

Marriage: Preparing a Proper Foundation (Part 1) by Rev. Tom Aicken

With the rapidly changing moral standards of our time, including new definitions of marriage, along with the discouraging statistic of an escalating divorce rate anyway, many young people are not wanting to commit to marriage. Some are even questioning whether marriage itself should be viewed as a thing of the past, a once useful institution, perhaps, but one that is no longer adequate for our changing times. As a result, an increasing number of people are opting for co-habitation, or even some other arrangement, over marriage in the traditional sense. What they don't realize, however, is that any deviation from the path leads to places they will not want to go, though they may not see it until they get there, and every false path is beset with its own hurts and disappointments along the way. Here are a few examples: co-habitation makes it even easier for the common-law spouse to leave; this, in turn, leads to the growing problem (soon to be of epidemic proportion) of the single parent home, in which children are robbed of the basic right of having two parents, a mom and a dad, in their lives; and this, too, contributes to the already burgeoning problem of the welfare state – i.e. single mothers are finding that they cannot raise their children alone, so they cast themselves on the public purse to help pay for their tragic mistake of ever hooking up with that dead-beat fellow in the first place; and so on it goes.

What, exactly, is the cause of this relatively recent lack of confidence in the time-tested institution of marriage? There are at least three contributing factors, and we will have to address all three if we want to turn the present trend around.

FIRST, there is simple ignorance. Here in North America, where Christianity has been increasingly marginalized, and where those who are presently considering their options have scarcely ever witnessed a good marriage themselves, marriage has been tried and abandoned repeatedly. If, however, one chooses to marry without having the least idea of what he is doing, it is rather like trying to cut the lawn with a vacuum cleaner. He has no reason to think that it will work. He needs first to go back to the manufacturer's instruction manual (in this case, the Bible) and learn what it is he is getting himself into, what are the right tools for the job, and how to use those tools most effectively.

SECOND, the militant feminism of the 1980's is another factor to be considered. The outcry of the feminists was the need for equality between the sexes. What was meant by equality, however, was really uniformity. Women wanted to be like men, to act like them and to take their place in the workforce, rather than celebrate what made them different and wonderfully unique. Even today, two generations later, many wives are in a power struggle with their husbands because they don't see themselves in a supporting role, with a separate function, but having to grab whatever they can demand (or seize by whatever manipulative means they can employ) for themselves.

THIRD, male chauvinism has also left its mark, and has done so in two equally tragic ways. On the one hand, many men seem to think that their role as head of the house and

bread-winner is to throw their weight around, to pontificate as the boss, and so lord it over everyone else in the home. These tend to be men who are very immature and quite irresponsible; they always over-estimate what they actually provide for the well-being of the family. On the other hand, and as a reaction to that, many men abandon duties of headship, slink into the background, and assume that perhaps a ship without a captain can find its own way into port after all. These men are never quoted, their opinion is never sought (it wouldn't be respected anyway), and their help is rarely solicited.