

Video: Crippled Woman Walks

Pastor Ron Phillips shares a video of a crippled woman, who miraculously walks after she was healed during a recent crusade in the Dominican Republic.

Since 1979, Ron Phillips, D.Min., has been senior pastor of Central Baptist Church, now Abba's House, near Chattanooga, Tenn. He hosts a daily online radio program, CenterPoint, and is the author of more than 20 books, including *Our Invisible Allies* (Charisma House). Visit his [blog, here.](#)

Don't Let Pride Hide Offense

One way the enemy keeps a person in an offended state is to keep the offense hidden, cloaked with pride. Pride will keep you from admitting your true condition.

Once I was severely hurt by a couple of ministers. People would say, "I can't believe they did this to you. Aren't you hurt?" I would quickly respond, "No, I am fine. I'm not hurt." I knew it was wrong to be offended, so I denied and repressed it. I convinced myself I was not, but in reality I was. Pride masked the true condition of my heart.

Pride keeps you from dealing with truth. It distorts your vision. You never change when you think everything is fine. Pride hardens your heart and dims the eyes of your understanding. It keeps you from the change of heart—repentance—that will set you free. (See 2 Timothy 2:24–26.)

Pride causes you to view yourself as a victim. Your

attitude becomes, "I was mistreated and misjudged; therefore, I am justified in my behavior." Because you believe you are innocent and falsely accused, you hold back forgiveness. Though your true heart condition is hidden from you, it is not hidden from God. Just because you were mistreated, you do not have permission to hold on to an offense. Two wrongs do not make a right!

The Cure

In the Book of Revelation Jesus addressed the church of Laodicea by first telling them how they saw themselves as rich, wealthy, and having need of nothing, then by exposing their true condition—"wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:14–20). They had mistaken their financial strength for spiritual strength. Pride hid their true condition.

Many are this way today. They do not see the true condition of their hearts just as I was unable to see the resentment I carried toward those ministers. I had convinced myself I was not hurt. Jesus told the Laodiceans how to get out of their deception: buy God's gold and see their true condition.

Buy God's gold.

Jesus' first instruction for breaking free from deception was to "buy from Me gold refined in the fire" (Rev. 3:18).

Refined gold is soft and pliable, free from corrosion or other substances. It is when gold is mixed with other metals (copper, iron, nickel, and so on) that it becomes hard, less pliable, and more corrosive. This mixture is called an alloy. The higher the percentage of foreign metals, the harder the gold becomes. Conversely, the lower the percentage of alloy, the softer and more flexible the gold is.

Immediately we see the parallel: A pure heart is like pure gold—soft, tender, and pliable. Hebrews 3:13 states that

hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin! If we do not deal with an offense, it will produce more fruit of sin, such as bitterness, anger, and resentment.

This added substance hardens our hearts just as alloys harden gold. This reduces or removes tenderness, creating a loss of sensitivity.

We are hindered in our ability to hear God's voice. Our accuracy to see is darkened. This is a perfect setting for deception.

The first step in refining gold is grinding it into a powder and mixing it with a substance called flux. Then the mixture is placed in a furnace and melted by intense heat. The alloys and impurities are drawn to the flux and rise to the surface. The gold (which is heavier) remains at the bottom. The impurities or dross (such as copper, iron, and zinc, combined with flux) is then removed, yielding a purer metal.

Now look at what God says: Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. –Isaiah 48:10

And again: In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. –1 Peter 1:6–7, emphasis added

God refines with afflictions, trials, and tribulations, the heat of which separates impurities such as unforgiveness, strife, bitterness, anger, envy, and so forth from the character of God in our lives.

Sin easily hides where there is no heat of trials and

afflictions. In times of prosperity and success, even a wicked man will seem kind and generous. Under the heat of trials, however, the impurities surface.

There was a time in my life when I went through intense trials such as I had never faced before. I became rude and harsh with those closest to me. My family and friends began to avoid me.

I cried out to the Lord, "Where is all this anger coming from? It wasn't here before!" The Lord responded, "Son, it is when they liquefy gold in fire that the impurities show up." He then asked a question that changed my life. "Can you see the impurities in gold before it is put in the fire?"

"No," I answered.

