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## The Masculinist #9: Preaching What We Practice

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Thanks for reading. And thanks for all the kind email responses you've been sending my way. It's great to see that the Masculinist has been resonating with you. The percentage of people who click to open my newsletters is off the charts (2x Urbanophile's rate). That's very gratifying.

This newsletter is something of an experiment for me. And it's a market test to see how much interest and demand there is for this material. I'm only going to keep it going if the readership keeps growing to validate that there's an audience out there.

So if you want to see it continue, if you care about the topic and want to see this newsletter continue and develop, please share and forward to other people who might be interested, because I can't do it without you.

People can subscribe at this link: <http://www.urbanophile.com/masculinist>

Again, this is most definitely not a safe space, as you'll see in this issue.

### Recent Revealing Headlines

Five recent news items combined to prompt this issue of the Masculinist.

Item #1: VP Mike Pence has a policy of not having dinners alone with women other than his wife. This is a variety of the "Billy Graham Rule", where that evangelist famously refused to be alone with a woman who was not his wife.

This tidbit of information about Pence provoked outrage from the usual suspects:

- Ashley Csanady in Canada's National Post says Pence's policy is [rape culture in action](#).
- The Atlantic says [it hurts women](#).
- Vox says [it's discriminatory and illegal](#).
- The New Yorker says Pence's view of women is de facto [the same as Trump's](#).
- Jessica Valenti at the Guardian says it's more proof Pence [is a misogynist](#).

The list goes on and on and on.

Item #2: Surveys show young people have modestly [shifted towards a greater preference for traditional marriage](#).

A University of Maryland study found that the percentage of high school seniors who "believed that families were better off if the men were 'the achievers outside the home' and the women handled most of the family and domestic duties" increased from 42% in 1994 to 58% in 2014. And the percentage that thought the husband should make all the importance decisions in the family increased from 29% to 36%. (One person I saw critiqued this for small sample sizes, but it's still interesting. And this critique only applied to the increase, not to the fact that a significant percentage of youngsters still prefer traditional marriage).

Item #3: This week's *New York Times Magazine* features a relatively [positive cover story on open marriage](#), in which couples agree that one or both partners can pursue romance and/or sex with other people besides their spouse.

**Item #4:** CNN published a first person story by Sarah Lenti, a Republican political consultant and former research assistant to Mitt Romney, on how she decided to [have twins by sperm donor IVF](#) when she was turning 40 and still single.

Lenti says, “I am a single mother by choice. Yet I was raised in a Christian, conservative home, where I grew up believing in the traditional family unit. And I was taught that there was an order to achieving it. First, fall in love. Second, marry a man. Third, start a family. Now in my fifth decade, only one has proven true for me -- and it isn't the first.”

**Item #5:** Calls to end stay at home motherhood in Australia. [Sarra Le Marquand](#), a columnist and editor for the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* (and apparently a contributor to the Australian Broadcasting Company) says that [it should be illegal to be a stay-at-home mom](#) in Australia. This was in response to a report by the OECD, the Paris based club of developed nations, saying stay-at-home moms need to [get back to work](#). The OECD writes, “There are potentially large losses to the economy when women stay at home or work short part-time hours.”

## **Women Still Want the Fairy Tale**

It's hard work suppressing the truth.

When my wife first moved to New York City, she rented her own apartment, a Hell's Kitchen sublet about a mile from where I live. People were surprised that she wasn't moving in with me. But what amazed her was how many women told her, unsolicited, how much they approved and how they wish they'd done the same thing. This even included the woman whose apartment she was subletting, who'd left it in order to move in with her boyfriend in Brooklyn.

And when people found that we didn't have sex until we were married, they were blown away by it. Woman after woman told her, “That's so amazing. I wish I'd done that.” One woman even told my wife that she intended to lie to her own daughter about her sexual history, because she didn't want her daughter doing the same.

