

Marriage Under Fire

Why We Must Win This Battle

By Dr. James Dobson

The State of Our Unions

Behold, the institution of marriage! It is one of the Creator's most marvelous and enduring gifts to humankind. This divine plan was revealed to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and then described succinctly in Genesis 2:24, where we read, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (KJV). With those twenty-two words, God announced the ordination of the family, long before He established the two other great human institutions, the church and the government.

Five thousand years of recorded history have come and gone, yet every civilization in the history of the world has been built upon it.¹ Despite today's skeptics, who claim that marriage is an outmoded and narrow-minded Christian concoction, the desire of men and women to "leave" and "cleave" has survived and thrived through times of prosperity, peace, famine, wars, epidemics, and every other possible circumstance and condition. It has been the bedrock of culture in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, and even Antarctica. Given this unbroken continuity, one might begin to suspect that something mystical within human nature must be drawing the sexes together—not just for purposes of reproduction as with animals, but to satisfy an irrepressible longing for companionship, intimacy, and spiritual bonding. Indeed, how can it be doubted? Passion finds its fulfillment in the institution of marriage.

Admittedly, there have been periods in history when homosexuality has flourished, as in the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, in ancient Greece, and in the Roman Empire. None of these civilizations survived. Furthermore

even where sexual perversion was tolerated, marriage continued to be honored in law and custom.

Only in the last few years have two countries, the Netherlands and Belgium, actually legalized what is called “gay marriage” and given it equal status with traditional male-female unions.² The impact of that vast sociological experiment is no longer speculative. We can see where it leads by observing the Scandinavian nations of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, whose leaders embraced de facto marriages between homosexuals in the nineties. The consequences for traditional families have been devastating. The institution of marriage in those countries is rapidly dying, with most young couples cohabiting or choosing to remain single. In some areas of Norway, 80 percent of firstborn children are conceived out of wedlock, as are 60 percent of subsequent births.³ It appears that tampering with the ancient plan for males and females spells doom for the family and for everything related to it. We will consider why this is true in a subsequent chapter.

To put it succinctly, the institution of marriage represents the very foundation of human social order. Everything of value sits on that base. Institutions, governments, religious fervor, and the welfare of children are all dependent on its stability. When it is weakened or undermined, the entire superstructure begins to wobble. That is exactly what has happened during the last thirty-five years, as radical feminists, liberal lawmakers, and profiteers in the entertainment industry have taken their toll on the stability of marriage. Many of our pressing social problems can be traced to this origin.

An argument in favor of homosexual marriage that you are likely to hear again and again on radio talk shows, on national television, and on the Internet, reflects a line of reasoning that you must be prepared to counter. It is embodied in these kinds of questions: Why all the fuss about gay marriage anyway? And why should it matter to you if a gay couple marries and moves into your neighborhood? Why shouldn't our definition of family be broadened and

modernized? After all, what harm could possibly be done by yielding to the demands of those who say traditional notions of family are outmoded and irrelevant?

Columnist Steve Blow, in a recent edition of *The Dallas Morning News*, echoed some of these questions. His op-ed piece was titled "Gay Marriage: Why Would It Affect Me?" and was apparently written after he had read one of my recent newsletters on the subject. Blow wrote:

When opponents talk about the "defense of marriage," they lose me. James Dobson's Focus on the Family just sent out a mailer to 2.5 million homes saying: "The homosexual activists' movement is poised to administer a devastating and potentially fatal blow to the traditional family." And I say, "Huh?" How does anyone's pledge of love and commitment turn into a fatal blow to families?³⁵

Mr. Blow clearly believes that the only reason for not legalizing homosexual marriage is sheer bigotry. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are very compelling arguments against marriage between homosexuals that should be considered by anyone who has not yet become familiar with the issues. Unfortunately, the American people, as a whole, have not yet thought through the consequences and measured the impact of this revolutionary concept. I could list fifty or more legitimate concerns. Let me focus on only eleven.

Eleven Arguments Against Same Sex Marriage

1. The legalization of homosexual marriage will quickly destroy the traditional family.

We've already seen evidence from the Scandinavian countries that de-facto homosexual marriage destroys the real Mc Coy. These two entities cannot coexist

because they represent opposite ends of the universe. A book could be written on the reasons for this collision between matter and antimatter, but I will cite three of them.

