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Appearance on CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees" Last Night — Controversy Over Childlessness

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I appeared last night on CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* to talk about the controversy over chosen childlessness as a lifestyle. Anderson Cooper anchored the show from Baghdad while Heidi Collins served as interviewer for the segment on childlessness.

The segment began with a production feature on Jennifer Shawne and Allan Rapp, described as "married five years and child-free," and several other couples who have made a similar decision — to marry but not to have children. Jennifer Shawne is the author of *Baby Not on Board*.

I was interviewed along with Madelyn Cain, author of *The Childless Revolution*. Here is a [transcript](#) of our exchange:

COLLINS: Some experts predict the number of married couples without children could go up 50 percent by the end of the decade. So what does it say about our future and ourselves? I'm joined now by two guests. From Louisville, Kentucky, we welcome Doctor Al Mohler; he is the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. And in Los Angeles, Madelyn Cain, she is the author of the book, "The Childless Revolution: What it means to be childless today". We welcome both of you. Albert, why do you disagree with the child-free lifestyle?

ALBERT MOHLER, PRES., SO. BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY: Well, in the first place I find it incredibly sad. I think most viewers watching that segment that you just very capably put forth, just demonstrates that this is really about avoiding the responsibilities of parenthood. And I find that profoundly sad. You know, obviously, there is a tremendous moral point to be made here. These couples — well, they have to be very thankful that their parents didn't make the same decision. And society depends upon parenthood and the raising of children being seen as a norm for married couples and as something that is of social value.

COLLINS: But, Albert, isn't it — pardon the interruption. Isn't it dangerous to assume that everyone can be a good parent?

MOHLER: Well, you know, I think what is more dangerous is to assume that we're going to say that people can be adults, and be recognized as responsible adults, who don't even aspire to grow up, to be mature enough to have children. I mean, parenthood is a part of helping to create adults. We grow up by having our children. Without that responsibility we have a generation of perpetual adolescents, just growing old.

COLLINS: Madelyn, is he wrong?

MADELYN CAIN, AUTHOR, "THE CHIDLESS REVOLUTION": I think he's dead wrong. I think that parenting is an option, it is not an obligation. And I think that we should be applauding the people who are mature enough and making a decision saying I know that this is not the right choice for me. And that's what these couples, that you were talking to tonight, were saying.

COLLINS: But is it possible that we are moving toward a more narcissistic society by choosing to sleep late and going to yoga, over having children?

CAIN: I think to try to lump all childless people together is a little bit dangerous, because unlike a woman who has had a child, there is only two groups of mothers; those who got pregnant, and those who just accidentally got there. The childless group is much more diverse. You have people who are childless by choice and some who cannot have children. And those who accidentally fall into childlessness and that's where we're moving.

COLLINS: Albert, are we grouping all of those people together?

MOHLER: Well, [I] didn't hear anyone in your segment who was having a fertility problem. That's a separate issue. This is childlessness as a chosen lifestyle and that's my big concern. Obviously, I respond to those who are having fertility issues with great sympathy. But you know, what we're hearing here are people who say I'm mature enough to know I'm too immature to be a parent. I'm going to let other people do that. I'm going to let other people do this. I mean, you look at some of these web sites, the references to children are just so dismissive and condescending and frankly, weird, that — I mean, obviously, if everyone in society even thought about this for an extended period of time, you know, we would not have any children. We have to understand that parenthood is to be understood as a part of marriage itself.

COLLINS: Madelyn — CAIN: I don't think —(CROSS TALK)

COLLINS: Madelyn, the birth rate is going down. You heard the numbers as we came into the segment?

CAIN: Absolutely. The birth rate is going down, but those are choices that people are making. They also went down during the Depression. It is something that society is now in a position — women now are more educated than they ever they were. They're in the workforce. They were never there before. We have effective birth control. I think that all children should be wanted children. Not children had out of obligation.

COLLINS: All right. To the both of you tonight, we appreciate your time. Albert Mohler and, our friend, from Los Angeles, Madelyn Cain. Thank you so much, the both of you.

