

**Carl Weisman**  
**Q&A**  
*So Why Have You Never Been Married?*

1. **Why did you write *So Why Have You Never Been Married?*** I wrote the book because I honestly could not answer the question “Why have I never been married?” As unbelievable as that sounds, I had difficulty articulating why I am a 49-year-old bachelor. I figured if I could just find other men who were never married and ask them that question, I was sure that I would hear the answer I’ve been looking for. Ironically, by the time I finished the book, I had not heard my answer from one of them. I heard, at least part of my answer, from all of them.
2. **What is the most important thing you hope the reader will learn from your provocative book?** That they are normal and healthy if they’re bachelors at age 40 or older. Men who have never been married are all different. Even though their destinations may be the same (i.e., never married), they have all taken very different journeys to get there. And no matter what stereotype you try to place on them as a group: *womanizer*, *commitment phobic*, it just doesn’t fit. In this group you are as likely to find a man that has been with a 100 women as you are to find one that has been with one, or none. In fact, it is possible that the only thing these men have in common is that they have never married.
3. **How common is it to find an unmarried individual over the age of 40?** There are about 12 million of us in the United States, with slightly more men than women. But there are two really interesting things about that number. First, in 1980, only 6% of men in their early forties were never married, and as of today that number is up to 17%, which is a statistically enormous increase. Men are delaying or avoiding marriage like never before and it’s growing at a significant rate. The other interesting aspect is that, by number or percentages, there are more unmarried men over 40 than women. So whatever the reason, it affects men more.
4. **What do these never-married men think about the institution of marriage?** They hold it in surprisingly high regard. Even the ones that have no desire to ever marry respect the institution, and they especially admire anyone that has the courage to actually partake in it. I don’t think there was a single negative comment made with regard to marriage by these men in all my conversations. But as I thought about it, it makes perfect sense. These men have nothing bad to say about marriage *because* they have never experienced it. They have no reference point.

It would not shock me to discover that bachelors feel better about marriage than divorced men.

5. **What is the number one reason given by these men as to why they are not married?** First you have to divide the group in two. A small percentage of the men have no desire to ever marry, and for them, the overriding influence was their parents. For many, they either witnessed a bad divorce or a bad marriage that probably should have ended in divorce, and now they want no part of it. The other group, which represent the vast majority, say they would like to marry some day. For those men the predominant reason given was that they just haven't met the right person yet. These men would rather be single than be in a marriage with someone they perceive to be the wrong one.
6. **What is the most surprising thing you discovered about why these men haven't married?** Financial issues play a major role in why many have not married. Remember, these men are middle aged and either are not doing very well financially, view themselves as a failure and consequently feel as though they have nothing to offer a prospective mate, or they are doing very well financially and are concerned about the damage that could be done to their finances if they were to marry the wrong person. For some of these men, financial worries paralyze them into not marrying.
7. **What is it that these men fear most about getting married?** Marrying the wrong person and ending up in a marriage that is far worse than being single. The results from the survey confirm this. While only 5% say they are afraid of never marrying, 48% say they are afraid of marrying the wrong person. The other fear they have is divorce. While only about a quarter are afraid of marriage itself, twice that many admitted they are afraid of divorce. These men are not afraid of marriage, they are afraid of a *bad* marriage.
8. **What advice do you have for unmarried people who say they would like to marry someday?** First, I would tell them to have the courage to be honest with themselves about the importance of being married. Some men and women do not want to be married and they need to be honest with themselves about that. I am sure there are at least a few men I spoke with who said they would like to be married who would not. They just haven't gotten around to admitting it to themselves yet. Next, I would tell them that everybody who wants to get married wants to marry the "right one." But before they can find the right one, they need to become the right one. If they want a perfect partner, then they'd better be prepared to show up perfect themselves. And finally, I would tell them that everybody is looking for the perfect person, the perfect "gift," but they need to understand, especially as they get older, that perfect gift may come wrapped differently than they had anticipated and they need to have the courage to open it, or it may be gone forever.
9. **What suggestions do you have for women dating men who have never been married?** I would advise them of two things: First, if they

hope to marry him then they need to get him to declare his intentions. Find out if he is in that small minority that has no desire to ever marry. Then they can make an informed decision. The other thing I would tell them is to be patient. Getting it right is important to these men and they want to be certain they found the right one. If they have waited this long they are probably not going to rush into marriage. If getting married quickly is important to the woman, then that could be a source of friction.

10. **What do you personally think about marriage after having written the book?** I have recognized the indisputable truth that marriage is for some people and not for others. The one-size-fits-all paradigm of the white picket fence and 2.4 children is not for everybody. I only hope that as a society we get to the point where we accept and respect both decisions as being equally valid and worthwhile. I have also become a big believer in renewable marriages. I just think people are living too long, and the one life-long marriage is going to be the exception in the future rather than the norm. Renewable marriages would be a step in the direction of acknowledging that and dealing with the consequences of that.
11. **How has the book changed you?** Prior to writing the book, not only had I never been married, I never even lived with a woman. About 5 weeks after I completed the book I moved in with the woman I am living with now. My friends were shocked to say the least. I can best explain it by saying that during the writing of the book, I had what I call an “Ebenezer” moment. In the story *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge gets a visit from the ghost of Christmas future and I feel as though that is what I experienced speaking with these men. In some cases I was talking to men ten years older than me and I got a chance to see what my future would be like. While that vision of the future didn’t necessarily scare me, it crystallized the fact that if I didn’t change, things wouldn’t change. And I wanted things to change.
12. **What do you think the future holds for the institution of marriage?** I don’t think the rules of marriage will change – the marriage doctrine will still be for life, but I think the expectations for a life-long marriage will change. In the future I believe some people will get married with the complete expectation that it is not forever. I also believe the number of men AND women postponing marriage into their forties will continue as a trend. The reality is that if having kids is not a priority, what’s the rush? With life expectancies being what they are and increasing, it is entirely possible to marry for the first time in your fifties and still have a 40+ year marriage. What’s wrong with that?
13. **Many women are critical of men for being commitment phobic. Do men get a bad wrap?** Some men may have issues or baggage, just as some women do, but the men featured in *So Why Haven’t You Been Married?* are actual heroic in that they *preserve* marriage by knowing they are not yet ready to make that commitment and they should not be walking down the aisle. They either haven’t found the right one, or they

