



# The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families

*James Q. Wilson*

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In a time of unity and common purpose, why does it still feel as though we are a nation divided in half? On one side, are those with solid families, well-paying jobs, safe homes, and a sound education. On the other are those who were raised by one parent, live in poor neighborhoods, and lack the skills and support needed to hold down a steady job and steer clear of crime. How did this come to pass? In is penetrating new study, esteemed commentator James Q. Wilson argues that the answer lies in the state of modern marriage. Once a reliable thread in the social fabric, marriage is now a convenient promise easily made and just as easily broken. Long taken for granted, it is now under attack, and the result is devastating. The signs are everywhere, with the increase in cohabitation, the proliferation of single and teenage parents, and the high divorce rate, all of which are eroding family life and damaging children's futures. In fact, statistics have shown that children of divorce and single parenthood are the ones who continually have higher rates of school dropout and teenage pregnancy, as well as a greater propensity for emotional problems, drug use, and criminal activity. Drawing on meticulous research and an acute interpretation of American history, Wilson takes aim at the sweeping forces that have slowly but surely stripped away the value of one of our most important institutions. *The Marriage Problem* reveals that the seeds of today's crisis were planted over many years by unlikely sources -- from the glittering ideals of the Enlightenment to the shameful practice of American slavery. The exaltation of individual rights has made unmarried cohabitation -- with its lack of ultimate responsibility to another -- the lifestyle of choice among younger people. And in today's inner cities, families continue to feel the impact of slavery, which taught mothers and children not to rely on the presence of fathers, creating an environment prone to abandonment. With precision and persuasiveness, Wilson exposes the patterns that have allowed us to degrade marriage and shows us how we can reclaim it. Incisive, intelligent, and thought-provoking, *The Marriage Problem* is a clarion call to rebuild the family, and society, by returning a solid marital structure to its core.

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