First, when the State sanctions homosexual relationships and gives them its blessing, the younger generation becomes confused about sexual identity and quickly loses its understanding of lifelong commitments, emotional bonding, sexual purity, the role of children in a family, and from a spiritual perspective, the “sanctity” of marriage. Marriage is reduced to something of a partnership that provides attractive benefits and sexual convenience, but cannot offer the intimacy described in Genesis. Cohabitation and short-term relationships are the inevitable result. Ask the Norwegians, the Swedes, and the people from the Netherlands. That is exactly what is happening there.³⁶

Second, the introduction of legalized gay marriages will lead inexorably to polygamy and other alternatives to one man/one woman unions. In Utah polygamist Tom Green, who claims five wives, is citing *Lawrence v. Texas* as the legal authority for his appeal.³⁷ In January 2004, a Salt Lake City civil rights attorney filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of another couple wanting to engage in legal polygamy.³⁸ Their justification? *Lawrence v. Texas*. The ACLU of Utah has actually suggested that the state will “have to step up to prove that a polygamous relationship is detrimental to society” —as opposed to the polygamists having to prove that plural marriage is not harmful to the culture.³⁹ Do you see how the game is played? The responsibility to defend the family now rests on you and me to prove that polygamy is unhealthy. The ACLU went on to say that the nuclear family “may not be necessarily the best model.”⁴⁰ Indeed, Justice Antonin Scalia warned of this likelihood in his statement for the minority in the *Lawrence* case.⁴¹ It took less than six months for His prediction to become a reality.

Why will gay marriage set the table for polygamy? Because there is no place to stop once that Rubicon has been crossed. Historically, the definition of marriage has rested on a foundation of tradition, legal precedent, theology and the overwhelming support of the people. After the introduction of marriage between homosexuals, however, it will be supported by nothing more substantial than the opinion of a single judge or by a black-robed panel of justices. After they have reached their dubious decisions, the family will consist of little more than someone’s interpretation of “rights.” Given that unstable legal climate, it is certain that some self-possessed judge, somewhere, will soon rule that three men or three women can marry. Or five men and two women. Or four and four. Who will be able to deny them that right? The guarantee is implied, we will be told, by the Constitution. Those who disagree will continue to be seen as hate-mongers and bigots. (Indeed, those charges are already being leveled

against Christians who espouse biblical values!) How about group marriage, or marriage between cousins, or marriage between daddies and little girls? How about marriage between a man and his donkey? Anything allegedly linked to “civil rights” will be doable. The legal underpinnings for marriage will have been destroyed.

The third reason marriage between homosexuals will destroy traditional marriage is that this is the ultimate goal of activists, and they will not stop until they achieve it. The history of the gay and lesbian movement has been that its adherents quickly move the goal line as soon as the previous one has been breached, revealing even more shocking and outrageous objectives. In the present instance, homosexual activists, heady with power and exhilaration, feel the political climate is right to tell us what they have wanted all along. This is the real deal: Most gays and lesbians do *not* want to marry each other. That would entangle them in all sorts of legal constraints. Who needs a lifetime commitment to one person? *The intention here is to create an entirely different legal structure.*

With marriage as we know it gone, everyone would enjoy all the legal benefits of marriage (custody rights, tax-free inheritance, joint ownership of property, health care and spousal citizenship, and much more) without limiting the number of partners or their gender. Nor would “couples” be bound to each other in the eyes of the law. This is clearly where the movement is headed. If you doubt that this is the motive, read what is in the literature today. Activists have created a new word to replace the outmoded terms *infidelity*, *adultery*, *cheating*, and *promiscuity*. The new concept is *polyamorous*. It means the same thing (literally “many loves”) but with the agreement of the primary sexual partner. Why not? He or she is probably polyamorous, too.

Liberal columnist Michael Kinsley wrote a July 2003 op-ed piece in *The Washington Post* titled, “Abolish Marriage: Let’s Really Get the Government Out Of Our Bedrooms.”⁴² In this revealing editorial, Kinsley writes, “[The] solution is to end the institution of marriage, or rather, the solution is to end the institution of government monopoly on marriage. And yes, if three people want to get married, or one person wants to marry herself and someone else wants to conduct a ceremony and declare them married, let ‘em. If you and your government aren’t implicated, what do you care? If marriage were an entirely private affair, all the disputes over gay marriages would become irrelevant.” Otherwise, the author warns, “it’s going to get ugly.”⁴³

Judith Levine, writing in *The Village Voice*, offered support for these ideas in an article titled “Stop the Wedding: Why Gay Marriage Isn’t Radical Enough.”⁴⁴ She wrote, “Because American marriage is inextricable from Christianity, it admits participants as Noah let animals on the ark. But it doesn’t have to be that way. In 1972 the National Coalition of Gay Organizations

demanded the ‘repeal of all legislative provisions that restrict the sex or number of persons entering into a marriage unit; and the extension of legal benefits to all persons who cohabit regardless of sex or numbers.’ Group marriage could comprise any combination of genders.”⁴⁵

Stanley Kurtz, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, summed up the situation in a recent *Weekly Standard* article. He noted that if gay marriage is legalized, “marriage will be transformed into a variety of relationship contracts, linking two, three or more individuals (however weakly or temporarily) in every conceivable combination of male and female . . . the bottom of this slope is visible from where we now stand.”⁴⁶

We must all become soberly aware of a deeply disturbing reality: The homosexual agenda is *not* marriage for gays. It is marriage for no one. And despite what you read or see in the media, it is definitely *not* monogamous.

