
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Is a marriage license required in order to be properly married?**

On the internet there are many articles suggesting that a marriage license from the civil government is not necessary in order to be considered married in the sight of God. Among other things, these articles teach things like this:

1) **Polygamy?**

- Some articles say if a couple gets a marriage license, there are now three people involved in the marriage (the man, the woman, and the government). Having a marriage license is therefore equivalent to polygamy since more than the man and woman are involved.

But couldn't this reasoning be used against the ones making the argument? They claim marriage is just between the man, the woman, and God. Wouldn't God be considered just as much of a "third party" as the civil government? If the government being involved constitutes polygamy, wouldn't having God involved likewise be considered polygamy?

Arguments like this are obviously invalid and unworthy of people who call themselves Christians.

2) **George Washington?**

- Some articles say that the requirement for marriage license is of recent origin. These advocates point out that George Washington was married to his wife and never had a marriage license. If George Washington could be married without a marriage license, then couples today may also be married without a marriage license.

But couldn't this reasoning be used against paying income taxes? The United States income tax system began during the days of the Civil War to finance the expense of the North fighting against the South. George Washington never paid income tax because he lived before the Civil War. Could citizens today, refuse to file and pay income taxes because George Washington never paid taxes?

This same reasoning is used in reference to the thief on the cross. Some say because the thief never had to be baptized in order to be saved, neither should anyone after the death of Christ have to be baptized to be saved. The point being overlooked in all these examples is this: With the arrival of a new law comes new obligations.

- a) The Civil War brought a new law regarding income taxes.
- b) The death of Christ brought the Law of Moses to an end and brought in a new law (Col 2:14).
- c) Likewise, while there may have been a time in U.S. history which did not require a marriage license, that time has passed away.

A FALSE ARGUMENT

The arguments on the internet go on and on. Many of these articles are written by religious people (including preachers) – each arguing that the government has no right to require a marriage license.

When all of the arguments of the internet writers are put into a logical form, here's what they are saying.

Major Premise: If marriage does not involve society in general, then civil government has no business being involved in marriages.

Minor Premise: Marriage does not involve society in general.

Conclusion: Therefore, civil government has no business being involved in marriages.

What these false teachers must prove is the minor premise. They are assuming marriage does not involve society in general, but assuming is not proving anything.

Society in general does have a say about marriage according to the Bible.

- According to Rom 1:18-32, the divine moral code given to all men of all nations, forbids sexual immorality (Rom 1:29).
- This moral code requires the death penalty for those who violate the code (Rom 1:32).
- God has given civil government the authority to punish those who violate the moral code (Rom 13:1-7)

- Therefore, the civil government is certainly involved in the moral affairs of its citizens.

Because the civil government is not more involved, our country is suffering.

- Children are being born to unwed parents who demand that society pay for the birth, the feeding, the clothing, the medical care, and the education of the children. When civil government has to pay for all of this – civil government is certainly involved in marriage (or the lack thereof).
- Sexually transmitted diseases are being spread and civil government is expected to find cures and pay for the expense of curing people with these diseases. Certainly civil government is involved in marriage (of the lack thereof).
- Married men abandon their wives and leave them with children and bills while these unfaithful husbands and fathers have sex with others. Society is left to care for the abandoned wives and children. Of course civil government is involved in marriage (or the lack thereof).

Shame on anyone calling themselves a "Christian" and making the argument that society is not involved in the marriage of a man and woman.

TRUE ARGUMENTS

In contrast to the false argument that civil government is not involved in marriage and should not require a license, I offer the following true and logical arguments:

Major Premise: If marriage involves society in general, then civil government has a right to be involved in marriages.

Minor Premise: Marriage does involve society in general.

Conclusion: Therefore, civil government has a right to be involved in marriages.

This is a valid and logical argument. If both the major and minor premises are true, then the conclusion is also true. As we pointed out earlier, society in general is involved in marriage. Therefore, the conclusion of this argument is true: Civil government has a right to be involved in marriages.

Here is another true and valid argument:

Major Premise: If marriage is a religious matter, then only believers can be legitimately married.

Minor Premise: Marriage is not a religious matter.

Conclusion: Therefore, believers are not the only ones who can be legitimately married.

Again, because the major and minor premises are valid, the conclusion is valid. This now brings up my final true and valid argument proving that civil government has a right to require a marriage license:

Major Premise: If marriage is not a religious matter (see syllogism #2), then civil governments have a right to regulate marriages with licenses.

Minor Premise: Marriage is not a religious matter.

Conclusion: Therefore, civil government has a right to regulate marriages with licenses.

All of these valid arguments demonstrate logically and scripturally that the civil government has a right to require a marriage license. Marriage is not primarily a religious matter – even non-Christians are married when they take the appropriate steps.

The conclusion, therefore, is this: When the civil government requires a marriage license, couples who live together without getting a license are living in sin. They are fornicators every time they go to bed with one another. It is sinful and unbecoming of a Christian to even suggest that such a thing is appropriate for God's people.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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