

A dandelion seed head is shown in profile, with its stem extending from the left. The seed head is dark, and numerous seeds with their feathery parachutes are blowing away from it towards the right. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

What is Marriage



What is marriage?

Marriage is both a personal relationship between a man and a woman, and the protective institution for their children. This protective role for children is at the core of marriage. From ancient philosophers to modern social scientists, the benefits for children of parents being married have been recognised in all human societies.

When this protective role is lost or diminished, children suffer.



Mother, father and child

Marriage permanently links the male into the mother-child bond. The obligations between husband and wife in part follow from those that arise between parent and child. Mothers and fathers each bring unique qualities to their relationship with their child. These distinct qualities help a child grow to a resilient adult.

Marriage, family and society

The union of a man and woman is the natural reproductive and protective environment for raising children. Marriage forms the family unit that existed before political institutions and apart from them. The foundation of this society lies in the natural love and obligations of husbands and wives for their biological children.



Marriage and the State

The State did not create marriage, but it has a role in recognising and supporting marriage because of the need to protect children.

Society has an interest in ensuring that marriage – the relationship for the creating and the rearing of children – is defined and protected. Otherwise, it would have no interest in marriage. This is why other affectionate relationships, such as friendships, are not regulated by the State; nor should the State have anything to do with them, as these are private matters.

Marriage and religion

Religions recognise and bless marriage, but they did not invent it. Marriage existed prior to Christianity. Christian views about marriage are based on the Bible and enriched by theological reflections.





Redefining marriage

Some people wish to redefine marriage to mean an affectionate relationship between any two (or more) people. This would see marriage reduced to just a committed, affectionate sexual relationship.

Marriage is more than that.

Loving, affectionate relationships between adults should be respected. But they are not marriages. Redefining marriage like this will weaken marriage by undermining the unique role of husband and wife in relation to the child. The law would reinforce the idea that marriage is just an emotional union, not a bodily union directed towards creating and protecting children.

This will increase marital instability and undermine the role of marriage, especially for children.

The power of the State

Redefining marriage also politicises it in a dangerous and novel way. Marriage, as it is, does not require the State to do anything other than support it. However, legally redefining marriage can only happen by State decree.

Marriage would no longer be a fundamental unit recognised by the State, but a right granted by the State to those it chooses.

Once marriage becomes a creation of the State, it can redefine marriage to mean anything. Instead of recognising and supporting the reality that a particular man and a particular woman are committed to each other and are the parents of a particular child, the State usurps this reality.

Once the State can no longer insist that marriage involves a commitment to a member of the opposite sex, there is no ground for insisting that marriage be limited to one person rather than several.

The consequences

A consequence will be a greater intrusion into family life.

For example, the State will be called upon to create the conditions that support the new definition. Terms like 'mother' and 'father' will likely be replaced by 'parent 1' and 'parent 2' on birth certificates and other documents, as has occurred in other countries.

Children will likely be taught in Primary School about alternative forms of 'marriage' as has occurred in other countries.

Freedoms, including religious freedoms, will come under attack. The providers of goods and services – for example, shopkeepers, photographers and holiday venues - will be legally coerced into providing their products and services against their conscience and beliefs.

Overseas experience has shown that even to state the traditional view about marriage as between a man and a woman could become unlawful!



