

AlbertMohler.com

# Killing Off Marriage? Dr. Ablow Reports — You Decide

*Marriage is so essential to human happiness and to the organization of human society that it simply cannot be ignored or denied.*

Monday, May 9, 2011

Dr. Keith Ablow thinks that marriage is “a source of real suffering for the vast majority of married people.” As a matter of fact, that is only one of the accusations Ablow hurls against marriage before eventually calling for its demise. Marriage, he insists, is a dying institution — and he celebrates its death.



Few might know or care of Ablow’s thoughts on the matter but for the fact that he is a psychiatrist and a member of the “Fox News Medical A-Team.” FoxNews.com recently published his assault on marriage, and the essay is sure to gain attention.

Ablow begins by quoting actress Cameron Diaz, who recently asserted that marriage is a “dying institution.” She added this comment: “I don’t think we should live our lives in relationships based off old traditions that don’t suit our world any longer.” Well, maybe that says a lot about her own world of experience and influence, but it is a breathtakingly audacious statement. It also reflects a view held by many among the intellectual and cultural elites, among whom marriage has been seen as a retrograde institution for some time.

Keith Ablow adds his hearty approval to Cameron Diaz’s indictment of marriage, adding that he is “not certain marriage ever did suit most people who tried it.”

He elaborated:

*From what I hear in my psychiatry office, and from what I hear from other psychiatrists and psychologists, and from what my friends and relatives tell me and show me through their behavior, and from the fact that most marriages end either in divorce or acrimony, marriage is (as it has been for decades now) a source of real suffering for the vast majority of married people.*

The physician claimed the mantle of a healer in diagnosing the epidemic consequences of humanity’s most enduring institution: “As a healer, I can’t help looking askance at anything that depletes energy, optimism, mood and passion to the extent that marriage does. It is, without a doubt, one of the leading causes of major depression in the nation.” Note his concern for “energy, optimism, mood and passion” — as if these constitute the greatest needs or aspirations of humanity. Dr. Ablow may be a psychiatrist, but a quick look at his books indicates concerns more in line with pop psychology.

The doctor diagnoses the ills of marriage with four arguments. First, he asserts that “the involvement of the state in marriage has been a colossal mistake.” Governmental involvement “debases” marriage, which is properly a religious institution. Government involvement renders marriage “sterile, linked to legislation and weighted down with legal implications that are psychologically suffocating.”

He adds this: “Smart, aware people feel consciously or unconsciously disempowered from the moment they say, ‘I do.’” Really? Just because marriage is a legal institution? This is sheer nonsense, of course, and it is a very unintelligent argument as well. Marriage is granted legal recognition precisely because it is a public declaration with public meaning.

The law, he says, should not distinguish between single and married persons (or, he offers as well, three cohabitating people), and individuals or couples could merely go to lawyers for contracts as needed.

That would lead to legal, moral, and cultural chaos. If the state were to “have no role in marriage, whatsoever,” it would simply mean that the government has decided to call marriage by some other name. Given the realities of human life, some standardized means of recognizing privileged relationships is a necessity. No civilization exists without it. This is true even in societies that separate the religious and legal definitions and authorizations of marriage. There is no major society that exists without marriage, and those rare movements in history that sought to eliminate marriage led to disaster.

Secondly, Ablow argues that marriage is dying because of the invention of oral contraceptives. Brace yourselves for this one. “Once human beings understood that they could express themselves emotionally, romantically and sexually without necessarily creating multiple families and perilously dividing their assets, the psychological pain of living without sexual passion (even by choice) was significantly intensified.” If you are looking for a prime example of the psychiatric subversion of all morality, look no further.

Keith Ablow is arguing, quite straightforwardly, that The Pill offers a chemical means of allowing adultery, and that this is liberation for humanity. Marriage, in his view, kills sexual passion. “The vast, vast majority of men and women, in fact, are no longer physically attracted to their spouses after five or ten years (that’s being kind),” he says. “If they have seen one another most of that time.”

He doesn’t stop there. Few “normal people” maintain sexual interest in a marriage, he insists. “Human beings just are not built to desire one another once we have flossed in the same room a hundred times and shared a laundry basket for thousands of days.”

Third, and most inane, Ablow argues that marriage “inherently deprives men and women of the joy of being ‘chosen’ on a daily basis.” No kidding. He argues that the vows of marriage deprive us of the experience of being chosen by our spouse every single day. Most married people “have to wonder whether their spouses really want to stay, or simply don’t want to go through the hassle of leaving.”

This argument is not only nonsensical, but it makes us wonder if Dr. Ablow has any real understanding of human beings. Does he really believe that — even if marriage were to disappear as a legal institution — men and women would re-decide their most intimate relationships and commitments every day, free to come and go without emotional pain and complication? Seriously?

Finally, Dr. Ablow argues that marriage is being undermined by hypocrisy. In his words: “The fact that millions of Americans take vows to stay in marriages for life, then leave those marriages — once, twice, maybe three times — has so trivialized and mocked those vows that many silently chuckle to themselves while listening to them.”

Well, now he is on to something real and important. No one can seriously doubt that this kind of hypocrisy is indeed weakening marriage both as an institution and as a personal commitment. But, in a strange way, the hypocrisy accidentally affirms the importance of marriage and the marital vows. Even those who break their marital vows do so after affirming in public what marriage *ought* to be and was always meant to be. The answer to hypocrisy is moral correction and a return to integrity in making and keeping the sacred vows of marriage. We do not solve the hypocrisy of the liar by rejecting the very idea of truth.

Coming to the end of his argument, Dr. Ablow insists that the end of marriage is “only a matter of time now.” Marriage is passing away, and we should plan for “what might replace it.” His great goal: “We should come up with something that improves the quality of our lives and those of our children.”

We can only wonder at the audacity of a man who champions the impermanence of relationships, argues that couples cannot long remain attracted to each other, celebrates the sexual liberation from marriage made possible by The Pill, declares marriage “a source of real suffering for the vast majority of married people,” and then calls us to something better for our lives and those of our children.

The current controversies over marriage, oddly enough, affirm what Dr. Keith Ablow denies. Marriage is so essential to human happiness and to the organization of human society that it simply cannot be ignored or denied. Of course, there

are those who want to deny the obvious — apparently even on the “Fox News Medical A-Team.” Keith Ablow’s assault on marriage is a sign of our times — and an embarrassment.

---

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at [mail@albertmohler.com](mailto:mail@albertmohler.com). Follow regular updates on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler](http://www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler)

Dr. Keith Ablow, “[Cameron Diaz is Right — 4 Reasons Why Marriage Is a Dying Institution](#),” FoxNews.com, Friday, May 6, 2011.

---

Content Copyright © 2002-2011, R. Albert Mohler, Jr.