

ALL ABOUT FAMILIES

THE MARRYING AGE

by Norman Bales

Between 1947 and 1962, the median age for those getting married for the first time was 20.3 for women and 22.6 for men. By 1987, the median age had risen to 23.6 for women and 25.8 for men. But that doesn't tell all the story. Eighty per cent of the men under 24 have never married and that compares to 55 per cent in 1970. The number of never married men between 30 and 34 has risen from 9 per cent to 23 per cent in the same time period, while the number of never married women has gone from 6 per cent to 15 per cent.

Demographics suggest that people marry at a later age and many don't marry at all. About two and a half million American households are populated by unmarried people who are living together. About 20 per cent of the people, who get married today, cohabit prior to marriage.

Throughout history, the marrying age has fluctuated. In Old Testament times, Esau married a Hittite woman when he was forty years old (Genesis 26:34). Some time after that, his parents became concerned that his twin brother might follow his bad example and sent Jacob off to seek a wife among his mother's relatives in Paddan Aram. Wives are often referred to as the "wife of your youth," but youth isn't defined. The marrying age has been determined by marriage customs, economic considerations and a variety of other circumstances.

I would like to think that people are postponing the time of marriage today because they recognize the need for greater maturity in order to manage their relationships. Unfortunately, the availability of birth control pills and legalization of abortion are major contributing factors in the decision to postpone the time of marriage. It is significant to note that the trend toward later marriage parallels the introduction of the pill and the legalization of abortion. In the minds of many people, the current state of technology, along with cultural permissiveness, encourages the practice of premarital sexual intercourse.

Regardless of the technology, the trends and societal attitudes, the fact remains that premarital sex is wrong in the sight of God. The Bible still says that fornicators "do not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). God didn't condemn fornication just because he wanted to rain on our parade. Every time God says "no." it's for our benefit. If you're thinking of marriage, it's a good idea to postpone the decision until you are mature enough to handle the responsibility, but it's not a good idea to disobey God.