

Tekst 3

Do you mean it?

AN EXPERIMENT begins next week in Louisiana that may interest quite a lot of other Americans.



Almost half of all American marriages now end in divorce. This is, of course, partly the result of a radical change of sexual mores in the West. But many Americans say the figures would not be so bad were it not for the spread of “no-fault” divorce laws. In Louisiana, a couple can legally split after six months’ separation, with no questions asked; in some states, it is not necessary to wait even that long. These laws, say the critics, further erode the idea of marriage as a commitment for life. Now Louisiana is 6 the erosion.

On August 15th, a law creating “covenant marriages”, passed overwhelmingly by the state’s legislature, goes into effect. A “covenant marriage” is an optional form of marriage which is harder to enter and harder to leave than the usual late-1990s sort. 7 it requires pre-marital counselling, and it allows divorce only under one of a number of fairly tight conditions: abandonment, two years’ separation, adultery, physical or sexual abuse, or if a spouse gets sentenced in court to hard labour or death.

For many Louisiana clergymen, this is 8 news. When the Reverend John Lancaster performs weddings at the First Baptist Church of Kenner, he often wonders how long the unions will last. Now he will require any couple who want him to escort them into wedlock to accept 9. “Those few extra steps may save a lot of marriages, help a lot of kids, and that’s worth it.”

10, some local clergymen, and not a few marriage-guidance counsellors, fear the law may work in ways its originators did not intend. John Shalett, programme director at a counselling agency in New Orleans, thinks it 11 be used as a way of learning how to bring marriage to an end. Want a divorce without waiting through two years of separation? Just have an affair, or beat up your wife.

Nor does the new law take into account every kind of destructive behaviour, complains Geraldine Levy, who looks after battered women at a home in New Orleans. There is more to domestic violence than physical battering; you can damage your partner by the language you use, or by the way you exploit an exchange of emotions. Yet, in 12, neither is a ground for immediate divorce.

Despite these 13, many people in Louisiana believe that when the law takes effect, covenant marriages will be a popular choice among young couples. What bride and groom do not think their love will 14? Yes, passions fade, dreary reality forces itself upon the scene. Mr Shalett says that most people do not truly know who they are, or what they want from life, until they have reached their thirties. He worries that the law may lengthen the duration of marriages at the cost of making many of them emotionally barren – which is good neither for the married pair nor for their children. Well, Louisiana now has a chance to find out whether the optimists or the pessimists are right.

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Kies bij iedere open plek in de tekst het juiste antwoord uit de gegeven mogelijkheden.

1p **6** ■

- A encouraging
- B going to measure
- C ignoring
- D trying to stop

1p **7** ■

- A Last but not least,
- B On the other hand,
- C Thus
- D Yet

1p **8** ■

- A excellent
- B old
- C shocking
- D unexpected

1p **9** ■

- A a covenant marriage
- B each other's shortcomings
- C marriage for life
- D the rules of the Church

1p **10** ■

- A Besides
- B However
- C Likewise
- D Therefore

1p **11** ■

- A cannot
- B could
- C should
- D will not

1p **12** ■

- A church laws on marriage
- B covenant marriages
- C most divorce cases
- D no-fault divorce laws

1p **13** ■

- A conditions
- B criticisms
- C recommendations
- D results

1p **14** ■

- A end in divorce
- B experience difficulties
- C get official approval
- D last for ever
- E produce children