



The young man came up to the cash register, handing over the money for his meal. I can't remember what he looked like or how much his meal cost. But what I do remember—several years after the incident—is his t-shirt. A black shirt, with a simple outline of a bride and groom on the front, and the words “Game Over.” As the weeks went by after this incident, I pondered what this shirt was saying. Why would marriage be a “game over”?

When I was engaged, I remember creating an account on a wedding website, so I could see “how it's all supposed to be done” in the days leading up to the wedding. One of the major areas that the site featured articles on was bachelorette parties. Whether it's an attempt to relax amid wedding planning or a chance to hang out with friends from other states, bachelorette parties are fairly common pre-wedding activities. Although there are exceptions, many bachelorette parties are extremely sexual, from the invitations and party favors to the activities, and objectify men and women alike. While it's good to have a fun “girls night out” before a wedding, our culture's take on bachelorette parties—overly-sexualized, extremely alcoholic, and wild—acts as if this gathering is the woman's last chance to be herself and have a good time. In other words, a common bachelorette mentality treats marriage as a “game over.”

There's also a phrase that I've heard directed at many unmarried people: “this is your time to be crazy and do what you want; live your life before you settle down and get married!” In fact, several months back, an article hit the internet which stated all of the things one can do instead of getting engaged in his or her early twenties. There is a mentality that singleness is a time to “explore” different sexual behaviors and relationships. It is a time to be wild—because all the fun ends with marriage. Getting married means no more random hook-ups, no more extreme independence, and no more self-centered lifestyles.

Honestly, these things won't fulfill anyone in the long run. But marriage, a lifelong union of self-sacrifice between a man and woman, will bring a person to deep fulfillment, love, and true joy. I've only been married a year, but this year has been the greatest adventure of my life. Every day provides new ways in which I can learn to love my husband and sacrifice for him better. Each moment is a chance for

us to grow closer to God together. Not only that, but marriage is fun, full of new discoveries and interests. And while I had fun adventures in my single days, going through life while united with my best friend is incredible. Yes, there are struggles, and I have a lot of growing to do, especially since I can't think only of myself, like I did when I was single. But we aren't here on Earth to think only of ourselves, either.

Marriage is all about self-gift, and everyone can start practicing that, no matter what his or her age or state in life is.

No matter what a person has done in his or her life, there is always a chance to start over. If you've bought into the lies of our culture which say "Marriage is a game over," you can start again. Commit yourself to loving others selflessly, whether through friendship, service, or simply sitting with someone who needs companionship. And if marriage comes, don't worry about losing your identity—you will continue to discover who you are (and who you are made to be) even more clearly. Vatican II declared that man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." A person finds his or her true identity in giving selflessly to others, and building a community of love. It's time to say "game over" to a culture of hookups, sexual laxity, and self-centeredness. Instead, welcome the adventure of self-gift into your life.