

What is the Divorce Rate in Your Congregation?

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It's time for a BHAG (big, hairy, audacious goal)!

Marriage is so special and sacred that it is it about time we do "something" big to protect it!

You can do this!

And it will make a HUGE difference!

About 1995 Johnny Carson, late night TV show host, commented that Dalton, Georgia was the divorce capital of the USA. The pastors of Dalton were shocked and alarmed. So they declared war on divorce, established a Community Marriage Policy, and appointed a young seminary graduate to take charge. That's when everything changed! **Working together they dropped the divorce rate 50% in one year!!!**

What will it take for the pastors of Portland, Oregon to stand stronger and more publicly for the marriages in their community and congregations?

Our culture is trending toward relationships that are...

- Shallow
- Narcissistic
- Lazy
- Temporary
- Hurtful

This is not good for anyone.

We don't mean to sound negative. But truth is truth. Look around. We all see it and it breaks our hearts.

Couples deserve something better!

We all need healthy, vital marriages because they...

- Build our character
- Mature our behavior
- Deepen our faith
- Stabilize our community
- Encourage our friends
- Protect our kids

This last point is the most heartbreaking!

Kids need their biological mom and dad and they need them desperately.

Children from a fatherless home are ⁽¹⁾:

- 5 times more likely to commit suicide;
- 32 time more likely to run away;
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders;
- 14 times more likely to commit rape;
- 9 times more likely to drop out of school; 10 times more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol;
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison

Failed marriages hurt those kids we love so much. But failed marriages aren't good for anyone!

We need to intentionally aim higher.

We can turn around this trend. In fact we already have: In Clackamas County the Divorce Rate has dropped 37%

over the past 14 years. In evaluating the impact of cohabitation, we compared Clackamas County with the rest of the State of Oregon and found that if we had had the same marriage and divorce statistics as the rest of Oregon, Clackamas County would have had 3500 fewer marriages, 1900 more divorces and 700 more kids devastated by their parent's divorce.

Many pastors from Clackamas County have signed the Clackamas County Marriage Policy ⁽²⁾ and together are already positively impacting marriage and the families they produce.

This is fantastic! But let's stretch higher. We have a big and audacious God. So may we challenge you to bigger and more audacious goals?

What would be big and audacious goals for the couples of your congregation?

If there have been five divorces in the past year, maybe a big, hairy audacious goal might be to reduce the divorces to four? Or to two, or one? I don't think having a goal of one divorce is beyond God's ability.

What if our goal was to build a culture that would have no divorces? Absolutely none!

What if our goal was that every marriage was thriving, exciting and strong?

What if our goal was that every parent was more attentive, positive and affirming?

Are my dreams impossible?

I don't think so.

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26 NIV)

Let's set goals that are big, hairy and audacious and ... impossible!

The Greater Portland Community Marriage Policy ⁽²⁾ offers guidance in structuring sub-goals toward building healthy marriage in your congregation. Every Marriage Matters might act in an advisory capacity.

Remember the old adage: "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail."

For our children's sake, let's not fail.

"If God is your partner, you better have large plans." – D.L. Moody

That's what I want – large plans. (Which is just another way to say big, hairy and audacious.)

- (1) According to the Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Justice as reported by <https://thefatherlessgeneration.wordpress.com/statistics>
- (2) The Clackamas County Marriage Policy was renamed the Greater Portland Community Marriage Policy in 2009

