

Pastor's Perspective, Loon Lake Times

Is Traditional Marriage Obsolete?

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By Pastor Tim White

If a month could have a theme song, I imagine June's would be "Here Comes the Bride."

It is a fact that more people get married in June than any other month of the year, followed by August, July, and May, in that order. Weddings are wonderful occasions that bring the family together to celebrate the love and lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. However, is marriage really necessary? What does a "piece of paper" (Marriage License) do for a relationship? Besides, people are skipping marriage and just living together every day, and they seem happy, don't they? So, what is the "big deal?"

Before I go any further, I want to say that the views expressed here are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher or staff of the Loon Lake Times. I believe that marriage is to be between one man and one woman in light of the teachings in the Bible, the science of the human body, and as reflected all through nature. Moreover, I have always endeavored to show love and respect towards all people regardless of their stand on various issues, including marriage. All I ask is for the same in return. Furthermore, for those who have been divorced, I am sorry if you have been treated as if you had leprosy by some sorely misguided people in "The Church" (who do not represent all Christians by any means!). Divorce is undesirable, painful, and complicated, but it is not an unpardonable sin, and sadly, sometimes divorce is the only solution because of those with hardened hearts who will always blame others and refuse to admit any guilt on their part."

I could share several Scriptures about marriage with you (like Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:28-31), but you may not even be sure the Bible is trustworthy (a topic I will

address soon). Therefore, let me share data from a non-religious organization that draws from about one hundred leading scholars called “The Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values” (www.americanvalues.org). Their research parallels many other studies about the personal benefits of traditional marriage and its irreplaceable positive impact on society.

The study produced by this particular nonprofit, nonpartisan organization is called “Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences, 3rd edition.” Interestingly, the first edition had twenty-one conclusions, and the second edition had twenty-six. I guess they kept discovering more reasons for “Why Marriage Matters.” It is important to note that these conclusions do not come from preconceived religious beliefs or biased notions about marriage but are the real-life realities they discovered from studying tens of thousands of couples over many years.

First of all – these scholars concluded something quite astonishing that should make us stop and consider from where, or from whom, did marriage originate? Conclusion (#6) states that “Marriage is a virtually universal human institution.” The institution of marriage cannot be traced to a specific culture, religion, ethnicity, or geographic region. Historically, the only role of any government has always been to acknowledge the validity and legal bonds of a marriage between a man and a woman.

So, what did they find out when comparing traditional marriage with cohabiting couples and households? Conclusion #4 summarized their findings by stating, “Cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage.” In support of that conclusion, they state that children in a cohabitation household have “higher levels of psychological problems” (#23), are “less likely to thrive” (#3), and are at “greater risk of child abuse” (#29). Likewise, cohabiting or dating women

have a greater risk of being the victim of domestic violence (#28) and have much higher rates of depression (#25) than married women.

Furthermore, married couples “build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples” (#10), and minorities and disadvantaged women (with children) benefit when they marry and stay married (#11 & 12). The traditional marriage structure provides the best opportunity for family stability, increasing the likelihood of healthy relationships and personal development among adults and their children (conclusions #1, 2, 7, and 8). Of course, marriage alone is not the cure-all for the issues we face today, and other factors will impact these areas of personal development and society as well, but study after study reveals that the best chance for all involved is in the context of traditional marriage. You can get the complete study from their website.

Finally, to those who say they are committed to their partner, what better way to show it than by making it legal and binding. Anything less is to leave oneself an escape route – and there are too many stories of supposed commitment that ended when things got complicated. In July, my wife and I will celebrate 42 years of marriage, and we view that “piece of paper” as our “Declaration of Love and Devotion,” which has profoundly changed us for the better in ways nothing else could. When a couple enters into this kind of marriage relationship, they will also discover the true meaning of love and give the world a picture of the kind of unwavering love God has for you and me. The God who created you loves you “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or health, until at death you depart this earth.” I pray that you know His unwavering and transforming love most of all.