

The Church and Homosexuality: Part III

By Greg Witherow

As mentioned in our first essay, gay marriage has moved to center stage in the ongoing American Culture War. Increasingly, the gay lobby has racked up incremental victories in the courts and state houses, with only occasional set backs or reversals. At the end of the day, the center of this debate boils down to one word - Marriage. The gay community wants access to the word in describing their partnerships. Traditionalists seek to protect an institution they see as both sacred and foundational to strong communities and the nation. But why is the word Marriage so important? Why does the gay community insist on access to it? And at its core, is the traditionalist position ultimately based on bigotry and homophobic fear? This essay will examine these questions and provide a response.

Bigotry or Principles

It is undeniable Western Civilization was built on Judeo-Christian (Biblical) values. Slowly over the centuries, these values gradually transformed society to the benefit of all. Inspired from Biblical principles, schools were established, slavery was abolished, the dignity of the person was recognized, hospitals were founded, women were elevated, the rule of law was established and private property respected. Such values serve as an invisible moral firewall to protect (not to shackle or suppress) people, especially women, children and the weaker members of society. This nation casts off its Biblical foundations to its own peril¹. Our way of life and freedoms depend on such Ideas.

In the Bible we learn marriage was created to be between one man and one woman. Children are the desired and natural progeny of the resulting sexual union. Lifetime monogamy between a man and a woman is expected. The husband has an obligation to provide for his family. These are central tenets to the marital institution. It is the Biblical moral code that elevates our sexual mores above those of our baser instincts and abuse.

Traditionalists base their moral code on rights found in the Bible and endowed by a Creator. It is a principled apologetic that has served society well. It is not an apologetic based on bigotry or fear of “people different from us”, but on dignity. It is a fair question to ask the gay community, what is the source of their moral code? Can it change? Does the gay apologetic reject polygamy or incest between consenting adults? How do we determine Right and Wrong? What is the source of inalienable rights? Think about it.

¹ Minus a Judeo-Christian foundation the picture is bleak. Most African nations are ruled by despots, not the rule of law. Muslim nations sometimes deny women education, the right to drive a car, force them to wear a burqa and execute persons converting away from Islam. Women living in China are subjugated to forced abortions and one child. Copyright laws are ignored and religious and political expression is suppressed. In India, while the caste system is officially illegal, in practice it still holds sway. The practice of Sati, the burning to death of Hindu widows sometimes still occurs. The degree these societies have advanced is to the degree they have adopted historical Western (i.e. Judeo-Christian) standards, even as the West rapidly moves away from them. Yes, there are things we can and should learn from other cultures. But the aforementioned attributes are at the core of Christianity, even if not always practiced.

The Goal: Gay Sex Is Normal

Gays claim they are second class citizens if they are barred from an institution open to heterosexual couples. There is no doubt legal rights are a part of this equation. Questions involving inheritance, hospital visitation rights, etc. would all be taken off the table with a marriage contract². But there is something bigger in this debate which is the real Crown Jewel for the gay community. The real prize and ultimate goal is a national affirmation that **gay sex is normal**. Again, at its core this battle is about affirmation, not rights. This can be proven with the following proposition. If gay couples were offered equal or **even greater rights** than marriage (for example, an additional \$500 tax credit), the offer would be rejected. Why? Because all the legal rights minus marriage does not give them affirmation. Therefore, gays effectively shame the public with the cries of “separate but equal” in order to scale the wall of Fortress Marriage. **With marriage they get Normal**. Adopting Civil Rights imagery, they have effectively advanced their Cause.

The Charge: Separate But Equal

But does the phrase “separate but equal” apply to gays as it once did to African-Americans? No. This can be illustrated by looking at the differences between men and women. While men and women are both equal before the law, they are in fact different. In this country men and women have access to the same laws, schools and employment opportunities. But common sense provides for allowances where true equality, where equality means “the same”, does not make sense. For example, few complain that men and women have different public bathrooms. Separate facilities are an arrangement that works well in our society. Likewise, women typically do not play on organized men’s sport teams. So there is an NBA for men and a WNBA for women. Title IX laws mandate separate but equal athletic opportunities on college campuses³. Minus the segregation, the sports would suffer (fewer fans) and women athletes would get hurt. These measures are based on common sense, not bigotry. If someone proposed these arrangements relegate women to a second class citizenship (separate but equal), it would be rejected. Why? It is because society recognizes the differences between the sexes.

Therefore if it can be shown gay unions are different from traditional marriage, the same principles would apply. Otherwise, marriage would suffer and people would get hurt.

A Different Sort of Union

As men and women are different in biology and (generally speaking) nature, so too are gay unions differ from traditional marriage in both biology and nature. It is by design that a husband and wife have the ability to procreate children. They each bring to the marriage sexual equipment that by nature is made to work together. Same sex couples are not so equipped. Therefore it is a biological fact that a gay union is a different variety

² It should be noted that all of these rights can be obtained even without the granting of a marriage license.

³ Title IX is a U.S. federal law enacted in 1972 that ensures women have the same educational opportunities as men. In athletics this has meant an arrangement where equal funding of men and women’s sports is provided, not a forced integration (with gender quotas or targets) of the sexes onto the same teams.

of union than a traditional one⁴. These two unions are no more identical than a man and a woman are identical. Acknowledging this is not discrimination, it is common sense.

The second difference is that multiple studies⁵ (and common sense) attest that children do better when raised with both biological parents in the house. Who can claim children are not emotionally healthier with both mom and dad? By definition, even a loving gay couple does not provide a mother and a father. Minus a mom and dad, children are hurt.

