

Trend: Youth Saving Marriage For Later

When we were working on our workshop on purity for boys, we were surprised at some of the research we found that says that the average age of first (and hopefully only!) marriage has gone up drastically in the last generation. For men, the median age has gone up from 22 or 23 to 28 and for women, it's gone up from 20 or 21 to 26.

The median age at the onset of puberty has dropped from 16 or 17 in the 1850's to 11 or 12 now. That means that our sons and daughters are fighting the battles of purity without the help of marriage for much, much longer than previous generations, as long as 17 years or more!

Careers Becoming the Priority

We've been thinking a lot about why people are getting married so much later. There are probably many reasons: some young women feeling like they need to get a career off the ground before they marry, some young men lacking ambition and playing video games instead of getting out and getting settled in their careers, an increase in those going to college or graduate school (especially among women) and also, just the terrible economy.

The worst reason is that the culture of marriage is dwindling in our culture. In the 60s, 80% or more of 25 to 34 year olds were married, now it's 45% or less. This is true despite research showing that married people live longer and are happier.

What is puzzling to us is that we're seeing the same rise in median age of marriage in the Christian and homeschool community and at least anecdotally, we're hearing lots of young women feeling ready for marriage and asking, "Where are

the guys?" Of course, the economy affects all of us, and increased levels of education pretty much do, too, but we'd hope that there would be fewer couch potato guys among the Christians!

We think there are a couple of things behind it: unreasonable expectations and cultural bleedover.

When we first heard about courtship, we liked the idea from the start—don't start pursuing a wife until you're going to be able to support one and when you do, go about it honorably with both sets of parents involved. So far, so good, but we were surprised when we heard others advocate that a young man be so settled that he owns a house debt free. Wow.

Most of the people I know didn't own a house debt free until their fifties—that kind of precludes grandchildren! In recent years, I've heard those views moderated, but the high expectations for young men financially have been heard loud and clear by the young men themselves. In a conversation recently with several young college men and college graduates, they expressed despair. Most were working outside their field of study and making a third what they'd expected to be making at this point.

They said, "There's no way I can approach a father about his daughter. I may not be able to for years at this rate." I wonder if some of the girls and their fathers might actually be willing to accept a hard-working young man who just isn't making much, but will the young men ask when they're afraid they don't meet the standard.

Cultural Situation Factors In

I remember when a college graduate we know said once, "Man, I hope the Lord brings the right one around soon!" Someone immediately spoke up, "Oh no! There's plenty of time for that."

Have some fun, go to graduate school, spend time on yourself first.”

The speaker was a Christian, but it’s just the expected response these days. In fact, if a young man is going to be prepared to take his place as a husband and father, he needs some encouragement in that direction.

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord. (Proverbs 18:22)

Marriage is a Good Thing

Are we telling them that marriage is a good thing? It’s probably not occurred to many of us. I mean, you talk to your girls about marriage and family life, you can hardly avoid it, they are playing and talking about it from the time they’re babies themselves. But, what about the boys? It just doesn’t come up that much. And, it’s going to come up less and less if we leave it to the culture.

Instead, we need to be teaching our boys that being a husband and father is a noble thing. We need to help them see that marrying, fathering children, and raising them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is one of the most effective ways to change the future. That through leading a family, they will be producing a new generation of warriors for Christ.

Equip Your Boys

Teach them to follow Christ, and to stand alone when they must. Encourage them to be men, to be responsible, to handle independence well. Tell them the stories of great men and teach them not to be afraid of hardship.

When we were first married, we were so poor, we’d share a can of soup for lunch, but we wouldn’t trade those years for any amount of comfort. We need to help them get committed to the local church and learn to lead a family spiritually. We need

to teach them to have courage and persistence—even in approaching a girl's stern-looking father. It's worth it.

After all, we want grandchildren, don't you?

What do you think? Do we need to be teaching our sons more about the goodness of marriage or is this late marriage a good thing?

Click here for the original article at .

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