

father. Mothers & fathers have a solemn obligation to love their children unconditionally.

Civil society also benefits from a stable marital order. Families are themselves small societies. The web of trust they establish across generations & between the spouses' original families are a key constituent of society as a whole. The network of relatives & in-laws that marriage creates & sustains is a key ingredient of the "social capital" that facilitates many kinds of beneficial civic associations & 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 (increased poverty, mental illness, crime, illegal drug use, clinical depression & 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 & social disorder soar; the state must expand to reassert social control with intrusive policing, a sprawling prison system, coercive child-support enforcement, & 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 & culture exhibit a dynamic relationship: Changes in one ultimately yield changes in the other, and together law & culture structure the choices that individuals see as available, acceptable, and choice-worthy. Given the clear benefits of marriage, the state should **not** remain politically neutral, either in procedure or outcome, between marriage & 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. 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 & one woman**, open to the begetting & 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 & public policy.

While the ceremonial form of religious & secular marriages often differs, the meaning of such marriages within the social order has always been similar. This is why the state honours those marriages duly performed by religious authorities. Moreover, current social science evidence on religion & marital success affirms the wisdom of the tradition, which has always recognized & acknowledged the positive role that religion plays in creating & sustaining marriage as a social institution. The majority of people marry in religious institutions. For many of these people a religious dimension suffuses the whole of family life & 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. 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 & children to alternative family arrangements. A great deal of research now exists from the anthropological, sociological, psychological & economic sciences, demonstrating the empirical benefits of marriage.

In every known human society, the institution of marriage serves **three** important public purposes. **First**, marriage is the institution through which societies seek to organize the bearing & rearing of children; it is important in ensuring that children have the **love & 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.

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. 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** & 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 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 infinitely more interesting than any romance, however passionate. Marriage is my way stated the Prophet (p) ...Yes, I do. **YES (breathlessly).** To that religiously & intellectually, brilliant person. Put your trust in God with this supplication: "Our Lord! Bestow on us spouses...who will be the comfort of our eyes. A Source of Joy." (25:74) If you have met on divine love then may you have the most blessed happiness that have ever come your way. Ameen.

The 'monies' in ceremonies does not mean 'be extravagant.' Be happy, make merry but **Keep it simple.**

# 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 & 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. Fleeting emotions. Marriage is not wedding bells, white dresses, suits, ceremonies, diamond rings, banquets, receptions & invitation cards...this is commercialized marriage...waste of time & money. A circus. It's a union of two souls. It don't need all that stage comedy to convince themselves of their union. Souls are souls...they are not consumer products to impress. Real Union comes in simplicity & sincerity. It does not need all this adornment. It does not need proof, it does not need an impressive evidence...it does not need all this paper work, all this stress & angst. All it needs is God. Marriage is a quiet, matter of fact union that necessitates a simple ritual of passage...A ritual of passage from one state to another...that's all. And as Muhammad (p) said: Make things easy & make them simple.**

**AND AMONG HIS SIGNS IS THIS,  
THAT HE CREATED FOR YOU MATES  
FROM AMONG YOURSELVES,  
THAT YOU MAY DWELL  
IN TRANQUILLITY WITH THEM,  
AND HE HAS PUT LOVE & MERCY  
BETWEEN YOUR HEARTS**

**T**hat's a verse of hope from God. How then has it become so hopeless. How many young hearts have revealed the fact that what they had been trained to imagine the highest earthly joy & felicity, marriage, was **but** the beginning of care, disappointment, and sorrow, and often leads to the extremity of mental & physical suffering (check out the divorce courts & shelters). The reality check: There is no relationship in the world that is a more rugged test of self-reliance than marriage. What happens in the relationship depends on whether the partners are trying to meet on the level of **divine love** or on the **infantile, possessive** level of eros. Is the woman a "Playboy" accessory or a life-partner? Is he a "hunk" or someone to respect. Some marriages struggle along on unmitigated, unadulterated eros & are a social riddle because of such ideas. Marriage **cannot** stand the strain of a dominance-submission struggle. It is moreso made unhappy by the myth of romance.

Marriages based on the romantic myth break down into mutual blame. The purpose of blame is to hide from oneself the necessity to become more self-reliant & productive. Blame says: **"You're a dog for not giving me what I want."** It does not urge us to get over our own leaning, dependent attitude. Blame is only a way of putting the whole problem on the other spouse. Mostly wives on husbands.