"But that doesn't mean they were not there," He said. "When the fire of trials hit you, these impurities surfaced. Though hidden to you, they were always visible to Me. So now you have a choice that will determine your future. You can remain angry, blaming your wife, friends, pastor, and the people you work with, or you can see this dross of sin for what it is and repent, receive forgiveness, and I will take My ladle and remove these impurities from your life."

See your true condition.

Jesus said our ability to see correctly is another key to being freed from deception. Often when we are offended we see ourselves as victims and blame those who have hurt us. We justify our bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, envy, and resentment as they surface. Sometimes we even resent those who remind us of others who have hurt us. For this reason Jesus counseled, "Anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:18). See what? Your true condition! That's the only way we can "be zealous and repent" as Jesus commanded next. You will only repent when you stop blaming other people. When we blame others and defend our own

position, we are blind. We struggle to remove the speck out of our brother's eye while there is a log in ours. It is the revelation of truth that brings freedom to us. When the Spirit of God shows us our sin, He always does it in such a way that it seems separate from us. This brings conviction, not condemnation.

It is my prayer that God's Word will enlighten the eyes of your understanding that you will see your true condition and become free from any offense you are harboring. Don't let pride keep you from seeing and repenting.

John Bevere is a popular speaker at conferences and churches and the author of best-sellers The Bait of Satan and The Fear of the Lord. He is host of The Messenger TV show and directs Messenger International ministry. This article was excerpted from his popular book The Bait of Satan.

Understanding the Role of the Watchman

This word *shamar* means to guard, to keep, to be a watchman. It emphasizes the protective element of the prophet's mantle. The preserving and guarding aspect of the prophet's ministry is needed in every local church. Many wellmeaning pastors have suffered unnecessarily due to the lack of understanding this aspect of the ministry of the prophet. The *shamar* aspect of the prophet's ministry is one of the most important ones, and it will benefit the church greatly.

The local church is kept safe through prophetic intercession, prophetic discernment, prophetic praise, prophetic preaching, prophetic teaching, and prophetic worship. This is how

the church is best defended. Without a revelation of the *shamar* aspect of the prophetic ministry, a local church will suffer from many attacks that can be averted.

Each church should identify, develop, and train the *shamar* prophets who have been set in their assembly by God. A revelation of the importance of the ministry of *shamar* prophets is vital to the success and long-term health of every church.

Shamar can refer to guarding a flock, the heart, the mind, a nation, or a city from outside attack or ungodly influences. It is used in reference to keeping (guarding) the gates or entries to cities. Each local church needs a prophetic guard. This is not one prophet but a company of prophets who help guard the church from the invasion of the enemy. Churches that develop the prophetic ministry will have the advantage of being protected through prophetic intercession and the *shamar* aspect of the prophetic ministry.

To guard means a number of things. It can mean to protect, to watch over, to stand guard over, to police, to secure, to defend, to shield, to shelter, to screen, to cover, to cloak, to preserve, to save, to conserve, to supervise, to keep under surveillance or control, to keep under guard, to govern, to restrain, to suppress, to keep watch, to be alert, or to take care. Synonyms for guard include protector, defender, guardian, custodian, watchman, sentinel, sentry, patrol, and garrison. These words help us visualize and define the *shamar* aspect of the prophetic ministry.

Without a revelation of the *shamar* aspect of the prophetic ministry, a local church will suffer from many attacks that can be averted. The *shamar* components of the prophetic mantle pertain to the prophet's role as a guardian tending to the flock over which he or she has care. It applies to the guardian function of the office, the aspect of prophetic ministry that makes a person like a sentinel or a protector.

To *shamar* a people is to work prophetically, to encircle the people or the church with a divine wall or hedge of protection—or to reseal the gap in the hedge through which the devil has broken in with satanic assaults, attacks, and warfare.