I apply something of a discount to this. Few people will actually express direct disapproval of other people's life choices. Facebook is notorious for this. No matter how objectively dumb the decision someone posts about making, it will receive a chorus of Likes and affirmatory comments.

But these were all in person comments, and ones that went well beyond social politeness. My wife was genuinely taken aback by it. What was very clear is that, despite being liberated big city women who would probably never declare it publicly, these women at some level still really longed for the fairy tale of a traditional relationship even if they weren't making choices in that direction.

What this reveals is that, in contrast to the popular belief that traditional views of marriage are on the way out, it actually remains an aspirational product for a whole lot of people, even those who have no particular religious faith. We see that survey above of younger Millennials and post-Millennials, who've been marinated in modernist messages about relationships their entire life and are well trained to know the “right” answers to give in surveys, who nevertheless still show a significant stated preference for traditional elements of marriage.

This is pretty incredible in light of the relentless campaign in media, academia, and much of culture and politics to explicitly elevate and praise everything that's transgressive to the norm, while explicitly denigrating and attacking traditional marriage as oppressive. Hence we see the NYT magazine cover story playing up open marriages and CNN glamorizing an older single woman's decision to have children with a sperm donor, while at the same time Mike Pence's traditional marriage is savaged. This is an obvious and easy to see pattern we see repeated over and over.

The result of much of this is that many young people today don't even seem to believe the traditional marriage that they want is even possible. A friend of mine helped produced a series of Christian video shorts called “[For the Life of the World](#).” One of the episodes is about love and marriage. When they showed this series to students at Christian colleges, the reaction of students was positive overall, but the response to the love episode was often, “That's impossible.” Even these Christian youngsters didn't see how they could attain that kind of a marriage in light of what they saw and heard around them.

The reason people like Mike Pence are attacked is because activists don't want the public to believe it's possible to have a marriage like that or that people still do have them or what having one might involve. They clearly recognize how attractive that is to a lot of people. And so they see the very idea that it's possible to achieve as a threat. Hence we see, for example, the OECD criticizing stay at home mothers, and an activist wanting to completely ban stay at

home motherhood. Le Marquand is very smart. She realizes that even stigmatizing women staying with their kids won't work, and thus legal compulsion must be used to stamp out the practice. In this she echoes Simone de Beauvoir, who famously said, "No woman should be authorized to stay home to raise her children. Women should not have that choice, because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one."

It's a free country. If people want to focus on career over marriage, that's their choice. If they want to have an open marriage, they can. Single woman getting sperm donor IVF at age 40? Sure, you can do that. Lean in? More power to you. Watching Internet porn? Nothing's stopping you.

Not everybody sees it that way though, at least when it comes to traditional marriage. That's the one thing a lot of people don't want it to be acceptable to choose or promote.

That's a shame, because the traditional marriage product that Christianity (and other religions) is selling is not just aspirational even to the non-religious, it's also objectively superior for raising children and staying out of poverty. [According to the center-left Brookings Institution](#), if you graduate high school and get a job, then wait till you are 21 and get married before having kids, your odds of ending up in poverty are only 2%. And you have a 75% chance of being middle class.

## The Church's Weak Advocacy for Traditional Marriage

Given that this product is both attractive to a sizable segment of the population and produces such great results, it's surprising that even the church doesn't have the courage to unapologetically enter it as a competitor in the marketplace.

In part that's obviously because they don't want to endure the attacks they will get for doing so. Brookings notes the challenges, pointing to when NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg ran ads warning teens of the life consequences of teen pregnancy, and then Planned Parenthood and others attacked him for stigmatizing the poor and minorities. (Luckily something like MTV's Teen Mom reality show seems to have done the trick, as teen pregnancy rates have dropped).

The polyamory folks can be out there repping their lifestyle in the *New York Times*. But if somebody wants to market a traditional marriage like that, they'll be demonized as perpetuating the patriarchy, shaming single mothers, or worse.

