

Father in Chief? Or Just Another Politician?

I have always appreciated President Obama as a family man. He and first lady Michelle have popularized several healthy family practices. For example, his practice of date night is something that thousands of congregations have taught for several decades. In some ways, he is the nation's father in chief! He has had the opportunity to serve the U.S. as the nation's paternal role model.

When a father stands for and lives by truth, "the blessing" of the Scriptures comes upon both the man and his family. In addition, a good father figure emulates the character of God and in special circumstances can be an instrument of healing for wounded hearts far beyond his own family.

Unfortunately, the president's politically motivated "revelation" concerning same-sex marriage has forced his staunchest supporters (black churchgoers) into a compromising position. They have to choose between their faith and the historic presidency of Barack Obama.

Entire black denominations are officially denouncing the president's stance on marriage. More practically, secular leaders wonder what could happen to the definition of the word *father*. Would the role of a father get diminished, eviscerated or ignored by homosexual marriage? Some educators question, "How does reading the book *Heather Has Two Mommies* affect a child's understanding of his or her own family? How will a child with a 'fluid' understanding of families interpret their own future role in a family? Further, where will the next generation find role models for fathering?"

For the sake of clarity, let's define the word *father*. Miriam Webster's Student Dictionary defines "father" as follows: a

male parent; an ancestor; one who cares for another as a father might; a person who invents or begins something ; a priest—used especially as a title.

After reading Webster's current definitions, I concluded that fatherhood matters. It matters in three dimensions: literally, figuratively and spiritually. They are needed on many different levels in a modern society.

Please don't mistake this observation for misogyny. My affirmation of fatherhood is not meant to demean women or the traditional feminine role in a family. In fact, the average person knows that it takes both a mom and a dad to raise consistently healthy children.

I understand the president's desire to bring moral clarity to his children. I also empathize with his desire to remain relevant and contemporary. Like the Obamas, my wife and I chose to send our daughters to private school, in our case at a considerable financial sacrifice. But President Obama's recent "evolution" on the issue of the definition of marriage highlights not only a stark difference in our view of life and truth, but in our understanding of fatherhood.

When explaining his apparent change of heart on the meaning and essence of marriage, President Obama did not delve very deeply into political philosophy. He might have offered an explanation of his changing understanding of the state's proper relationship to the individual and where homosexual behavior fits into that equation.

Instead he talked about his personal interaction with homosexuals, including parents of his daughters' friends. He alluded to being swayed by his daughters' opinions on marriage, saying to ABC's Robin Roberts, "And Malia and Sasha ... it wouldn't dawn on them that somehow their friends' parents [in same-sex relationships] would be treated differently. It doesn't make sense to them and frankly, that's the kind of

thing that prompts a change of perspective. You know, not wanting to somehow explain to your child why somebody should be treated differently, when it comes to the eyes of the law.”

Of course, no one is saying that homosexuals should not be treated with dignity and respect. Retaining the age-old definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is not bigotry. Redefining the institution of marriage to offer legal and public approval of homosexual behavior is a different matter entirely.

I am happy to give the president the benefit of the doubt and assume that he didn't reverse his opinion on this foundational issue simply to avoid an uncomfortable conversation with his daughters. But his answer reveals that he has a very different understanding of his role as a father than I have.

Fathers should serve as the moral leaders in their home. They should model and instruct their offspring on the difference between right and wrong, and healthy and unhealthy choices. The very fact that, according to the president, Sasha and Malia could not understand what was different about two homosexual men raising a child versus a married mother and father raising a child, points to a rather significant failure in their moral instruction.

Whatever a family's beliefs about marriage and sexuality, they are matters about which parents must clearly teach their children, not send them into the world to figure it out on their own.

In this week after Father's Day, let's affirm the role of fathers everywhere! Let us also challenge both the president and the Department of Justice to enforce the Defense of Marriage Act. If you would like to add your name to a letter to the president, please visit .

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