

Fighting for Marriage

The battle for marriage requires unified action by all Christians.

A special glow surrounded my oldest daughter as we celebrated her 25th birthday. She was beyond the legal age of accountability, poised to be treated as a real adult. Nothing could have spoiled this day for me except one lingering question: Where will she find a husband?

A great number of black men are in prison, others have contracted HIV/AIDS, an increasing percentage are down-low (quietly gay) and some have prematurely died. In addition, many black men can't relate to her Ivy League education.

I don't like it, but here are the statistics. Blacks account for more than one-third of all abortions in the U.S., though we represent 12 percent of the population. Seven out of 10 black babies born in 2006 will be born out of wedlock. Forty percent of African-American adults are single.

I thought about these facts as I was reading a poignant Washington Post article, "Marriage Is For White People" by Joy Jones. It confirmed that marriage in the black community is under attack. But the writer noted that what we see among African-Americans is a foreshadowing of what will happen in the rest of the nation.

Liberals see black family decline as a natural result of poverty. They insist economics can solve the problem. Conversely, conservatives think that a "pull yourself up by your boot straps" mentality will save the day. Unfortunately, both underestimate the huge problem.

Looking at the liberal argument first, we find that during the early 1950s, before the civil rights movement, there were fewer out-of-wedlock births and divorces among blacks than today. Therefore, poverty alone is not the issue.

The conservative argument is also flawed. Although marital breakdown stems from personal choices, we are all challenged by the sinfulness of our culture. Unmarried couples living together, out-of-wedlock births, divorce and remarriage have changed the social landscape.

Jones noted that “sex, love and childbearing have become a la carte choices rather than a package deal.” This moral confusion would only worsen with the introduction of gay marriage.

For this reason, the same-sex marriage battle requires concerted, unified action by all Christians. Solving the problem of black family disintegration will take courageous effort. The following story illustrates the hurdles you may face in sounding the alarm.

I sat on an 11-person panel at a nationally televised summit called the State of the Black Union with Tavis Smiley. I expressed my concerns about the black family. I shared also that same-sex marriage had the potential to devastate the institution of marriage. Jesse Jackson interrupted me with a verbal attack.

He purported that whites had put me up to this “anti-gay” agenda. Later a gay activist snarled several derogatory remarks my way.

So what can you do to make a difference in the battle for marriage? First of all, you can live the truth. Christians should remain committed to heterosexual marriage.

Second, you can warn people that everywhere same-sex unions exist out-of-wedlock births and divorce rates increase.

Third, you can contact your elected officials and urge them to support a federal marriage amendment to the Constitution. Finally, you can vote against anyone who opposes this much-needed piece of legislation.

Let's take action now so that my daughter, your daughter and our grandchildren will be able to choose biblical marriage as a way of life.

Harry R. Jackson Jr. is senior pastor of 3,000-member Hope Christian Church in the nation's capital. Jackson, who earned an MBA from Harvard, is a best-selling author and popular conference speaker. He leads the High-Impact Leadership Coalition. To read past columns in Charisma by Harry R. Jackson Jr., log on at