This applies not just to the world but also to the church. It's absolutely the case that pastors will hear complaints that certain messages are hurtful to singles or single mothers. I have heard the complaints. For example, I recently heard about a guy who gave a sermon telling his own personal story. He was going to do missionary work overseas, but wanted to be married first so that he wouldn't be the "awkward single missionary dude" when he got back. (Smart move). Some single person found it offensive and complained.

And on Mother's Day, Liberty University professor Karen Swallow Prior, who was unable to have children, wrote in the *Washington Post* that [many childless women feel overlooked by churches](#). (Note that Prior doesn't provide to others the consideration she desires for herself; she is one of the people who [critiqued Mike Pence's marriage in the secular web site Vox](#)).

The church is so sensitive to criticisms like this that it basically refuses to evangelize traditional marriage and good decision making even to its own members.

You may be saying to yourself, "Aaron, what are you talking about? The church is promoting traditional marriage." But the reality is that the church leaders today are at some level downplaying, even subverting traditional marriage at every turn. Some because they don't appear to believe in it themselves, others because they are afraid of offending some constituency.

As one example, just look at *Christianity Today*, the leading Evangelical magazine (one to which I've previously contributed). It's long had a feminist orientation. My editor there, former managing editor Katelyn Beaty, is an explicitly staunch feminist. The magazine publishes a regular stream of articles with feminist friendly messages. Recent entries include ["How Brainy Women Benefit the Church,"](#) ["The 'Feminine' Trait Every Christian Needs to Learn,"](#) ["What Feminism Owes to the Protestant Reformation,"](#) and ["Female Pastors Bring Hope to War Torn Middle East Churches."](#)

They don't usually directly disparage traditional marriage elements like hypergamy (women marrying up) and differentiated sex roles. Rather, like the *New York Times*, they play up as much as possible all the ways that women don't have to fall into those traditional roles. The normal is downplayed or minimized and the abnormal or peripheral



(like female pastors in the Middle East) is celebrated whenever they can.

## The Tim and Kathy Keller Story

Another example of this is to be found in Tim and Kathy Keller's book [\*The Meaning of Marriage\*](#).

By rights, Tim and Kathy should be exemplars of the case for traditional marriage. Kathy was raised in a "gender neutral" environment in feminist home and a liberal mainline church. Her mother was one of the few college-educated women around. She was raised to believe she could do anything a boy could do, and to this day she approvingly cites feminist scholars like Carol Gilligan.

She was attracted to the superficially nerdy but very high potential Tim, whom she had met through her sister when Tim was attending Bucknell and who was now attending the same seminary. She took steps to get him on lockdown before graduation in their mid-20s. Tim wasn't stepping up to the plate as quickly as she wanted, so she issued an ultimatum to which he responded and they became a couple, then got married. They remained virgins until marriage.

Kathy attended Gordon-Conwell Seminary and was en route to ordination in the Presbyterian Church. Her theological studies convinced her that the Bible prohibited ordination of women, so she withdrew from the ordination process – and endured being booed and hissed at by the majority of the 350 ministers at the presbytery meeting when she did it.

Though Kathy didn't believe she could be ordained, there were many other things in ministry she could have done. In light of her talents and background, she could have easily taken the position that she was as good or better a candidate than Tim for a ministry career. (I once heard on a radio show that she graduated #1 in her seminary class, with Tim #2. That might possibly have been a joke and I can't verify it, but those who know her describe Kathy as "brilliant"). Instead, at the time she'd been dreaming of an urban ministry, she followed Tim to his first pastoral job at a small church in rural Virginia.

Kathy appears to have never developed a serious independent career of her own, but instead worked to support Tim's and raise their three children. Ultimately this resulted in the founding of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in 1989, the first beachhead of Evangelicalism in Manhattan. Tim Keller has not only directly affected the lives of many thousands of people in his church, he helped create the entire field of urban church work in the modern era. He's raised untold millions of dollars to fund new church starts, not just in New York, but in cities all over the world. He's trained and inspired huge numbers of pastors as well. And he has touched millions more like me who have read his books and learned from his thinking.