aren't ready to be faithful, or their careers are more important. They act accordingly and really honor and preserve the sanctity of life-long marriage by remaining single. They are not commitment phobic; they are heroes and for that they should be commended.

- 14. Is it a mistake to get married in your 20's?** For most people it is. Getting married is like solving a puzzle. You're looking for that one piece that fits perfectly, and there is no way to find it without looking at the puzzle, which is yourself. The challenge of course is that in your 20s the puzzle keeps changing because most people aren't fully developed as adults yet, but they think they are. So they end up with the right puzzle piece for who they are at that time, but then they change and the piece doesn't fit. Then they begin the process of trying to change one another, which usually doesn't work. It just seems easier to find the right puzzle piece after your puzzle has stabilized. And for most people that doesn't happen until their thirties, or in the case of the men I spoke with, their forties and fifties.
- 15. What are some of the reasons that you say love may not lead to marriage?** I actually discovered seven reasons why love may not lead to marriage. One of the more obvious is an unsatisfying sex life. The man has loving feelings for the women but there is just a sexual incompatibility there which keeps most men from moving forward. They love her but cannot picture a life time of sex with her. A less obvious one is that sometimes *love* is all there is. These people are completely incompatible with each other but somehow manage to create loving feelings between them. This situation is sometimes characterized by couples who fight constantly. In essence they love each other but can't stand each other.
- 16. What are some of the regrets shared by men who have never married?** The most frequently voiced regrets never married men have are over their dating decisions. They either regret not dating the right women, or not dating enough women or sometimes they regret dating the wrong women too long. Not ending relationships sooner. In general they wish they had better relationships strategies and approached relationships differently. I suspect that is the same for never married men and women. The other major regrets they have tend to center on the men's own behavior toward women. Some wish they had been more honest, some wish they were better communicators—including saying I love you more—and some wish they had just been better boyfriends. But I suppose the biggest regret of all, which was only displayed by a handful of the men, is they would not have let the right one get away. They would have tried harder to make it work.
- 17. What do you mean by the "80% dilemma"?** The 80% dilemma can actually affect both men and women and is characterized by a situation where one person in a relationship feels there is too much compatibility there to walk away, but not enough to commit to marriage. If there were less than 80% compatibility it would be easy to walk away and if they were 100% compatible it would be easy to commit to marriage. It's

when there's that little something missing that tends to lead to relationship paralysis. The 80% dilemma is what often times leads to long term relationships which do not end in marriage. It's probably more common among twenty-somethings because they figure they've got plenty of time to find Mr or Ms 100%.

18. **Who tends to be happier: married men, divorced men, or never married men? Why?** From what I understand happily married men are the happiest men of all. I suspect unhappily married men are the most unhappy of all with never-married and divorced men falling somewhere in between. I know from the studies I've read that when it comes to health—especially stress—married men are the healthiest, but never married men are healthier than unhappily married men. So from a health standpoint, if you could foresee an unhappy marriage in your future, you would do better to remain unmarried.
19. **What is the most important thing to a never married man in a long-term relationship?** According the results of the survey what never married men want from a woman in a long term relationship by more than three to one is a good personality and a sense of humor. Tied for a distant second are sexual compatibility, intelligence and physical attractiveness. But what I found during my conversations is what the men thought was most important in a long term relationship is whatever was missing in their last relationship. For instance, if they were most recently with a women they thought talked too much, then what's important now is to find a quieter woman. It makes perfect sense since that tends to be the reason they left that relationship in the first place.
20. **What results surprised you the most in your survey of 1533 never married men over 40?** The importance these men place in finding the right woman. These men in effect have said that being with the right one is more important than being married, and if they don't happen to find the right one, they would just as soon remain single forever. The who is more important than the what. I have also inferred from their responses that they believe not everybody gets a right one in this life, and if that's the case, they aren't going to settle. If their lot in life is to not find their right one, they will remain unmarried. They do not fear going through life having never married. It does not define them.
21. **What role does an never married guy's parents or friends play in their decision to remain single? Does the marriage status of either his parents or close friends influence him at all?** The survey indicates that the parental influence is much stronger than the influence of friends. About half the men surveyed admitted that their parents relationship had at least some influence on why they have yet to marry compared to only a quarter of the men who said their closest friends' influenced the decision. I can add that from the men I spoke to, the parents did not have to get divorced to have a marriage-avoiding affect on them. Just being raised in a house where the parents fought all the time was enough to sour some men away from marriage.