

in sickness and in health

choices that individuals see as available, acceptable, and choice-worthy. Given the clear benefits of marriage, we believe that the state should **not** remain politically neutral, either in procedure or outcome, between marriage and various alternative family structures. Some have sought to redefine civil marriage as a private contract between two individuals regardless of sex, others as a binding union of any number of individuals, and still others as any kind of contractual arrangement for any length of time that is agreeable to any number of consenting adult parties. But in doing so a state would necessarily undermine the social norm which encourages **marriage** as historically understood i.e., the sexually faithful union, intended for life, between **one man and one woman**, open to the begetting and rearing of children. The public goods uniquely provided by marriage are recognizable by reasonable persons, regardless of religious or secular worldview, and thus provide compelling reasons for reinforcing the existing marriage norm in law and public policy.

While the ceremonial form of religious and secular marriages often differs, the meaning of such marriages within the social order has always been similar, which is why the state honours those marriages duly performed by religious authorities. Moreover, current social science evidence on religion and marital success affirms the wisdom of the tradition, which has always recognized and acknowledged the positive role that religion plays in creating and sustaining marriage as a social institution. The majority of people marry in religious institutions, and for many of these people a religious dimension suffuses the whole of family life and solemnizes the marriage vow. It is thus important to recognize the crucial role played by religious institutions in lending critical support for a sustainable marriage culture, on which the whole society depends.

In the last forty years, society has conducted a vast family experiment, and the outcomes are increasingly coming to light via scientific investigations. While no single study is definitive, and there is room at the edges for debate about particular consequences of marriage, the clear preponderance of the evidence shows that intact, married families are superior for adults and especially for children to alternative family arrangements. A great deal of research now exists from the anthropological, sociological, psychological, and economic sciences, demonstrating the empirical benefits of marriage.

In virtually every known human society, the institution of marriage has served and continues to

for better or for worse

serve **three** important public purposes. **First**, marriage is the institution through which societies seek to organize the bearing and rearing of children; it is particularly important in ensuring that children have the **love and support of their father**. **Second**, marriage provides direction, order, and stability to adult sexual unions and to their economic, social, and biological consequences. **Third**, marriage civilizes men, furnishing them with a sense of purpose, norms & social status that orient their lives away from **vice** & toward **virtue**.

Marriage achieves its myriad purposes through both social/biological means that are **not** easily replicated by the various alternatives to marriage. When marriage is strong, children & adults both tend to flourish; **when marriage breaks down, every element of society suffers**.

Keep the flames of your marriage alight with these poetic words of Gibran: Here love begins to render the prose of life into hymns & canticles of praise, with music that is set by night, to be sung in the day. Here love's longing draws back the veil & illumines the recesses of the heart, creating a happiness that no other happiness can surpass but that of the soul when it embraces God. Marriage is the union of two divinities that a third might be born on earth. It is the union of two souls in a strong love for the abolishment of separateness. It is that higher unity which fuses the separate unities within the two spirits. It is the golden ring in a chain whose beginning is a glance, and whose ending is eternity. It is the pure rain that falls from an unblemished sky to fructify & bless the fields of divine nature. As the first glance from the eyes of the beloved is like a seed sown in the human heart & the first kiss of her lips like a flower upon the branch of the Tree of Life, so the union of two lovers in marriage is like the first fruit of the first flower of that seed.

Think; before that knot becomes a noose. Think with these Prophetic words: "Do **not** marry only for a person's looks, for their beauty might become a cause of moral decline. Do **not** marry for the sake of wealth, as this may become a source of sin. Marry rather on the grounds of religious devotion." If your spouse has looks & wealth & most of all, faith, you have stumbled upon a rare human Kohinoor. O Man, if your wife is one with a laser-like intelligence, sharp sense of humor & a compassionate soul — now, that's a centerfold. The stimulus that matters most reaches our hearts & minds. Treasure them. Beware, O Man, **beware** & follow Ali's advice: "Avoid marrying a stupid woman, since her company is distress & her children too get wasted." Her tongue being a weapon of mass destruction.

May your marriage be as Leo Tolstoy penned: "He felt now that he was not simply close to her, but that he did not know where he ended & she began." Marriage is my way stated the Prophet (p) ... Yes, I do. **YES**. To that religiously & intellectually, brilliant person.

until death do us part

MARRIAGE

Stabilizes the Society



It's not the ring...but the (ca)ring!

Marriage differs from other valued personal relationships in conveying a **full union** of husband and wife including a spiritual, emotional, financial, legal, sexual & parental union. Marriage is the beginning of a new relationship between a man & a woman, who pledge their sexual fidelity to one another, promise loving mutual care & support, and form a family that **welcomes & nurtures** the children that may spring from their union. This understanding of marriage has predominated the world for thousands of years. It springs from the biological, psychological & social complementarity of the male & female sexes: Women typically bring to marriage important gifts & perspectives that men typically do not bring, just as men bring their own special gifts & perspectives. This **covenant of mutual dependence** & obligation, solemnized by a legal oath, is strengthened by the pledge of permanence that husband & wife offer to one another: always to remain, never to flee, even & especially in the most difficult times. There are no shortcuts to building a life of substance. It's an ongoing process. Marriage has a **collective**, not **individual**, imprint. **How little of permanent happiness can belong to a couple who are only brought together because their passions are stronger than their virtues.**

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In our modern age, marriage has weakened, with serious negative consequences for society as a whole. Four developments are especially troubling: **divorce, illegitimacy, cohabitation, and same-sex marriage.** Marriage protects children, men and women, and the common good. The health of marriage is particularly important in society, which depends upon citizens to govern their private lives and rear their children responsibly. Marriage also offers men and women as spouses a good they can have in no other way: a mutual and complete giving of the self. Thus, marriage understood as the enduring union of husband and wife is both a good in itself and also advances the public interest.