I think it's safe to say that without Kathy's support, Tim never would have accomplished the things he did. She was clearly the strong helper that propelled him to his potential. What's more, Kathy herself actually ended up with a high impact ministry of her own. She co-authored this book with Tim, and has had a huge ministry to large numbers of women in the church. Her name also soared high into the firmament. Had she gone her own way and tried to build her own thing, I doubt I would ever have heard of her.

(As an aside, Kathy's story reminds me of another famous woman of the same era: Hillary Rodham Clinton. Hillary was a star at Wellesley College, where she was the first student commencement speaker in 1969. Her speech was actually featured in *Life* magazine. Rather than trying to build her own career solo, she married Bill and moved to "backwoods" Arkansas to support his political aspirations. With her by his side helping him, Bill was twice elected President. Despite Bill giving her many legitimate reasons to dump him, she stayed with him. And she herself ultimately became a Senator, Secretary of State, and won the popular vote in last year's presidential race. Would she have had as much personal political success had she tried to do it herself without Bill? I don't think so.)

With the exception of that bit about her class rank, I pieced together Kathy's story entirely from the book. But this is not how they tell it. Instead, they present it in deconstructed form, and even take care to highlight examples of how their marriage went against the traditional pattern that was the norm. For example, they talk about a time in Philadelphia when Tim stayed home to watch the kids while Kathy went off to work part time to help them make ends meet when Tim's professorship wasn't paying enough on its own. And they talk about a conflict over childcare duties in which Tim surrenders and agrees to help out with the diapers. The book gives a surprisingly weak and unenthusiastic endorsement of the marriage theology it outlines, and minimizes or even undercuts some of its key implications.

More importantly, they don't explicitly call out and endorse the life patterns I just highlighted. They don't suggest that women might want to think about prioritizing marriage and grabbing a high potential guy early before the good ones

are all snapped up and the marketplace turns against them. They don't point out that division of labor is the core of economics going back to Adam Smith, and that by collaborating to boost the husband's career, the wife can often boost herself the process. In this regard they are also somewhat like Hillary, who today expresses feminist sentiments that are the exact opposite of how she personally lived her life and got where she is today.

I can't name anybody who has more gone against her own upbringing and her own instincts and personality, or paid a higher personal cost for doing so, than Kathy Keller when she reoriented her life from the pursuit of personal ordained ministry to a supporting role in Tim's. The results that came from her decisions were far greater than either of them could have imagined back in seminary, including for Kathy personally. She deserves to be much more celebrated for this than she is.

Tim and Kathy have an inspirational story. The tragedy is that I've never heard them once tell it like this or suggest it as a template for others to follow. Redeemer church has remained largely singles (in fairness, likely in part because people who marry often end up cycling out of NYC), and stresses the validity of the single life in Christianity.

The woman I mentioned in my last newsletter, who now finds herself 40, single, and panicking, attends Redeemer and says she was personally mentored by Kathy Keller in weekly meetings for a decade. Yet she made completely different life choices than Kathy. She is now 40, single, living in an apartment with multiple roommates, grieving over not having marriage and children, and hates her job.

It's tough for Kathy to viscerally convey her own life choices. The women she comes in contact with today are encountering her as a high level leader at the height of her powers. They don't see what Kathy was like or what she was doing in her 20s or 30s. Still, I can't help but wonder if Kathy ever privately kicked this woman in the butt and told her she was heading for disaster if she didn't make some bigtime changes. (It's not too late. Tim or Kathy could pick up that phone right now and do it).