Look at these examples from the Bible that use the word *shamar*:

- Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. —Psalm 127:1
- My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. —Psalm 130:6
- I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence. —Isaiah 62:6
- The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? —Song of Solomon 3:3

We can see that watchmen duties in the church are accomplished through the prayer, intercessions, and petitions of the prophet on behalf of the local body of believers. Such a guard would consist of the prayer team, the special intercessors, dedicated psalmists, seers, and subordinate prophets. It is the word *shamar* that emphasizes the status of prophets as spiritual guards, warriors, supernatural enforcers, and keepers of the churches of God. Without the help of the watchmen, pastors cannot take care of their flocks. As a result, the people of God become open prey to the enemy forces:

Prophets Who Protect

My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have

forgotten their restingplace. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not. –Jeremiah 50:6–7

Building a hedge of protection

Additionally, the word *shamar* identifies a prophet who encircles (or surrounds) to retain and attend to, as one does a garden. The prophet's spiritual authority acts as a fence or garrison around an assigned congregation to shield it from harm, attack, or demonic trespass. Protection from trespassers, as meant here, includes protection from the spoilage, destruction, invasion, and threats that result from spiritual and human trespassers in the church.

Behold, he that keepeth [*shamar*] Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper [*shamar*]: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve [*shamar*] thee from all evil: he shall preserve [*shamar*] thy soul. The Lord shall preserve [*shamar*] thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. –Psalm 121:4–8

We can see from these verses that God *shamars* His people. God loves His people and protects them. The *shamar* aspect of the prophet's ministry is a part of the nature of God. God never slumbers or sleeps. He is always alert. God *shamars* us from evil. God *shamars* our souls (our minds, wills, and emotions). God *shamars* our going out and coming in (our travels). It is the nature of God to protect. Protection from God is a part of our covenant with Him, and *shamar* prophets are therefore a practical part of the working out of our covenant relationship with God.

John Eckhardt is overseer of Crusaders Ministries in Chicago. Gifted with a strong apostolic call, he has ministered across the U.S. and in more than 80 other countries. He produces a weekly TV program, *Perfecting the Saints*, and is the author of more than 20 books, including *Ordinary People, Extraordinary*

Power and the popular *Prayers That ...* series (*Prayers That Rout Demons, Prayers That Break Curses, Prayers That Bring Healing, Prayers That Release Heaven*) and . For more, visit his ministry at www.impactnetwork.net.

Madonna's Gay Smooch and a Shocking 'Homophobic' Rant

Maybe you've never heard of **Michelle Shocked** before today. The folk singer doesn't exactly carry Madonna status—but she's getting plenty of attention in the wake of some eyebrow-raising comments at a recent concert.

After pop sensation Madonna used her appearance at the 24th annual GLAAD Media Awards last weekend to bully the **Boy Scouts** for its "anti-gay" stance, Shocked came out with an anti-gay stance uniquely her own.

But while Madonna is being celebrated for trotting on stage donning a Boy Scouts uniform and smooching gay CNN newsman Anderson Cooper right on the kisser as he won the Vito Russo Award (which is presented to an openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender media professional who has made "a significant difference in promoting equality,") Shocked is getting shunned for what some are calling homophobic remarks.

Judge this for yourself.

According to the *Bay Area Reporter*, Shocked told fans at a concert, "When they stop Prop 8 and force priests at gunpoint to marry gays, it will be the downfall of civilization and Jesus will come back," she said.

The paper reports that “Loud gasps were heard from the audience. Many fans walked out.” “I believe the Bible is the Word of God,” Shocked continued. At that, more audience gasps were heard, the paper reports, and more fans exited, some shouted pro-gay sentiments as they walked out.

The paper then reports, “With a broad smile, Shocked said, “You are going to leave here and tell people ‘Michelle Shocked said God hates faggots.’”

Shocked never said she hated gays or anyone else. Nevertheless, Shocked has seen concert venues cancel her appearances.

Madonna, on the other hand, can seemingly do no wrong in the gay community, but I personally view Madonna’s comments and actions at the GLADD Awards as far more offensive than anything Shocked actually said.

According to WENN News Service, “The Material Girl took to the stage in New York to present Cooper with the top honor, and couldn’t help but court controversy with her onstage ensemble—a swipe at the Boy Scouts’ ban on openly gay and transgender leaders. “Donning the shorts, shirt and hat worn by members of the Boy Scouts of America, the gay icon told the audience, ‘I wanted to be a Boy Scout, but they wouldn’t let me join. I think that’s f**ked up. I can build a fire. I know how to pitch a tent. I have a very good sense of direction. I can rescue kittens from trees. Listen, I wanna do (good) for the community’.”

So where do we go from here? Were Shocked’s comments out of line? Is she stooping to Madonna’s level by using such colorful language about “forcing priests to marry gays at gunpoint”? Or is it justified in light of the gay agenda’s hard push to force its will down the throats of God-fearing Christians?

