempted). This is exactly where the external view of the marital promise has its value: when human weakness is at play. Even the most devoted partner may be tempted, and he or she may not be strong enough to resist without the commitment (and some aren't strong enough even with it). As the legal philosopher H.L.A. Hart explains in his classic book, [\*The Concept of Law\*](#), it is in this way that laws bind even the best of us; when tempted to skirt the law, our respect for the law, if we hold to it internally, may keep us to the straight and narrow.

Basically, if commitments (like marriage) are freely chosen and adhered to, they won't seem like commitments at all, but they will still have all the meaning that commitments ideally have. But when we start thinking of our commitments only as commitments, and lose sight of the reason we made them, then the trouble starts.

**Mark D. White** is the chair of the Department of Philosophy at the College of Staten Island/CUNY.