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“Choice Mothers” — What’s Missing from this Picture?

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Social change is a constant in civilization. New technologies, human migrations, climate changes, and any number of demographic and worldview shifts prompt changes in the way humans live and maintain civilization’s patterns and structures. For the most part, these changes unfold slowly. Now, however, we are witnessing social change unwind at warp speed.

Just consider the disappearance of marriage as the expectation for many young adults and the disappearance of the father from many families.



The Guardian [London] reports on the phenomenon of “choice mothers” who have opted for what some observers call “single motherhood by choice.” The number of unmarried women who want to have a child by artificial insemination is growing at an unprecedented rate, even as the age of women seeking to conceive a child without a father is dropping.

As the paper reports:

A survey of attitudes towards contraception out this week appears to confirm this as a trend. Both men and women said they had serious concerns about whether they would meet the right partner in time to conceive naturally; and 56% of the women asked said they would consider asking a male friend to father their child if they failed to find a partner by a certain age. And it was younger women - those aged between 28 and 31 - who were the most likely to go it alone if the right man did not turn up in time.

Seeking artificial insemination in your 20s or 30s is not unusual among lesbians (who have no reason to delay), but heterosexual women typically wait to see if they can find a partner first. Using a sperm donor has always been a last resort. Now the process is becoming a first resort. Say that you are in your early 30s and you are convinced your life will not be complete without a child. Why wait? Many women have financial independence earlier in life than in the past and few see being a single mother as a situation that carries a stigma. Many single mothers by choice argue that they see couples struggling with the difficult issues that shared parenting raises. Women in this category who know that they definitely want a baby are less concerned about raising a child alone than they are about waiting for the “right man” for so long that they miss their fertility window.

There is so much to unpack in this report. At one level, this points to the natural desire of women for children — a desire that is, in itself, both understandable and admirable. Indeed, Christians will rightly believe that this is a desire given to a woman by the Creator. At another level, even this newspaper recognizes that there is something sad about so many young women giving up on another natural desire — the desire for a husband (though the paper uses the politically-correct term, “partner”). Christians would see this, too, as evidence of God’s intention.

The result of this is the redefinition of the family before our eyes, with so many young women choosing to have children even as they have no plans for any present or future marriage. These children will know no father and the entire social fabric is unraveled that much further.

The institution of marriage is the Creator's gift – an institution that constitutes the only natural, holy, and wholesome context in which all of these desires are fulfilled. But marriage has been subverted by divorce, cohabitation, contraceptive and reproductive technologies, and a host of ideological and cultural influences.

Our cultural obsession with a false ideal of personal autonomy promises us all that we can have whatever we want, and on our own terms. This sad report serves to remind us that, left to our own, we will try to create our own reality and have what we want without accepting what we really need.

Fathers are missing from this picture, but so is something even more fundamental — God's gift of marriage and the glory of God evident in the perfection of His gifts.

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