



You are the Salt of the Earth . . .
You are the Light of the World.

Matt. 5:13-16

Strengthening Marriage

February 2012

Family is foundational. Marriage constitutes the basic building block of society, and it was the first institution created by God in the book of Genesis. One man and one woman in a marriage covenant relationship for life is the divine pattern expressed throughout the Bible. Quoting from Genesis 1 and 2, Jesus declared:



Have you not read that at the beginning, the Creator made them male and female, and said: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate (Matthew 19:4-6).

A good marriage enables people to be happier, live longer, and build more economic security. But it is not just about the individual. Marriage is an exclusive union that takes its distinctive character from being founded, unlike other friendships, on this bodily unity that sometimes generates new life. Certainly, marriage has value in itself and not just as a means to procreation. Yet marriage is the form of relationship that is uniquely suited for childrearing, which is why it is a matter of vital public concern and not just a "private matter." In fact, marriage is a public, social contract for which the law requires witnesses. Why? It has profound implications for the common good, for the health of society.

Marriage impacts children. Wherever possible, children should be reared in the context of the bond between the two parents whose marital union gave them life. Research shows that when both genders are represented in the parenting role, children have the best opportunity for health, wellbeing, development, and success in life. As Dr. James Dobson notes, "More than ten thousand studies have concluded that kids do best when they are raised by mothers and fathers." Every civilization has been built upon the institution of marriage. It is the foundation. The happiness and success of individuals, the welfare and security of children, and the soundness of society, are all largely dependent upon the stability of marriage according to the divine pattern.

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Pro-Family Action Steps

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According to the Family Research Council's Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI), federal surveys clearly demonstrate that the always-intact married family that worships frequently (weekly or at least monthly) yields the most favorable social outcomes. Compared to the non-intact family that worships less than monthly or never, national data illustrates the superiority in:

Benefits for the Individual:

- Happiness: 50% more likely to be happy in a general sense.
- Performance: More than a third more likely to take pride in their work (34%).
- Health: Nearly a third more likely to rate their health excellent or very good (30%).
(From the *Case for Marriage*)



Benefits for the Couple:

- Marital Satisfaction: 25% happier in their relationship.
- Divorce or Separation: 50% less likely.
- Adultery: More than 4 times less likely (7.7% vs. 33.8%).
- Earned Income: As much as 5 times more annually (\$54K vs. \$9.4K).

Benefits for their Children:

- Average High School GPA (English and Math): Almost half a grade point higher (2.94 vs. 2.48).
- Expulsion or Suspension from School: Nearly 3 times less likely.
- Repeating a Grade: Nearly 6 times less likely (6% vs. 34%).
- Hard Drug Use: Nearly 2.5 less likely (8.5% vs. 20.1%).
- Drunkenness: Nearly 2 times less likely (22.4% vs. 41.2%).
- Homosexual Activity: 3 times less likely (2.5% vs. 7.5%).
- Running Away from Home: Over 2.5 times less likely.
- Average Number of Sex Partners (Females): Over 3 times less (0.47 vs. 1.55).

Family Research Council

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