## Preaching What We Practice

Tim and Kathy are in effect doing what Charles Murray describes as "not preaching what you practice." Murray, Robert Putnam, and others have noted that the marriage patterns of the upper middle class (UMC) are very traditionally bourgeois. Yet rather than promote that as normative, they tout otherwise for the masses, with disastrous results. Sarah Lenti is far outside the norm of UMC parents. (It's worth pointing out that Lenti is a political conservative aligned with the staunchly anti-Trump Mitt Romney. They hate Trump, but what are they selling? This is a small but telling example of why political conservatism is a dead end).

Certainly men and women have made non-traditional choices and had great success. And some tried for the traditional path and ended up miserable. But we hear people unapologetically tout one choice after another – but rarely do we hear someone touting a traditional looking marriage. Not even the people who are actually living that lifestyle successfully. The lives of the authors of every Christian marriage book I've read more or less follow Tim and Kathy's basic life pattern. But I don't see the strong recco of that in their books or sermons.

Again, this isn't about compelling people to live any particular way or demonizing other people's choices. This is a free country and people can do what they want. If you don't want a traditional marriage, don't enter into one. Do whatever you want or think is right. I hope it works out for you. But when you've got a great product, one lots of people are almost waiting for permission to admit they want, and refuse to promote it or even state unapologetically that you're using it yourself, that's a tragedy.

Why is this related to masculinity? Because to stand up for traditional marriage and admit it's something that a large number of people actually want takes balls. Because it's a choice too many people out there in the world can't abide.

I said the first guiding principle of this newsletter was Solzhenitsyn's dictum "live not by lies." In an era of "fake news," the most important thing we can do as Christians, or even just as Americans generally is to align ourselves with and speak the truth as we honestly believe it to be – even if it's personally costly. Another guiding principle was "skin in the game." Wherever possible we should only promote as true or normative things that we personally live by, or at a minimum not promote things incompatible with our own lives.

If you don't agree with me, fine. Promote what you believe to be true. But there are a whole lot of people out there, Christian and non-Christian, who believe one truth – as evidenced by how they are personally living their own lives – but are speaking something different. This is similar to how Silicon Valley titans market iPads to your kids while [heavily restricting their own children's access to technology](#).

Things that are true:

- The vast majority of people are not called to the celibate life, and thus should be married. Marriage is the normative pattern.
- Marriage is the best place to raise children and single motherhood is inferior in almost every case.
- People need to treat marriage like finding a job - you have to prepare yourself for it as best you can and aggressively pursue it sooner rather than later. It doesn't just fall out of the sky on your head like a meteorite. If you delay pursuing it, it might not be there when you decide you want it.
- People shouldn't engage in premarital sex or cohabit prior to marriage.
- Relationships are best if they are hypergamic (a woman marrying higher status man – something even strident feminists de facto admit when they say women would not deign to marry down).
- Traditional sex role divisions work best for most people (not necessarily in an absolute form, but best if the focus is on the husband's career with the wife more focused on child-rearing, best if husband is generally the leader)
- A large majority of women want to have children, and will be grieved and distressed if they are unable to do so.
- Stay monogamous within marriage.
- Do not divorce in almost every case.

Don't believe these? Fine, don't believe them. But I'd point out that other than avoiding pre-marital sex, this describes the actual behavior of large numbers of UMC or better families, like say Barack and Michelle Obama. If you also scratch off monogamy, it even describes the personal behavior of others like the very successful Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Don't want to make single people or single mothers feel bad? Fine, do whatever you want to affirm them. Just don't expect the levels of pre-marital sex and divorce inside your church to ever go down. (And if you think singleness is great and perfectly acceptable, stop yelling at single men that they should "man up" and pursue all those amazing single women in your pews because you're a fraud).

Think that sounds too patriarchal? If so, maybe our problem isn't too much patriarchy, but too little. After all, in a patriarchy young men have actual responsibilities and can't just live in Mom's basement playing video games and fapping to internet porn. There also aren't 40% out of wedlock birth rates (up from 11% in 1970) that practically guarantee large amounts of poverty and social dysfunction. And is it better for young women like my niece to be a single mother, scraping by as a hostess at Frisch's while grandma babysits the kid (which she in fact was, and which is a common pattern in working class communities), or being a married mother at home with her kids until they are school age?

