

Many Millennial Women Choose Not to Take Husband's Last Name—Should Christians Follow This Trend?

Changing your name post-wedding is definitely not easy—it requires a visit to the Social Security office, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the passport office. Not to mention all the credit cards and banking information, email lists, magazine subscriptions and even social media handles that need changing. Needless to say, the task is somewhat tiresome.

So, why do it? That certainly seems to be the question many Millennial women are asking themselves when it comes to taking their husband's surname. In fact, 30% of Americans don't feel a woman should change her name after marriage, and the trend appears to be growing in popularity.

I'm 10 months into marriage, and the paperwork for my name change still sits on my desk. I've adopted my husband's last name in theory—I even changed my email signature! However, I still haven't made the change official. My official documents still bear my maiden name, and should someone ask for my legal name, it would be my maiden one.

Do I plan to change my name? Yes. However, I can't say that the idea of just removing my maiden name and tossing it aside like an old sweater is a concept that comes easily to me. I love my maiden name and have spent 27 years making it my own. It's the name I share with my family whom I love dearly, and I'm proud of it. This makes the change emotional and sparks a little pain of identity crisis in my heart and gut.

I want to stress that the point of this article is not to convince you that you should, or should not take your

husband's last name. Rather, it is to explore the reasoning and decision-making behind the name change, how it started and why it seems to be going out of style. And more importantly, as a Millennial woman in a modern world, how do you decide what to do?

To fully be able to discuss the topic in an intellectual manner, a bit of education into the history of the name change is needed. In taking a look back, the tradition of a new bride changing her name after marriage is due to the historical underpinnings in English (and subsequently American) common law in the ninth century, when lawmakers began to ponder the legalities surrounding personhood, families and marriage. As a result, the doctrine of coverture was created and women—who were forbidden from entering into contracts, engaging in litigation, participating in business, maintaining any right over their children or exercising ownership over real estate or personal property—were required to assume the husband's surname.

But, to take us back even further to the Medieval times, the only name that mattered was your "Christian name"—such as Thomas or Elizabeth—which was conferred at baptism. Surnames gained popularity as time progressed only as a practicality to distinguish between the many Thomases and Elizabeths out there.

It wasn't until—not surprisingly—women began to take exception to their non-existent legal status that the feminist movement in the mid-1800s paved way for the passage of the "Married Women's Property Acts" in several U.S. states. This allowed women to gain individual legal status for the purposes of signing contracts, engaging in business and commerce and making purchases to acquire property. As a result, a woman's surname now had its own legal significance and the number of women opting to keep their maiden names gained popularity. Finally, in the 1970s, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Tennessee law that required a woman to assume the last name of

her husband before being able to register to vote.

It's important to understand the history of the name change in order to fully understand your own opinions on the matter. It hasn't always been tradition, and the reasoning behind its creation was somewhat stale and legal—despite what it's evolved into today. There are many arguments put forward to argue the validity of the “right” thing to do when it comes to maintaining the tradition:

–It's totally breaking tradition to not change your name!

–You won't fully feel like husband and wife until you share a last name.

–There's no way she's a self-respecting feminist if she takes her husband's last name.

–These women who keep their maiden names are just trying to make some political feminist statement!

–The biblical thing to do is to change your name.

As a feminist, Christian, Millennial woman, I had a lot of thoughts swirling around my brain when it came time to put my decision in writing on my marriage certificate.

While the Bible doesn't directly and explicitly address the issue of taking your husband's last name, there are numerous passages of Scripture that support it. My husband and I know marriage to be a covenant union sanctioned by God for His glory, our joy and the benefit of our future children and those around us. As stated in Genesis 2:24, through marriage, we go from being separate units to one flesh: “Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Sharing one name is just another way that we can further become “one flesh” in the eyes of God.

Further, the relationship between husband and wife is a

paradigm of the relationship between Christ and the church: We—the church bride—identify ourselves with Him and are called by His name when we become one with Him. As my husband's bride, changing my name is a way for me to symbolize that same unique bond.

No, you will find no Scripture that point-blank demands a bride to adopt the surname of her husband in clear, modern language. But yes, by taking his last name, she is making a spiritually symbolic decision to mirror the relationship between Christ and the church as well as becoming “one flesh” with her husband.

To address another common argument, some women in the feminist movement claim that taking your husband's last name cannot be synonymous with feminism. While I did promise to not take sides in this article, I must break character to say the following: Feminism, by definition, is the belief that men and women should receive the same cultural and legal rights in our society. By condemning and belittling a woman's choice to take her husband's last name for religious, cultural or emotional reasons, you are not gaining a position of authority in the fight for female empowerment. In fact, I might argue that you are doing the opposite.

There's much to consider and some might say I'm just scratching the surface of a complex political, cultural and spiritual topic. To which I would say, *Yes, I most certainly am!* Now go forth and explore, discuss and ponder!

I only know that as a feminist, I still longed for the camaraderie of sharing one surname with my husband; as a Christian, I longed and felt called to become “one” with my husband; and as a Millennial, I decided to intentionally disregard the many voices that each claimed to be the voice of the one and only “right answer.” I made a decision that reflected my personal faith and emotional opinions and desires.

So, to the engaged Millennial, I encourage you to do the same. Do your research, consider your faith and beliefs, ponder the way your name reflects your identity and make a decision that supports all of the above.

My goal is to have my new surname on my driver's license by our one-year anniversary. Seems doable, right? But to add a little twist, my maiden name will appear there as well! It will appear as an extension of my middle name—a lifelong reminder of who I was before I became a wife.

Because I am, after all, a modern, millennial woman. {eoa}

LightWorkers' mission is to create engaging, uplifting and inspirational content that breaks through the clutter, building a community of sharing and igniting a movement in the real world that motivates people to celebrate and share the good all around them. Visit .