What will happen sociologically if marriage becomes anything or everything or nothing? The short answer is that the State will lose its compelling interest in marital relationships altogether. After marriage has been redefined, divorces will be obtained instantly, will not involve a court, and will take on the status of a driver’s license or a hunting permit. With the family out of the way, all rights and privileges of marriage will accrue to gay and lesbian partners without the legal entanglements and commitments heretofore associated with it.

These are just a few reasons why homosexual marriage is truly revolutionary. Legalizing it will change everything, especially for the institution of the family.

2. Children will suffer most.

The implications for children in a world of decaying families are profound. Because homosexuals are rarely monogamous, often having as many as three hundred⁴⁷ or more partners in a lifetime—some studies say it is typically more than one thousand⁴⁸—children in those polyamorous situations are caught in a perpetual coming and going. It is devastating to kids, who by their nature are enormously conservative creatures. They like things to stay just the way they are, and they hate change. Some have been known to eat the same brand of peanut butter throughout childhood.

More than ten thousand studies have concluded that kids do best when they are raised by loving and committed mothers and fathers.⁴⁹ They are less likely to be on illegal drugs, less likely to be retained in a grade, less likely to drop out of school, less likely to commit suicide, less likely to be in poverty, less likely to become juvenile delinquents, and for the girls, less likely to become teen

mothers. They are healthier both emotionally and physically, even thirty years later, than those not so blessed by traditional parents.⁵⁰

Social scientists have been surprisingly consistent in warning about the impact of fractured families. If present trends continue, the majority of children will have several “moms” and “dads,” perhaps six or eight “grandparents,” and dozens of half-siblings. It will be a world where little boys and girls are shuffled from pillar to post in an ever-changing pattern of living arrangements; where huge numbers of them will be raised in foster-care homes or living on the street, as millions do in countries all over the world today. Imagine an environment where nothing is stable and where people think primarily about themselves and their own self-preservation. And have you considered what will happen when homosexuals with children become divorced? Instead of two moms and two dads, they will have to contend with four moms or four dads. How would you like to be a new husband a generation later who instantly had four or six or eight mother-in-laws.

We must also consider a world of the future where immorality is even more rampant than today, where both unbridled homosexual *and* heterosexual liaisons are the norm. The apostle Paul described such a society in the book of Romans, referring apparently to ancient Rome. He wrote, “They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless” (Romans 1:29–31).

It appears likely now that the demise of families will accelerate this type of decline dramatically, resulting in a chaotic culture that will rip kids apart emotionally.

3. Public schools in every state will embrace homosexuality.

With the legalization of homosexual marriage, every public school in the nation will be required to teach this perversion as the moral equivalent of traditional marriage between a man and a woman. Textbooks, even in conservative regions, will have to depict man/man and woman/woman relationships, and stories written for children as young as elementary school, or even kindergarten, will have to give equal space and emphasis to homosexuals. How can a child, fresh out of toddlerhood, comprehend the meaning of adult sexuality? The answer is, they can't, but it is happening in the state of California already.⁵¹

4. Adoption laws will be instantly obsolete.

From the moment that homosexual marriage becomes legal, courts will not be able to favor a traditional couple of one man and one woman in matters of adoption. Children will be placed in homes with parents representing only one sex on an equal basis with those having a mom and a dad. Even the polyamorous couples won't be excluded. The prospect of fatherless and motherless children will not be considered in the evaluation of eligibility. It will be the law.

5. Foster-care programs will be impacted dramatically.

Foster-care parents will be required to undergo "sensitivity training" to rid themselves of bias in favor of heterosexuality, and will have to affirm homosexuality in children and teens. Moral training, at least as it applies to sexuality, will be forbidden. Again, this is the current law in California.⁵²

6. The health care system will stagger and perhaps collapse.

This could be the straw that breaks the back of the insurance industry in Western nations, as millions of new dependents become eligible for coverage. Every HIV-positive patient needs only to find a partner to receive the same coverage as offered to an employee. It is estimated by some analysts that an initial threefold increase in premiums can be anticipated; even with that, it may not be profitable for companies to stay in business.