You decide.

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at jennifer.leclaire@charismamedia.com or visit her website [here](#). You can also join Jennifer on [Facebook](#) or follow her on [Twitter](#)

Pastor Ron Phillips Marvels at Pope Francis' Humility

This is the year of the church, in spite of so many liberal attacks on our faith.

In spite of the denominational lines that define the differences between Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, charismatics, Methodists, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, etc., billions of people across the globe still name the *name that is above every name*, and still bow their knees to Christ.

Congratulations to all of our friends of the Catholic faith on the election of Pope Francis I. He has taken the name of St. Francis of Assisi, a priest known as an evangelist and missionary. He comes from South America, a hotbed of charismatic Catholicism.

Pope Francis I is the first pope to bow down and ask the people to pray for him. What humility! Let us pray, as fellow believers, that God will use this man as an instrument to turn the world back to Christ.

May the life and leadership of Pope Francis I echo the words of St. Francis as he guides Catholic believers "to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his

footsteps.”

Successful Church Planting Requires Both Passion and Planning

My wife, Joyce, and I planted our local church 29 years ago, Jan. 29, 1984, in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn, N.Y. We were not sent out with any money and had only a handful of people who volunteered to serve with us. The following is based on all the mistakes I have made as a church planter, and the lessons I wish someone had coached me through.

1. Be sent from your local church.

Unfortunately, many send themselves and just “went” instead of being “sent.” The Bible teaches us that we should not preach unless we are “sent” (see Romans 10:15).

I was sent out as an evangelist in 1980 by my pastor, and was paid a small stipend for three full years before I was sent to start our church. I had to prove myself by being faithful to our mother church and serve our mother church as a licensed minister.

Many ministers act more like Robert Duvall’s character in the movie “The Apostle,” than like the apostolic structure found in the book of Acts and the epistles of the New Testament, because they “anoint,” “appoint,” and “send” themselves out without any biblical or ecclesial authority behind them!

I realize there are sometimes extenuating circumstances that may mitigate against a person receiving the blessing of a

local church in order to start a work (e.g. Martin Luther and the Reformation, John Calvin, those saved and called by God in nations where the gospel is not yet established with strong local churches, or those who sit under pastors who are control freaks who will not send anyone out).

I know of many people who just “went” and were never sent from their mother church—many even causing church splits—but I have yet to see any of these works have long-term success, since the foundation of these works started in such a way that they could not set precedent for loyalty and submission to spiritual authority in their new churches. Those who have started the wrong way have to go back to their former pastor and/or local church and repent, asking them for forgiveness and to release them and pray for them so that the curse of disobedience can be broken.

2. Have a strong church-planting team.

Jesus sent people out two-by-two, never alone. There was a reason for this. We need the prayers and support of fellow laborers when planting a church, which some believe is perhaps the single most difficult and stressful job in the world! The best thing is to strategically plan to have your church planting team—at the very least—include:

- An administrator;
- A bookkeeper working with a CPA;
- A worship leader;
- Adequate legal counsel to help set up your corporate papers, board and minutes;
- The senior leader who will lead the work.

Many are the church planters who go out by themselves, with only enthusiasm and passion as their resources for success, often resulting in unnecessary strains on their marriages and families because they have to be all things to all people, while doing all the administrative work necessary to sustain organizational flow.

3. Have a financial base of support.

Many church planters go out without raising support and without a financial plan. Although God has called many into the mission field without any money up front, that is the exception, not the general rule. I believe a church planter should spend at least one year raising financial support from their friends, family, local church, and even perhaps extracting and saving offerings for one year prior to the church launch from those called to be part of the church planting team. (This financial commitment will also help the team have more ownership and commitment to the process.) New senior pastors depending week-to-week on tithes and offerings with less than 30 committed tithing families will have a very difficult time focusing on the new church because of the concerns they will have providing for their families. Marriages and families can split apart because of pressures such as these.

4. Search out and know the community.

A church planter should do a demographic search of the community, know its history, key locations and personally meet senior leaders who run organizations that provide neighborhood support systems, like hospitals, police stations, youth empowerment programs, job training centers, community boards, the Chamber of Commerce, etc. They should also have a target audience (specific age group, culture, religious and ethnic background) that will thus frame their methodological approach to ministry.