What does a father provide? Boys need a father in the home who is role a model of manhood, instills in them a respect for authority and helps them to garner the confidence that they can succeed. Girls need a dad to give her fatherly affection and the assurance she'll always be beautiful in his eyes. Lacking this male love, she will seek it elsewhere.

What does the mother provide? Boys need a mom to nurture them with her inherent loving heart. Moms also give their sons the opportunity to learn how to treat a woman. Girls need a mom to talk to (girls, more than boys love to talk), to exhibit the strengths of the feminine virtues and how to deal with would-be suitors. Gay couples cannot make the same impressions that a father and mother imprint on a child's soul⁶. News flash: A man cannot be a mother and a woman cannot be a father. Scientists stunned⁷!

To summarize, men and women are different in both biology and (generally speaking) in nature. While a gay union can be donned with the same legal rights as marriage, it would in fact be a legal fiction to claim such unions are in essence **synonymous** to marriage. They are neither the same nor can they produce the same results. Governments have long given special status to traditional marriage. Why? It is because such marriages produce future citizens of stable dispositions and who are generally well grounded in Right and Wrong. This is good for communities and nations. In contrast gay couples cannot sire children and the very nature of the union actually undermines values of Right and Wrong.

The Law of Unintended Consequences

For the public, the unintended consequences of declaring gay unions' morally equivalent to traditional marriage will reverberate throughout society. First, there is no longer a

⁴ Gays will rebut this argument in three ways. First, they will rightly claim gay couples can have children using in vitro fertilization. This is true. But in doing so they are outsourcing to either a female or a male. Besides, science is getting to the point where only a laboratory is needed for a fetus to gestate for nine months. No sane person believes this is healthy or ideal. Second, it may be argued that there are too many people in the world today - making a gay union more virtuous than a traditional one! But the objection does not reverse the point that by nature a gay union is different than the traditional one. Third, if a traditional marriage cannot produce children are they not (on this point) on equal footing with a gay union? The answer is no, because in theory traditional couples are designed to have children and gays are not. A man who is incapable of siring children is still by definition a man and not a woman.

⁵ Read "Posterity Lost: Progress, Ideology and the Decline of the American Family" by Richard T. Gill

⁶ It is true that many traditional families are dysfunctional or broken. But it is also true that everybody instinctively knows what the ideal is, and that it is healthy for a family to strive for the ideal.

⁷ On January 20, 1992 Time Magazine's cover story declared that "new studies" show men and women are born different and therefore behave differently. Apparently the credentialed academics had just learned what any 16th century peasant farmer could have told them. This "news" warranted a front page story.

moral argument for denying polygamy, incestuous marriage (i.e. two adult brothers)⁸ or group marriages. With people of every sexual inclination jumping into the marital bed (with lifetime vows seen as optional), marriage continues its March To Meaninglessness.

A second repercussion is the impact on our young people. If gay sex is stamped Normal by society, such sex will be taught in our schools (as part of sex education). How will young people respond? We are beginning to find out. Focus on the Family (FOF) was founded by James Dobson and provides counseling services to families. Parents often contact FOF with questions or concerns about child-raising. What is the number one question FOF gets from parents? It is calls about teen homosexuality. By incrementally normalizing the practice, young people are experimenting in gay sex.

A third repercussion will be the loss of religious freedom. While initial laws may protect religious freedom, over time these protections cannot stand up in court. Imagine a church denying African-American couples a wedding. Based on Civil Rights laws, this cannot happen. If homosexual marriages are declared a Civil Right, how long will it take for a court to demand churches give gays access to the altar? Publicly speaking out against homosexual sex will be labeled a hate crime. This is already happening in Canada⁹. Our priests will either comply or go to jail. To think otherwise is to live in Fairyland.

In 1993 the late Senator Patrick Moynihan wrote an essay entitled Defining Deviancy Down¹⁰. In it he highlights the necessity of “intact biological parent families” to insure a healthy citizenry and stable nation. He concludes by stating, “We are getting used to a lot of behavior that is not good for us.” While only implicitly addressing gay marriage (not an issue in 1993!), he clearly lays out bleak consequences when we trivialize deviancy.

Summary

To summarize, the case for traditional marriage is based on principles, not bigotry or fear. Second, the real goal of gay marriage is to normalize gay sex, not to merely obtain legal rights. Third, gay unions without the legal status of traditional marriage are no more discriminatory than having the NBA and WNBA or separate bathrooms for men and women; there are differences. Fourth, gay unions do not benefit society as traditional marriage as they cannot produce offspring nor provide a holistic environment for children raised in such homes. Fifth, the consequences of gay marriage include further deviant behavior, a loss in religious freedom and an increased moral fog for our young people.

The consequences of gay marriage will reach into our schools, our churches, our homes and the public square. We tinker with our moral foundations at our own peril. Increasingly alone, the Catholic Church stands armed with her dogmas, the Bible, the Sacraments, beauty and The Truth. She is in need of soldiers with fortitude and resolve.

⁸ In a December 23, 2008 Washington Post column, Richard Cohen was offended when gay marriage was compared to incestuous marriage. But if the incest is between **consenting adults**, what is he outraged about? Cohen fails to see that yesterdays outrage is today’s human right.

⁹ Protestant and Catholic clergy have been charged. See <http://catholicexchange.com/2008/06/09/112825/>

¹⁰ Read it at this web site. <http://www2.sunysuffolk.edu/formans/DefiningDeviancy.htm>