Ten Principles on Marriage & the Public Good

- ✪ Marriage is a personal union, intended for the whole of life, of husband and wife.
- ✪ Marriage is a profound human good, elevating and perfecting our social and sexual nature.
- ✪ Ordinarily, both men and women who marry are better off as a result.
- ✪ Marriage protects and promotes the well-being of children.
- ✪ Marriage sustains civil society and promotes the common good.
- ✪ Marriage is a wealth-creating institution, increasing human and social capital.
- ✪ When marriage weakens, the equality gap widens, as children suffer from the disadvantages of growing up in homes without committed mothers and fathers.
- ✪ A functioning marriage culture serves to protect political liberty and foster limited government.
- ✪ The laws that govern marriage matter significantly.
- ✪ “Civil marriage” and “religious marriage” cannot be rigidly or completely divorced from one another.

Changing but degrading sexual mores have made illegitimacy/cohabitation a central feature of our social landscape. The products of advertising (condoms & AIDS) & Hollywood (movies with illicit sex) often appear indifferent to, if not hostile toward, the norms that sustain decent family life. New medical technology has made it easier for single mothers & same-sex couples to have children not only outside of marriage, but even without sexual intercourse. Taken together, marriage is losing its preeminent status as the social institution that directs & organizes reproduction

& childrearing.

Human beings are social animals & the social institution of marriage is a profound human good. It is a matrix of human relationships rooted in the spouses’ sexual complementarity & procreative possibilities & in children’s need for sustained parental nurturance and support. It creates clear ties of begetting and belonging, ties of identity, kinship, and mutual interdependence & responsibility. These bonds of fidelity serve a crucial public purpose, & so **it is necessary and proper for the state to recognize and encourage marriage in both law and public policy.** Indeed, it is not surprising that marriage is publicly sanctioned & promoted in virtually every known society & often solemnized by religious & cultural rituals. Modern biological & social science confirm the benefits of marriage as a human good consistent with our given nature as sexual/social beings.

Married men gain moral and personal discipline, a stable domestic life, and the opportunity to participate in the upbringing of their children. Married women gain stability and protection, acknowledgment of the paternity of their children, and shared responsibility and emotional support in the raising of their young. Together, both spouses gain from a normative commitment to the institution of marriage itself including the benefits that come from faithfully fulfilling one’s chosen duties as mother or father, husband or wife. Couples who share a moral commitment to marital permanency & fidelity tend to have better marriages. And are definitely happier. They are more productive & creative. Society benefits.

The marital ethic enjoining permanence, mutual fidelity & care, as well as forbidding abuse, arises out of the core imperative of our marriage tradition: that men & women who marry pledge to love one another, “in sickness & in health” and “for better or for worse,” ordinarily “until death do us part.”

The family environment provided by marriage allows children to grow, mature, and flourish. It is a seedbed of sociability and virtue for the young, who learn from both their parents and their siblings. Specifically, the married family satisfies children’s need to know their biological origins, connects them to both a mother and a father, establishes a framework of love for nurturing them, oversees their education and personal development, and anchors their identity as they learn to move about the larger world. These are not merely desirable goods, but what we owe to children as vulnerable beings filled with potential. Whenever humanly possible, children have a natural human right to

know their mother and father, and mothers and fathers have a solemn obligation to love their children unconditionally.

Civil society also benefits from a stable marital order. Families are themselves small societies, and the web of trust they establish across generations and between the spouses’ original families are a key constituent of society as a whole. The network of relatives and in-laws that marriage creates and sustains is a key ingredient of the “social capital” that facilitates many kinds of beneficial civic associations and private groups. The virtues acquired within the family: generosity, self-sacrifice, trust, self-discipline are crucial in every domain of social life. Children who grow up in broken families often fail to acquire these elemental habits of character. **When marital breakdown or the failure to form marriages becomes widespread, society is harmed by a host of social pathologies, including increased poverty, mental illness, crime, illegal drug use, clinical depression, and suicide.**

It is within families that young people develop stable patterns of work & self-reliance at the direction of their parents. This training in turn provides the basis for developing useful skills & gaining a profession. More deeply, marriage realigns personal interests beyond the good of the present self & thus reduces the tendency of individuals & groups to make rash or imprudent decisions that squander the inheritance of future generations.

Strong, intact families stabilize the state and decrease the need for costly and intrusive bureaucratic social agencies. Families provide for their vulnerable members, produce new citizens with virtues such as loyalty and generosity, and engender concern for the common good. When families break down, crime and social disorder soar; the state must expand to reassert social control with intrusive policing, a sprawling prison system, coercive child-support enforcement, and court-directed family life. **Without stable families, personal liberty is thus imperiled as the state tries to fulfill through coercion those functions that families, at their best, fulfill through covenantal devotion.**

Law and culture exhibit a dynamic relationship: Changes in one ultimately yield changes in the other, and together law and culture structure the