For example, when Jesus sent His leaders out to preach, He expressly told them not to preach to any but those of the lost sheep of the house of Israel; He had his demographic target and did not operate by happenstance (see Matt. 10:5-6). My theological mentor, Ray Bakke, always tells his students that they need to exegete their communities, not just Scripture.

http://www.charismanews.com/components/com_jce/editor/tiny_mce

/plugins/article/img/pagebreak.png);">

5. Get to know the pastors and key leaders in the community.

In the same way we need ministry teams to effectively shepherd a congregation, we also need to have meaningful collegial relationships with other pastors in the community. Church planters should attend monthly ministerial fellowships and get to know the “lay of the land,” ask the right questions, and learn from the mistakes of those leaders who have gone before them.

Church planters especially need the support of other likeminded pastors called to the region so they can be part of a support group. This is especially true if their mother church is in another state. But even if it is nearby, connecting with other pastors ensures that you do not have a sectarian spirit, but a spirit of unity that enhances the kingdom of God instead of only your own empire.

6. Strike a balance between discipleship and outreach.

The philosophy I employed when I started our local church was based on 2 Timothy 2:2, which teaches that senior leaders are to pour into faithful people who are able to teach others.

I have seen many church planters get so caught up with numbers that their church became more of a center for events and big-name personalities that could draw people into a building, than in focusing on building people. A church must be more than a “gathering of loose bricks.”

We are called to build a spiritual temple that can truly offer praises unto God. Church planters have to remember that the method they employ to establish a new church will be needed to sustain the long-term interest of the church attendees. Those who attempt to build a church by bringing in Christian celebrities will have to keep putting out an enormous amount of money in advertising and offerings to these guests, which will become a monster that has to be constantly fed. They will

soon realize that building a church like this does not produce much fruit.

I believe successful church planters also have to know the balance between pushing their attendees to help in evangelistic outreaches, and in nurturing those who are already in the church. Some have made the mistake of only utilizing a strong mindset of outreach, without also employing in-reach to people who are established in the faith and have new families they have to raise.

When you have a young church, full of a lot of single adults who have a lot of time on their hands, you can push them hard to do a lot of ministry-related neighborhood outreaches. But there comes a time when those same people are going to get married and have children and need to have more family time and biblical counseling to aid them in their journey to maturity as fathers, mothers, husbands and wives.

Unfortunately, I have observed numerous young churches experience continual church splits because their pastors never distinguished between single young people with more time on their hands and those with growing families. Consequently, these leaders demanded that those with new and growing families serve in the church 4-6 nights per week without any letup, which causes burnout, divorce, adultery and bitterness toward ministry.

Joseph Mattera *has been in full-time ministry since 1980 and is currently the presiding bishop of Christ Covenant Coalition and Overseeing Bishop of Resurrection in New York, a multiethnic congregation of 40 nationalities that has successfully developed numerous leaders and holistic ministry in the New York region and beyond. [Click here](#) to visit his website.*

Carman: I Didn't Want to Tell My Mother I Have Cancer

When Carman was diagnosed with incurable cancer, he was stunned—but his thoughts quickly turned toward his 90-year-old mother.

“My mother had just broken her back in a fall. I didn't want to put any pressure on her, because all she would do is worry,” says Carman, an evangelist and singer who rose to fame in the 1980s, in an exclusive interview with Charisma News.

When Carman started getting phone calls from people far and wide offering him their **prayer** support after the cancer diagnosis, he knew it wouldn't take long for the news to spread like wildfire.

“I didn't want to tell my mother I have cancer, but I didn't want her to find out the wrong way,” says Carman. “Then, I felt I also had an obligation to tell the people I had ministered to what was going on. I posted a message on Facebook.”

Carman wrote on [his Facebook page](#) on Valentine's Day: “I have delayed writing this but those of you I call friends and supporters, who have prayed for me and this ministry need to know about this new battle that lies ahead. One week ago I was diagnosed with myeloma cancer. It is incurable and I've been given a 3- to 4-year window of time.”

Since then, Carman's fans have flocked to his Facebook page with a show of support. He added more than 45,000 fans in February and another nearly 10,000 fans so far this month.

