



‘Marriage’ vs ‘Shacking Up’...?

It's true there are as many miserable people who are married as there are single. But people today often feel they don't need a piece of paper to signify their love. So they just live together without the benefit of marriage. Hold on! ...*Marriage has benefits?*

It's worth noting that while heterosexuals are now largely fleeing the altar, gays are clamoring to get there, certain their union without this tie ...is invalid! Ironic, huh? So, marriage is needed to validate a union in their mind...? Interesting contrast in our society today.

Does a bond on paper mean anything? Personally, I've found most of life requires *validation in writing!* I needed a 'certificate' to prove I'd been born. I had to get a 'license' -in writing - to drive a car. Or even insure it. On entering college, I had to have a high school 'transcript'. On graduating, you need a 'degree'. On practicing medicine, you need proof of training, in writing. Then when you die, guess what? Someone needs a death certificate to collect on your life insurance, and sometimes prove they missed work due to a funeral!

Just from a practical standpoint, marriage 'protects'. I once knew a gal who lived with a fellow 20+ years when he became tired of her. Though she'd aided him in building a wonderful home, he pushed her out with the clothes on her back, since the house was in his name. There was nothing she could do. He evicted her by means of a *landlord-tenant* relationships since she received her mail there! When she didn't follow the law by getting married in the first place, the law then turned on her in this instance. That's because marriage would have 'benefited' her with a fair split to their shared wealth. Courts protect children born to that union; not the unmarried. So to marry requires *real* and lasting commitment. (The law on common law marriage varies in each state and are only recognized in 11 out of 50 states.)

Jesus chose a wedding for His very first miracle...a time of joy and celebration. Many think there was little ceremony in ancient times and *no* weddings historically – that people just 'hooked up' like they do nowadays. But, Jewish weddings were performed under a canopy and celebrated a full week. Grooms were not permitted to work for an entire year! True since the days of Moses.

That celebration brings up our next point. The New Testament says "Let marriage be held in honor among all..." Hebrews 13:4. What does it mean to *honor*...? Webster's defines honor as: "High regard or great respect given, received or enjoyed; a keen sense of right & wrong; adherence to principles considered right; integrity (to conduct oneself with honor)." To *dishonor* then, would be to pay no regard; or be ambivalent! Even seniors no longer revere marriage.

The passage above goes on to say, "...let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the immoral and adulterous." Hmm...is it saying then, that sex outside of the 'marriage bed' is immoral and adulterous? Remember, these are not *my* words! Marriage was first defined by God: The idea that 'two should be one.' Some marriages do fail – often due to weakness of character that demands 'instant fixes' and that resists all adversity. But when they work, *they are magnificent*. The privilege of *re-defining* marriage is not an option given to mankind. It's a God's thing, and personally, I wouldn't want the 'fall-out' from messing with His business!

Here's the bottomline. Marriage is to society what the atom is to science...the nucleus of everything! It signifies God's desire to be 'one' with us – no adulteration. Meaning no other 'gods'. Whatever has our attention, has *us*. Nothing can so derail our lives like being consumed with sex. Especially prematurely! More, judgment awaits when we misuse it. Epidemic std's (sexually transmitted diseases) are proof, that if we sow to the flesh we will reap back in that flesh. Plus the millions of abortions.

In the absence of honor, virtue, and integrity, we forfeit this higher calling – of being all we were created to be. Jer. 29:11-13. Our lives were never meant to be so 'common' as illicit sex makes us. Yet we manage to make them so by trusting our own inclinations rather than God's. Billy Graham addressed the declining morality in the U.S. recently, saying "My heart aches for America."

Forgiveness and mercy await all those who have strayed from that high calling. And a new beginning because God gives second chances! Even - especially – after an abortion. Moses, Paul and King David were all mightily used, yet all were murderers. Forgiven. If you don't feel good about your life....you're a candidate for that fresh start! Ask for it. Rom. 10:9-11 Don't further sabotage your route to joy and wholeness through ambivalence. Ask...