And how about the cost to American businesses? Will they be able to provide health benefits? If not, can physicians, nurses, and technicians be expected to work for nothing or to provide their services in exchange for a vague promise of payments from indigent patients? Try selling that to a neurosurgeon or an orthopedist who has to pay increased premiums for malpractice insurance. The entire health care system could implode.

Is it possible? Yes. Will it happen? I don't know.

7. Social Security will be severely stressed.

Again, with millions of new eligible dependents, what will happen to the Social Security system that is already facing bankruptcy? If it does collapse, what will that mean for elderly people who must rely totally on that meager support? Who

is thinking through these draconian possibilities as we careen toward “a brave new world”?

8. Religious freedom will almost certainly be jeopardized.

In order to get a perspective on where the homosexual activist movement is taking us, one can simply look at our neighbors to the north. Canada is leading the way on this revolutionary path. I could cite dozens of examples indicating that religious freedom in that country is dying. Indeed, on April 28, 2004, the Parliament passed bill C 250, which effectively criminalized speech or writings that criticize homosexuality.⁵³ Anything deemed to be “homophobic” can be punished by six months in prison or by other severe penalties.⁵⁴

Pastors and priests in Canada are wondering if they can preach from Leviticus or Romans 1 or other passages from the writings of the apostle Paul. Will a new Bible be mandated that is bereft of “hate speech”? Consider this: A man who owned a printing press in Canada was fined \$3,400 for refusing to print stationary for a homosexual activist organization.⁵⁵

Censorship is already in full swing. One of our Focus on the Family radio programs on the subject of homosexuality was judged by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission to be “homophobic.” The radio station that carried the broadcast was censured for airing it, and I have not been able to address the issue since.

Is that kind of censorship coming to the United States. Yes, I believe it is. Once homosexual marriage is legalized, if indeed that is where we are headed, laws based on what will be considered “equality” will bring many changes in the law. Furthermore, it is likely that non-profit organizations that refuse to hire homosexuals on religious grounds will lose their tax exemptions. Some Christian colleges and universities are already worrying about that possibility.

9. Other nations are watching our march toward homosexual marriage and will follow our lead.

Marriage among homosexuals will spread throughout the world, just as pornography did after the Nixon Commission declared obscene material “beneficial” to mankind.⁵⁶ Almost instantly, the English-speaking countries liberalized their laws against smut. America continues to be the fountainhead of filth and immorality, and its influence is global. Dr. Darrell Reid, president of Focus on the Family Canada, told me recently that his country is carefully

monitoring what is happening in the United States. If we take this step off a cliff, the family on every continent will splinter at an accelerated rate. Conversely, our Supreme Court has made it clear that it looks to European and Canadian law in the interpretation of our Constitution.⁵⁷ What an outrage! That should have been grounds for impeachment, but the Congress, as usual, remained passive and silent.

10. The gospel of Jesus Christ will be severely curtailed.

The family has been God's primary vehicle for evangelism since the beginning. Its most important assignment has been the propagation of the human race and the handing down of the faith to our children. Malachi 2:15 reads, referring to husbands and wives, "Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." That responsibility to teach the next generation will never recover from the loss of committed, God-fearing families. The younger generation and those yet to come will be deprived of the Good News, as has already occurred in France, Germany, and other European countries. Instead of providing for a father and mother, the advent of homosexual marriage will create millions of motherless children and fatherless kids. Are we now going to join the Netherlands and Belgium to become the third country in the history of the world to "normalize" and legalize behavior that has been prohibited by God himself? Heaven help us if we do!

11. The culture war will be over, and the world may soon become "as it was in the days of Noah" (Matthew 24:37).

This is the climactic moment in the battle to preserve the family, and future generations hang in the balance. This apocalyptic and pessimistic view of the institution of the family and its future will sound alarmist to many, but I think it will prove accurate unless—unless—God's people awaken and begin an even greater vigil of prayer for our nation. That's why we are urgently seeking the Lord's favor and asking Him to hear the petitions of His people and heal our land. As of this time, however, large segments of the church still appear to be

unaware of the danger; its leaders are surprisingly silent about our peril (although we are tremendously thankful for the efforts of those who have spoken out on this issue).

This reticence on behalf of Christians is deeply troubling. Marriage is a sacrament designed by God that serves as a metaphor for the relationship between Christ and His church. Tampering with His plan for the family is immoral and wrong. To violate the Lord's expressed will for humankind, especially in regard to behavior that He has prohibited, is to court disaster.

- **Excerpted from the book, *Marriage Under Fire, Why We Must Win This Battle* by Dr. James Dobson**
- **Footnoted references are included in the book**