There are plenty of successful exceptions to normative pattern I'm sure you can cite chapter and verse. If you want to swing the bat and try that out, be my guest – just [don't come complaining to me later if it doesn't work out for you](#).

Even the woman writing the NYT story on open marriage cops to the truth about her own life. She writes:

This spring I went to a conference out of state. Afterward, a few attendees lingered to talk and then drifted off, with the exception of one, a man, also in his 40s, who spoke impressively earlier that day. The conversation was easy between us, and we ended up, as did everyone else, walking back to the hotel across the street, where I invited him to join me for dinner. I felt the need to justify this — there was no room service at the hotel, I felt awkward eating alone in the lobby — but I was also enjoying his company, and it seemed, especially after all the interviewing I had been doing, that it was absurd to worry about something as safe as a meal with a man, also married, with whom I shared professional interests. I was curious, even, to know what it would feel like — *I realized that outside work interviews, I could not remember the last time I had dined alone with a man who was not my husband*, which suddenly struck me as an amazing fact of my adult life. [emphasis added]

She was on the Mike Pence plan. And the one time she deviated from it, she ended up lying to her husband about it afterward, and created a zone of doubt in her mind about her marriage. Hardly a ringing endorsement of the open marriage lifestyle.

Church leaders, and the American UMC generally, need to have the courage to openly talk about the life patterns that made them personally successful, and take the heat to unapologetically defend it as a perfectly acceptable and viable choice for people to desire and seek after in life. They need to have the balls to preach what they practice.

Now, can I guarantee my own life and marriage will work? No. I'm not holding myself up as the example (quite the

opposite in many ways, actually). But the people who are examples aren't holding themselves up as such. Many of them aren't even particularly strong advocates for any kind of marriage. If our marriage doesn't work, then the responsibility is on us. But I'm placing my personal bet on the same basic strategy Tim and Kathy Keller used in their life.

## In the News

Ross Douthat: [Requiem for Girls](#).

But successful art has a way of slipping its ideological leash, and the striking thing about “Girls” is how the mess it portrayed made a mockery of the official narrative of social liberalism, in which prophylactics and graduate degrees and gender equality are supposed to lead smoothly to health, wealth and high-functioning relationships. In large ways and small the show deconstructed those assumptions. The characters’ sex lives were not remotely “safe”; they were porn-haunted and self-destructive, a mess of S.T.D. fears and dubiously consensual incidents and sudden marriages and stupid infidelities. (Abortion was sort-of normalized but also linked to narcissism: The only character to actually have an abortion was extraordinarily blasé about it, and then over subsequent episodes revealed as a monster of self-involvement.) Meanwhile the professional world was mostly a series of dead ends and failed experiments, and the idea that sisterhood would conquer all even if relationships with men didn't work out dissolved as the show continued and its core foursome gradually came apart.

Houston Chronicle: The fracking boom [caused a baby boom, but not a marriage boom](#). This throws cold water on the theory that what it takes to boost the marriage rate is to make men more marriageable by getting them better jobs:

Why didn't the marriage rate or the share of babies born to unwed mothers change in areas near the nation's shale plays, despite the money rolling in? Perhaps, the researchers speculated, social attitudes are playing a greater role than economic factors, as out-of-wedlock births no longer carry the stigma they once did.

## Coda

“Shockingly to feminists, many [white working class women] want to be housewives. ‘Women like me thought this was the ultimate in oppression, and white working-class women thought this was the ultimate in freedom,’ says [feminist law professor Joan C.] Williams. If a WWC woman is a housewife, her family doesn't have to juggle childcare without a babysitter, and it validates her husband as a successful breadwinner” – Simon Kuper, [“The despair of the white working class,”](#) *Financial Times*, May 13-14, 2017.

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