

Good essay on relationships: marriage

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



Regardless of one's gender, one of the most important -- if not most important -- relationships they will enter into during their lifetimes is marriage. Generally speaking, the institution of marriage means many things to many different individuals, as well as cultures. Holy matrimony in the US has a set of ideals, expectations, and social mores that are unique to the relationship, lending it a special distinction among human relationships, and making a statement about human nature.

The ideal of marriage is something that children usually observe in practice as they grow up. By observing their own parents, they learn what marriage is about, and they internalize their definition of marriage based upon what they have observed during their childhoods. The mold is not really set, because, by the time most kids leave the household, they have seen the marriages of their friends' parents, and have received cultural messages about marriage from sources such as television, the internet, school, and advertisements.

One of the first things people hold ideal and sanctified in marriage is faithfulness to each other, whether that be man and wife, man and man, or wife and wife. Almost always, spouses expect their significant other to show faithfulness to them. That is, they are expected to not cheat upon each other, and show fidelity to each other, in both thought and deed. Most married couples also hold other ideals about marriage. For example, the property a person once owned by themselves (including money) is now shared with their partner for life. Many states recognize this ideal as a legal, enforceable reality, should a marriage end in divorce.

Marriage is a legal contract between two unrelated individuals. Similar to any business contract, it contains both a promise and certain legal implications,

as well as expectations. For example, the ideal of faithfulness is a part of the marital vows, but it is also a reality that must be observed by both parties in the eyes of the law. If a married partner cheats, most states will allow this breach of contract to be grounds for divorce as well. However, if both parties have their own agreement about how faithfulness is defined or they have an "open marriage", a spouse may not be too likely to ask for a divorce. Legally speaking, marriage has many legal implications. For example, if there is a crime and a married couple needs to be questioned in a court of law, spousal privilege allows the couple a large degree of latitude insofar as they can request not to testify against their spouse.

Indeed, marriage is a difficult endeavor. When young couples "tie the knot", there is the implication that one day they will have children. While not an expectation, social mores nearly dictate what goes on between a husband and wife. Since younger couples usually bring children into the world, families of both the husband and wife look forward to having nephews, nieces, or grandchildren. Thus, marriage, if it results in procreation, can expand the size of a new family arrangement.

As a law of nature, human beings, like other animals, grow old and die. The institution of marriage is an integral part of this reality, and is a way of directing our sex drive, as well as one of the ways our culture has to overcome the reality of our individual deaths -- procreation. As one of our cultural norms, marriage encourages us to have offspring, and keep our genetic lineage alive. This phenomenon means a lot for our respective cultures, and society-at-large.

Certainly, many children are born out of wedlock, but marriage usually adds

the extra roles of father and mother to the previous roles of husband and wife. When marriage rates increase and couples who can procreate do procreate, this increases the population. Thus, marriage has an effect on how many human beings populate the planet. The State often encourages marriage as a way of increasing, or putting the brakes on population growth. In China, married couples are limited to the number of children they can have, due to the fact that the country has nearly 1/6th of the world's population.

However, people would like to think of marriage as more than just an allowable way to reproduce. Cultures and society hold romantic notions that marriages will last into perpetuity. In fact, many marriages last for decades. As modern medicine continues to make great strides, it may not become unusual to see marriages lasting 100 years or more. Since childhood, we are inculcated with the belief that one day we will find a fitting romantic partner for life, and we base how we gauge romance mainly by the behaviors we observed in our parents as we grew up. For some, the romantic ideals of marriage may dog them for life, as they search for their ideal mate for long periods of time, postponing the rite of marriage, and procreation.

Marriage plays a huge role in our society, and brings different families together. The institution of marriage has definitive legal implications and rights, but it also holds cherished ideals, such as romantic fulfillment and devotion to a person for a lifetime: " 'til Death do we part". Moreover, marriage is the primary channel by which a man and woman overcome their individual mortality, and bear fruit into the world -- children. When this happens, the role of man and wife is changed by social mores into the role of

father and mother. Marriage is probably the most important relationship a person will ever have.