

7 Negative Impacts of Marriage's Decline

CNN journalist Carol Costello recently interviewed Kent State University students about marriage. While the (heterosexual) students, both male and female, all looked forward to getting married, the interview highlighted their limited understanding on the impact marriage has on their own lives and on society. Thus, despite their own intentions, they seemed unsure of its importance for the future of children and society.

Consider the facts.

First, there will be a decline in population, even a population implosion, if too many millennials opt against marriage and against having children. Given that none of the students talked about abstaining from sexual intercourse, multiple configurations of the family (for example, single parent families, families with non-married co-habiting parents, etc.) will be the natural result. Therefore, both adults and children in all these different forms of the family, will do more poorly in all of the many outcomes measured. On the other hand, married adults and their children do best. There is no avoiding this in the aggregate. While individuals may escape some of the negative outcomes, society as a whole does not.

The Effect on the Economy: Workers will be less productive overall and the economy as a whole will suffer because singles are not as productive. Married men with three or more children are the most productive. There will be a continued slower growth rate for the economy which has already happened because of the high rate of breakdown of marriages already in place. We will have less money going into the tax pool for the common good because married couples pay the most, and we will have far fewer of them. There will be less capital

formation because of the lower productivity and wages, and less savings (married couples save the most). There will be a diminishment of services and industries that flow from the birth of children—everything from diapers, clothes, homes, carpeting and teachers for elementary classes, high school and college. There will be less house building (as baby boomers age and die off but have fewer young marrieds bidding on their homes).

The Effect on Education: Because more of our children will come from non-intact families, they will learn less, achieve less academically and will drop out of formal education earlier. This is especially true for boys, who, in broken families, do not have their father around. This education deficit will, in turn, make them less suited for the educational and vocational demands of marriage.

The effect on crime and on the common good: In non-married parental households, there will be more, not less, physical and sexual abuse of women and children. This is because the married family is the safest place for them. There will be more loneliness and less support in old age in non-married households.

The Effect on Health and Mental Health: While advances in medical science and public health will be beneficial, the retreat from marriage will push in the opposite direction. There will be higher levels of depression and anxiety, more obesity, more addictions to drugs and alcohol, more STDs and their associated or accompanying health consequences, more accidents and shorter lifespan.

The Effect on Religious Practice: The retreat from married sexuality will result in less religious practice. Religious practice is a universal ingredient to thriving on every outcome measured in the federal data system: health, mental health, happiness, education, marriage and child well-being.

The Effect on the Family Itself: The family we will always have with us. But the family will be more broken if people cohabit or cohabit before getting married. This means even fewer children will have the care and attention of their fathers. These father-deprived children will have less impulse control (of anger and the sexual drive) and a more short-term outlook. This alone will weaken their children's futures significantly. Their parents will have less financial resources. There will be a much earlier loss of virginity for teenagers, resulting in more out-of-wedlock births or more abortions, followed by more cohabitations and divorces for these children as they enter adulthood. Finally, there will be less contact with extended family.

The "Law of the Gift" (giving of oneself) is the universal law of human happiness and the secret of all happy people. Marriage is the school of giving but 54 percent of our teenagers today have biological parents who never married or are no longer together. For most of our young adults, at least one of their parents put their own good ahead of their children's good and, in the process, wounded and weakened them.

Given the facts, the big question really is, how do we break this downward cycle? How do those wounded by a parent who did not live the Law of the Gift for them, learn to live it?

The bottom line: the Kent State University students interviewed by Carol Costello held strong, positive sentiments towards their own future marriage(s) but had limited understanding of its importance for the common good.

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