



## The Top 10 Issues Facing Marriage and Family Today

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In an interesting survey, LifeWay researchers solicited responses as to the “Top 10 Issues Facing Today’s Family.” More than 2,000 people from around the country were part of this project. What are these top 10 issues facing today’s family? Here are the results:

1. Anti-Christian culture
2. Divorce
3. Busyness
4. Absent father figure
5. Lack of discipline
6. Financial pressures
7. Lack of communication
8. Negative media influences
9. Balance of work and family
10. Materialism

What are we to make of this list? Immediately, we are struck by the superficiality of responses. What does it mean for “anti-Christian culture” to be the #1 issue facing today’s family (see also #8: negative media influences)? How does this not amount to shifting the blame for failing Christian marriages to the surrounding culture and the favorite enemy, the media? Is it the media’s fault if our marriages are failing?

What does it mean for divorce to be #2? Is divorce an “issue” marriages face or is it the result of a deeper, underlying problem that needs to be addressed as the root cause? And are our marriages failing merely because we are too busy (#3) or struggle to balance work and family demands (#9)? This again seems to be to confuse a surface matter with deeper, underlying issues. Also, to be sure, all of us face financial pressures. We hardly need a survey to know this.

The same can be said regarding #7, lack of communication. As Christians, are we really saying that one of the main needs of Christian marriages is to improve spousal patterns of communication? Is this not what non-Christian counselors are saying as well? How, then, are we different in our prescriptions for failing marriages than the world at large? Should we not be different?

An absent father figure (#4) and lack of discipline (#5) may often go hand in hand, yet once again, this is clearly the result of other problems, not an “issue” marriages face. The root cause lies somewhere else, and so the remedy must start at this deeper point as well. The same is true for materialism, which is undoubtedly a problem for marriages, but only symptomatic of deeper issues.

If all those “Top 10 Issues Facing Today’s Family,” then, are merely symptomatic, what is the primary root cause of the failure of Christian marriages today? In my judgment, it is people’s *lack of grounding in biblical teaching on marriage and the family*. As we try to lay out

in our book [\*God, Marriage & Family\*](#), the current *cultural* crisis surrounding marriage is really symptomatic of a deeper *spiritual* crisis that can be remedied only by a *return to the biblical foundation*, that is, the scriptural teaching on marriage and the family.

Clearly, it is not for lack of good intentions that Christian marriages fail. Nor is it lack of Christian resources. These are aplenty. What is lacking is the right kind of resources, plus the recognition that marriage and family are at the heart a divine institution that is the target of intense spiritual warfare. For this reason, good intentions or superficial remedies are not good enough. Rather, people must once again be taught God’s plan for marriage and the family, and they must commit themselves to live out this teaching as part of their Christian discipleship and as an expression of their witness to Christ in this world.

May I suggest, therefore, that we substitute for the “Top 10 Issues Facing Today’s Family” the *one* issue that is truly foundational for the recovery of Christian marriages and families in our day: the need of Christian men and women to rediscover the biblical teaching on marriage and the family on a profound, spiritual level, and to commit themselves to live by this teaching in the midst of those other issues. I believe that what we will find is that once the root issue is addressed, these other issues will be reduced to mere gnats yapping at our heels.

For further study see [\*God, Marriage & Family\*](#) (2d ed.; Crossway, 2010). See also the [commentary](#) by Albert Mohler on this work; as well as Andreas Köstenberger, “[The Biblical Framework for Marriage](#),” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 4/2 (2006): 24-42.