

"Christian family living is ... the gospel most intimately made real."
—Nels Ferre

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In Defense of Marriage

In the last few weeks, we have witnessed a firestorm of controversy surrounding the institution of marriage. The Supreme Court ignited this latest round with its overturning of a Texas sodomy law, revealing the Court to be more liberal in its views than most pundits thought. The state of Massachusetts then entered the fray with news of its impending legislation to legalize the oxymoronic "gay marriage," validating that state's reputation as perhaps the most liberal in the Union. Finally, during a news conference on Wednesday, President Bush informed the nation that his administration would research the best way to codify marriage into U.S. law.

Evidently, enough people are too embroiled in this debate to step back and realize how absurd it is. It is a damning testimonial of our society's state of morality that changing the definition of marriage is being seriously discussed. If the discussion results in marriage being opened up to combinations of people other than one man and one woman, we can mark it as the death-knell of the nation. No society has ever endured far beyond the demeaning of the marriage institution.

From a biblical perspective, marriage is humanity's founding institution. After He created Adam and Eve, [God](#) immediately united them as husband

and wife ([Genesis 2:21-24](#)). Their union became the bedrock upon which human civilization was built. As much as evolutionists have tried to dispel the notion, humanity is one large family, and family begins with marriage.

Various kinds of families have been tried throughout history—polygamous, incestuous, communal, etc.—but none of them have really worked. All stable, enduring societies cherish the one-man-one-woman lifelong bond of marriage. Rome, for instance, flourished during its centuries as a republic due to its tenacious grip on what has become known as the "traditional family." It is renowned for its total lack of divorce throughout this period. Rome's slow decline can be traced to the time when easy divorce and open promiscuity began to cheapen the marriage covenant's worth.

This should give us an indication of where America—and to a similar extent, the rest of the Western world—is on the timeline of societal decline. Divorce and promiscuity became commonplace not long after World War II. In the nearly sixty years since that time, divorce rates have hovered around 50%, and out-of-wedlock sex is nearly universal. Roughly a third of America's births are illegitimate. And since the late 1970s, homosexuality has increasingly become accepted as just another lifestyle choice, despite the ravages of AIDS.

Now homosexuals, wanting still more, are clamoring for legal recognition and benefits as couples. The legal recognition of traditional marriage acknowledges its benefits to society as a whole. Traditional marriages produce children, who extend the nation's existence, ideals, goals, and wealth for another generation. Traditional families are healthier, more stable, and more productive than other kinds of families, resulting in a net gain for society. Homosexual unions can never even [hope](#) to provide society any of these benefits.

The apostle Paul writes in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." The use of both "fornicators" and "adulterers" is significant here because the former covers all sexual immorality, while the latter describes marital infidelity. Homosexuality, then, included under the general term "[fornication](#)," has no place in godly marriage. Using Paul's language, it is defiling, thus perverse, base, and unwholesome. There should be no debate within the

church of God that such an abomination has any place among God-fearing Christians.

Looking beyond this ungodly attempt to pervert the noble institution of marriage, Christian husbands and wives need to take stock of their own relationships, asking such questions as: Are we making the most of our marriages? Are we good examples of what Christian marriages should be? Are we honoring God in these God-plane relationships? Do our children see how much we love each other? Are we truly united in belief and practice? How can we improve our marriages?

Then, even if society crumbles around us, we will have created an environment of strength and unity in which to rebuild an even better world for our children and grandchildren.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Perfect Marriage](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Recent years have witnessed the merciless assault on marriage and family values by godless forces such as feminism, homosexuality, and free sex. Under the best of conditions, marriage takes work to make it succeed. Next to baptism, marriage is the most important decision we could ever make. God, having distributed His characteristics between the genders, created and blessed the marriage relationship (at the beginning of creation) as a lifelong, God-plane relationship for the purpose of producing children developing divine character, providing the basis of the proper kind of government (learning rulership and submission, authority and love, and humility and glory), providing the prototype of the intimacy of Christ and His bride (functioning as one unit or spirit), ultimately reproducing the Godkind, and providing the prototype of the Marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Sex, Sin and Marriage](#)

by Staff

Sexual topics and imagery are all around us, yet God covers the whole subject with His very terse and direct seventh commandment: You shall not commit adultery. Sex and marriage are God-given experiences that Christians need a proper perspective of, as this article shows.

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