> “Having a [spouse] who is committed for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, makes people happier and healthier.”
>
> Gallagher and Waite, *The Case For Marriage*, p. 77

## What the Church teaches, social science confirms…

# Marriage Is Good for Husbands, for Wives and for Their Children

God is both Creator and Redeemer. So God knows all about our bodies, our hearts, and our relationships. After all, He made them! God invented sex and marriage.

It shouldn’t be a surprise, therefore, that His way for marriage is the way that makes us truly fulfilled and happy. But does science back up the Church’s teaching?

Yes! **The sociological evidence is clear: lifelong, life-giving marriage is good for husbands and wives. It is also the ideal environment for raising children.**

## Marriage Is Good for Husbands and Wives

“For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health”—the marriage vows bind a man and woman together publicly. In an uncertain world, these vows create a rock-solid reality. The husband and wife can set out on the adventure of building a shared life together because of the security of their publicly sworn love.

**More Security.** The marriage bond is invisible, but it exists! In fact, sociology shows that its effects are powerful: marriage makes people healthier and wealthier. In contrast, cohabiting couples (who live together in a sexual relationship outside of marriage) do not have the security of a publicly sworn love.

**More Money.** Spouses make more money, pool resources, and reduce expenses to a much greater degree than cohabiting couples do.[1]

**Better Health.** And marriage improves a person’s physical health. A wife is significantly healthier, and a husband benefits even more. “Married adults have longer lives, less illness, greater happiness, and lower levels of depression and substance abuse than cohabiting and single adults.”[2]

The difference that marriage makes is only common sense, when you think about it. For example, men are likely to benefit from their wives’

looking after their behavior and diet. (Some sociologists call this phenomenon "the virtue of nagging"!) Single men are much more likely to engage in risky behaviors—to drink and smoke too much, for instance—than married men. Marriage inserts them into the wide world of family networks and social responsibility.

## Increased Sense of Meaning

Marriage and parenthood give a person a **sense of meaning**. We aren't just living for ourselves. We have other people to think about. That sense of meaning helps our mental health as well.

**Increased Happiness.** Do you want to be happy? Marriage is one of the best predictors of **happiness**. 40% of married people rate their lives "very happy," compared to less than 25% of cohabitors.[3]

**Better (and More) Sex.** In fact, married sex is much more physically and emotionally satisfying than sex among unmarried people. And husbands and wives have more of it than unmarried people.[4]

Again, this is just common sense. **Sexual intimacy** is much more satisfying when it is experienced in the context of marital love, with its public commitment. Marriage promises a spouse who will be there forever, for better and for worse, in sickness and in health. Who doesn't want that?

## Life-Giving Marriage

Children want that permanence too. "The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: **the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life.**"[5] Married love, which is sexual love, creates new life. And children flourish under marriage as God has created it.

> "Few propositions have more empirical support in the social sciences than this one: Compared to all other family forms, families headed by married, biological parents are best for children."
>
> David Popenoe, Rutgers University, February 2006 [9]

Children living in low-conflict families with their married biological mother and father are more likely to attend school and graduate, less likely to be depressed and abuse drugs and alcohol, less likely to be physically and sexually abused, and less likely to be sexually active and undergo teen pregnancy.[6]

In addition, children flourish when they have **both their mother and father**. "Studies suggest that men and women bring different strengths to the parenting enterprise, and that the biological relatedness of parents to their children has important consequences for the young, especially girls."[7] In fact, exposure to a biological father's pheromones (chemical signals) seems to delay sexual development and thus sexual activity in daughters![8]

Of course, many single parents do a terrific job raising their kids, and they need to be supported in their heroic efforts. Still, having both a mother and father is optimal.

**Sociology confirms what the Church has always taught: following God's plan for sexuality and marriage leads to human fulfillment and happiness!**

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[1]The Witherspoon Institute, *Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles* (Princeton: The Witherspoon Institute, 2006), p. 22. [2]Witherspoon, *Marriage*, p. 22. [3]Maggie Gallagher and Linda Waite, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000), p. 67. [4]Ibid., pp. 78-96. [5]*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2363. [6]Witherspoon, *Marriage*, pp. 18-21. [7]Ibid., p. 20. [8]Ibid., p. 21. [9]"The Scholarly Consensus on Marriage," Center for Marriage and Families Fact Sheet no. 2 (New York: Institute for American Values, 2006).

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