

RELIGION SEPARATE STATE

It was bound to start happening; with the decline and degradation of marriage in the legal realm, Christianity is saying “no” – to state sanctioned marriage. Taking the decision to the degree of unauthorized licensures, some churches have turned to “blessing” marriages – rather than sanctioning them. At the same time, some couples are foregoing legal marriage for the developing belief that a license has no credibility or value.

What is happening to marriage? It is becoming less practiced, less appreciated and less valued among the general public. Increasingly, couples are not marrying because marriage – outside of a personal commitment based to the sanctity of marriage – is losing its credibility and worth.

Marriage is not like driving, fishing or operating a business; it is not a license to hang-out together until times get rough – or someone is not happy. One of the respondents writes:

Increasing numbers of us reject licenses from the state in favor of honoring God's word...

No where in the Bible dos a servant of God ask permission from the government to marry. The Father is more than good enough. And while there are references to what God has joined together, there is no similar praise for what Caesar has blessed.

The reasons for this growing trend are mixed: some think that marriage should be more broadly defined – and thus expand from the tradition of Christian and other religions through recorded history; some consider the state's form of marriage and weak and insufficient – in terms of the perceived meaning of marriage as a promise; still, other opinions may draw on personal freedom or some *counter culture* mentality. Whatever the basis – and however strong the conviction – the plain truth is that state-sanctioned marriage is losing ground – or it dying a slow death.

To understand (this trend) is to ask the fundamental question: “what is marriage?” **For the law**, marriage is no more than a license (like hunting or driving a car); not a contract – and certainly not a covenant or promise – marriage is weak and insipid; and in this diluted state gives way to high rates of divorce – with all its devastation to the family. **For the public**, marriage is many things; but like the politician who tries to be all things to all people, he ends-up being

nothing to no one. **Finally for God – whom I believe created marriage – it is a promise or covenant.** God (or the Bible) compares marriage to the relationship between Christ and the church. Marriage is sacred...is a sacrament – and should be treated with the up most respect and value.

When marriage is lowered to a license or is diluted to diverse opinions, it becomes “nothing to no one”. Marriage cannot be all things but must remain in the context of its construction and constitution. When removed from this framework – which has been the course of the state – it is nothing like a marriage as designed; but marriage is simply a convenience...until it becomes no longer convenient!

Some churches are “pulling out”; they are saying **that they want nothing to do with state-sanctioned marriage.** Will this trend continue; and will the Christian continue to pull away; or maybe it's the state that is actually pulling away – or maybe it's both!

Commitment is the cornerstone to marriage; whether derived directly from God – through one's commitment to Christ – or through the basic *common grace* that is given to men by God. Marriage is bigger than man; it is not about the joining of two imperfect people – but is about an institution that is blessed and sacred. **Marriage has lasted because marriage works;** but it can only work when personal conduct is committed to this blessed and sacred institution – and is committed to nothing less.