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## Marriage A Big, Big Deal

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FOR MOST PEOPLE in a free society who decide to get married, the most important factors in their lives are who they marry and how the marriage works.

Life is difficult. Out there in the world of commerce or agriculture or law or medicine or bureaucracy or the military, the individual is merely a cog in the machine. Expected to produce so many widgets, attend so many meetings, file so many income tax returns that the way he feels, the kind of mood he's in, all of that is extremely secondary to what he (or she) produces. What his or her output is for the production of the almighty dollar or the almighty spreadsheet is what counts in the real world outside the home. This means that the outside world is cutting you down to size (as the song goes) a fair amount of time. It leaves you feeling like your life is a routine, like you're a number, a brick in the wall (to quote another song). You—as a person, as an individual—do not count for a lot.

Bear in mind, there are exceptions. Some workplaces make you feel good about yourself and care about you as a soulful human being. But as far as I have been able to tell, these kind of professional environments are in the minority. It is great if you can get into one of them, but it's not a standard part of the workday to make the worker feel good.

### **Shelter from the Storm . . . or Not**

However, if your home is a warm, cozy place with a warm, cozy spouse, you have a fortress against the pressures, anger, and cold of the outside world. This is no small thing. If your home is built upon the rock of love and understanding and caring, you have a shelter from the storm. (Forgive me, but I cannot stop myself from paraphrasing songs. Popular music is a major part of my life.)

#### 4 WHAT WOULD BEN STEIN DO?

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To be sure, and I don't want to kid you about this, as many, many homes are not warm, cozy places. Instead there are many homes that are Roach Motels of anger, sarcasm, an absence of love, and constant fear of explosions of rage. Still other homes are poisoned pools of estrangement and deviousness.

How do you make sure you have the kind of home that works as a fortress and a Sleep Number bed to keep you comfy all of the time, no matter how badly Mister or Missus Recession blows at the door? How do you make sure you have a home in which you feel protected, and not threatened or bored or mystified by what is going on in there? How do you build that happy home you want?

#### **There Are Two Major Ways**

1. Making the right decisions about who you marry.
2. Acting decently and lovingly as a spouse yourself.

These might sound simple. They are in fact incredibly difficult. Let's first take a closer look at making the right decision.