Marriage should be a partnership of two people FOR the world. Not a side show of two people AGAINST the world. Or against each other. We can guess the probable success of any marriage if we know the degree of self-reliance of the contracting parties. The success of a marriage cannot be greater than the productivity of the partners.

Most marriages begin with the ILLUSION of romantic love. Fueled by listening non-stop to those "love songs." The best definition of romance is: **the crazy desire to be pampered all the time.** Pampering is the desire for personal recognition. It is evidence of

**persistent infantilism** & a lack of self-reliance. It is the desire to "expect from another." It is the opposite of the creative attitude, which "gives out" rather than "sucks in." In romantic love, each one expects to "get" happiness from the other. The partner is supposed to pamper. Both sit & wait for the other to get busy. A row begins when the show doesn't start on time.

The infantile attitude toward marriage is almost unbelievable. We can only guess at the extent of it when we realize the number of "love" stories that are ground out weekly & consumed (books, periodicals, TV, radio, movies & the Net). People, mostly women, would NOT buy such stuff if they did not believe in its probability. We find no such sale for fairy stories, which are **no more fantastic.** After stuffing the mind with such material, is it any wonder that partners resent each other when they find out that marriage is mostly about mundane stuff. "When do we eat?" "Paid the water bill?" "Washed the clothes?" "Visited grandma?" "Why is he/she texting you?"

Marriage was never intended to do anything for people. Certainly it was not designed to make them happy. People are supposed to do something for marriage. It requires the combined work of male & female to make a successful, productive unit in society. Marriage has little or no relationship to happiness. Happiness is a by-product of a self-reliant, productive, creative way of life. The individual who has not learnt to be happy single has just as little chance being happy in marriage. Those who have the "begging" attitude will find the pickings poor in marriage.

In older cultures a young couple is aware of what will be expected of them. He will have the job of doing certain things. She will have different duties. It is understood they are about to enter a WORKING relationship & to remain productive. Most of them never heard of "romance." She loves him. He loves her! Society does not care whether marriage partners find happiness together so long as they pay their bills & do their job.

Marriage, properly undertaken, can be a fruitful relationship in which both partners grow stronger in their own potentialities & not of necessity become a rubber stamp. On a mistaken basis it's a stranglehold & an endless punishment for our infantilism. What passes for marriage counseling is a joke! It does nothing to ventilate the sweat box of romantic nonsense. Advice is given as to how to "pamper" the other. By now you would have understood that such stuff is rubbish. Be or become **self-reliant.**

In our modern age, marriage has weakened, with serious negative consequences for society as a whole. Four developments are especially troubling: **divorce, illegitimacy, cohabitation & same-sex marriage.** Marriage protects children, men & women, and the common good. The health of marriage is important in society, which depends upon citizens to govern their private lives & rear their children responsibly. Marriage also offers men & women as spouses a good they can have in no other way: a mutual & complete giving of the self. Thus, marriage understood as the enduring union of husband & wife is both a good in itself & 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 & wife.
- ✪ Marriage is a profound human good, elevating & perfecting our social & sexual nature.
- ✪ Those who marry are better off as a result.
- ✪ It protects & promotes the well-being of children.
- ✪ It sustains civil society & promotes the common good.
- ✪ Marriage is a wealth-creating institution, increasing human & social capital.
- ✪ When marriage weakens, the equality gap widens. Children suffer from the disadvantages of growing up in homes without committed mothers & fathers.
- ✪ A functioning marriage culture serves to protect political liberty & foster limited government.
- ✪ The laws that govern marriage matter significantly.
- ✪ "Civil marriage" & "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 & 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 & personal discipline, a stable domestic life & the opportunity to participate in the upbringing of their children. Married women gain stability & protection, acknowledgment of the paternity of their children, and shared responsibility & 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.** They are happier, more productive & creative. The marital ethic enjoining permanence, mutual fidelity & care, as well as forbidding abuse, arises out of the core imperative of our marriage tradition: those who marry pledge to love one another, "in sickness & in health" & "for better or for worse," ordinarily "until death do us part."

The family environment allows children to grow, mature & flourish. It is a seedbed of sociability & virtue for the young, who learn from both their parents & their siblings. Specifically, the married family satisfies children's need to know their biological origins, connects them to both a mother & a father, establishes a framework of love for nurturing them, oversees their education & personal development, & anchors their identity. 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 &

**Our Lord, let our spouses ... be a source of joy for us**

**It is not enough to find the right person...YOU must be the right person**