

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

GOD LOVES MARRIAGE ?

Did you know church is for more than weddings? God created marriage as the foundational institution of human society. Recent research shows significant benefits for intact married families that regularly attend church. Marriage yields a positive impact on individuals, couples, children, and all of society - producing people who are happier, healthier, wealthier, and more successful contributors to civilization.

1- God defines marriage. Marriage is the covenant relationship of one man and one woman for one life. Perhaps you'd like to define things, but God was here first. And He wrote it down. Jesus quotes Genesis 1 and 2 in Matthew 19:4-6, "*Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*" What God has separated, let not man join. For good reason, society sees marriage as not just a public ceremony but a lawful social contract requiring witnesses. Ray Ortlund writes, "Marriage is not a human invention; it is a divine revelation. Its design never was our own made-up arrangement of infinite malleability. It was given to us, at the beginning of all things, as a brightly shining fixity of eternal significance. We might not always live up to its true grandeur. None of us does so perfectly. But we have no right to redefine it, and we have every reason to revere it." Wise words reflecting God's divine design. He adds "Only the Bible imparts to us a vision of marriage so transcendent and glorious, far beyond human variation and even human failure. Marriage is of God and reveals a wonderful truth about God. And we have no right to change the face of God in the world. All we can rightly do is receive what God has revealed with gladness and humility." It's in the Bible and in church that we hear encouraging words like this, reflecting the reality that marriage is a bodily union that produces new life, which can only thrive in the committed relationship of parents.

2- Marriage benefits people. Marriage is a matter of the common good. Thousands of studies affirm the facts that children do best in homes where their parents are married. And the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) reports how federal surveys show numerous advantages for society as intact married families worship frequently. Husband, wife, children, going to church together, weekly, or at least monthly. As individuals, they are 50% more likely to be generally happy, 34% more like to take pride in their work, 30% more likely to rate excellent or very good health. Couples are 25% happier, 50% less likely to separate or divorce, more than 4 times less likely to commit adultery, and earn up to 5 times more annually. Their children score nearly a half grade point higher GPA, are 3 times less likely to be expelled or suspended, 6 times less likely to repeat a grade. They are nearly 2.5 times less likely to use hard drugs, and 2 times less likely to get drunk. They are 3 times less likely to engage in homosexual activity, and females have over 3 times fewer sex partners. And they are over 2.5 times less likely to run away from home. These are major advantages for simply following God's perfect pattern for His people. You can get more information at MAARI.us and FRC.org and FamilyLife.com and TheFamilyLeader.com.

3- Love transforms your life. CS Lewis wrote, " All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that 'God is love'. But they seem not to notice that the words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love. Of course, what these people mean when they say that God is love is often something quite different: they really mean 'Love is God'. They really mean that our feelings of love, however and wherever they arise, and whatever results they produce, are to be treated with great respect. Perhaps they are: but that is something quite different from what Christians mean by the statement 'God is love'. They believe that the living, dynamic activity of love has been going on in God forever and has created everything else." 1 John 3:9, "*in this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" Receive God's love by putting all your trust in Jesus, who paid for sin and gives new spiritual life, with His power to obey His command to love one another. That's the life-changing good news about love - in Jesus!