“I figured this kind of thing would probably get 200 or 300 responses and people would offer a few remedies and prayers. But then I was shocked. All these responses kept coming in,” Carman says. “I don’t know what it all means. I’m just trying to digest it. I guess I’ve been out there for a long time and there’s more people [who] have been affected by my music than I realized.”

Stay tuned for more from Carman’s heart as this exclusive series continues.

Mike Bickle: Recovering The Biblical Grace Message

American culture has colored our understanding of grace. Watch as Mike Bickle offers the biblical definition of grace.

How Prayer is Infiltrating Congress

Watch a video with Rep. Randy Forbes as he gives insight into the origins of a weekly prayer meeting that convenes before each session in Room 219 of the Capitol building.

Obama's Acrobatics on Homosexual 'Marriage'

The number of flip-flops President Obama has now performed on the issue of marriage would be impressive for an Olympic gymnast.

He was for **homosexual marriage** (in a 1996 Illinois state Senate campaign), then against it (in his 2008 presidential run), then for it again (in a widely publicized interview last May). His administration said the **Defense of Marriage Act** (DOMA) was constitutional, then decided in 2011 it was unconstitutional. Now the president, who said last May that the issue should be decided at the state level, is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn California's law on the issue.

The high court will hear arguments in late March on two marriage cases—one challenging the federal act, and the other challenging California's marriage amendment, **Proposition 8**. Both DOMA (for purposes of federal law) and Prop. 8 (for California law) define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

Although Obama has always favored repeal of **DOMA**—part of which prevents the federal government from recognizing homosexual marriages even in states where they are legal—his Justice Department originally said the law could be defended as constitutional. Justice reversed that position in 2011 and has intervened in the DOMA case to call for it to be overturned.

On Feb. 28, however—the last possible day—the president's solicitor general filed a brief in the California case as well, urging that Proposition 8 be overturned.

In the interview with ABC's Robin Roberts where Obama announced his new position on marriage last year, he repeatedly said it would be a mistake to "nationalize" the marriage issue. In fact, he said, that was a key part of why he opposed DOMA.

On May 9, Obama said, "[W]hat you're seeing is, I think, states working through this issue. And I think that's a healthy process and a healthy debate. And I continue to believe that this is an issue that is gonna be worked out at the local level, because historically, this has not been a federal issue, what's recognized as a marriage."

Roberts even pressed him on the possibility of the Justice Department pushing more strongly to **redefine marriage**, but Obama resisted, saying, "I've got an opponent on—on the other side in the upcoming presidential election, who wants to refederalize the issue [with] a constitutional amendment. And, you know, I think it is a mistake to try to make what has traditionally been a state issue into a national issue."

Obama's decision last week to challenge Proposition 8—"federalizing" what is a settled matter under California state law—is a brazen act of hypocrisy.

The Justice Department's brief in the Proposition 8 case is premised entirely on the argument that classifications based on "sexual orientation" should be subjected to "heightened scrutiny" under the Constitution's "equal protection" clause—the same skeptical standard as a classification based on race.

In law, defining marriage as the union of a woman and a man does not create a classification based on the sexual orientation of any individual at all, but bases it on the gender complementarity of the couple. Yet even conceding the disparate impact of such laws upon homosexuals, they do not qualify for what is termed "strict legal scrutiny," which

generally involves an immutable characteristic (which sexual orientation is not) and political powerlessness (which is belied by the apparent stranglehold that homosexual activists now have on the Democratic Party).

The other typical requirements are a “history of discrimination,” but what history actually shows is long-standing disapproval of homosexual conduct, which is not the same as discrimination based on group identity. The characteristic also must be one that “bears no relation to the ability to perform or contribute.”

In this case, however, the question is not whether homosexual individuals contribute to society (they can and do, in various nonsexual ways), but whether **same-sex couples**, as a class, are capable of performing the core public purpose of marriage, which is procreation. They cannot.

The Justice Department brief fails to note that nearly all federal appeals courts have evaluated “sexual orientation” under the more lenient “rational basis” test. The role of marriage in promoting responsible procreation, and in keeping a man and woman together to raise the children produced by their union, is more than sufficient “rational basis” for laws classifying opposite-sex couples and same-sex couples differently.

Peter Sprigg *is senior fellow for Policy Studies at Family Research Council. This article appeared in [The Washington Times](#) on March 6.*