

Redefining Marriage? Why Do People Want to? *Dick Lincoln, Shandon Baptist Church*

My first experience with catalogue shopping took me to the Herter's Catalogue. It was about an inch or two thick, and every little item was promoted as if it were pure gold. The founder was an old French Canadian character named George Leonard Herter. I would spend days drooling over items, checking my budget, and finally getting my mother to write a check to Herter's. Ten to fourteen days later my package would arrive. The ten to fourteen days had erased the pain of handing over my lawn mowing money, and it now seemed like somebody up in Minnesota just decided to send me some fishing tackle. (There is actually a spiritual point coming.)

I contrast that to today's credit card culture. You go to a store and make your purchase (the pleasure). Then all you have to look forward to is the pain of paying and paying. The new way seems easier on the front end but is, in fact, more painful for a longer period.

Redefinition of marriage is the latest social experiment Americans are trying that seems to ease a burden while it actually inflicts pain. Much like our attempts to redefine womanhood and manhood (let's get Stevie a doll and Sally a baseball bat) so everyone could be free to pursue whatever gender identity their hearts desired. The experiment seemed to provide the short-term pleasure of freedom while actually causing ongoing disaster. In the last five years we've been treated to such amazing headlines as "Women and men are really different." Now the pain of that silly experiment lingers in educational phoniness and gender confusion that doesn't honestly recognize and allow for gender differences that are inherent and God-ordained.

Marriage, it turns out, is actually a challenge. Imagine! It is clearly defined in faith and secular practices as a bond for life between one man and one woman. But picking the right mate and then working things out is much harder than falling in love. The thing people really don't like is it's more like an old-fashioned catalogue purchase (pay up front and trust that you'll find it worthwhile) than a credit card purchase (I didn't even have to give them any money). We are redefining marriage to include living together, same sex partners, and whatever else secularists can dream up. Seems like this offers the happiness without the pain. It doesn't. It brings much worse difficulty such as:

1. Children are ALWAYS hurt by divorce and instability, and the redefinition of marriage has created great instability. Many adults are glad they got a divorce. It is the rare child who rejoices at his parents' divorce. Children need committed parents and stable homes.
2. Adults are ALWAYS hurt by being out of the will of God. How many times has humankind thought God wouldn't be bothered if we altered His will so we would feel happier? "There is a way that seems right unto man, but the end

thereof is death” (Proverbs 16:25). Jesus made it plain that following Him would require self-denial including making marriage and family work.

3. Society is ALWAYS hurt by dishonest options. Legislators don't want to say “no” to constituents who want an easier way, but when we say, “Nobody can tell anyone else what a successful family is,” we are not being honest. When we all decide for ourselves what is right, we have chaos.

Several years ago at a conference, the music leader was lobbied by lots of people to sing their favorite hymn. He solved the problem by asking everyone to turn to their favorite hymn and on the downbeat sing it. The result was chaos although everyone got his or her own way for a moment. In that case, it was funny. With marriage and the family, it is not.