

Is Gay Marriage a Moral Issue or a Civil Liberties Issue?

The battle for the family is heating up with one of the most important issues that could cause a huge tipping point in culture: the redefining of marriage by the Supreme Court.

Can marriage be defined only as a legal relationship between one man and one woman, or can it exist between two consenting adults of the same gender? In 2008, California voters defeated a proposed amendment that would redefine marriage. However, the battle will not stop at the state level. Gay activists want the U.S. government to redefine marriage. Currently nine states recognize same-sex marriage, and the majority of the population now favors recognition of gay marriage.

Is It a Moral Issue or a Civil Rights Issue?

There are two very different vantage points from which to view the issue of gay marriage that will determine a conclusion: Is it a moral issue or a civil rights issue?

The gay community would like this issue to be defined as a civil rights issue, comparable to what blacks faced during the civil rights movement. However, you can only make this argument by totally removing the moral component.

It's not a sin to be a black person or to live as a black person, according to the Bible. However, the Bible is very explicit about homosexuality being a sin. Comparing this to a civil liberties issue is not comparing apples to apples. If you remove the moral issue and you operate totally as a secular society, then perhaps you can argue this issue purely on a civil basis, which is how our nation has evolved on the subject. However, it's a slippery slope, because then you must recognize the civil liberties of polygamists, pedophiles and any other form of aberrant behavior among people who want

equal access and want to be treated equally *without moral consideration*.

Should we legalize sodomy or sexual abuse of children? Why would we not think such a thought? It's because we believe we are dealing with a moral issue. What if a parent and a child are consenting? Just because immoral behavior takes place by two consenting people does not make it OK.

What Is the Basis for Our Moral Compass?

For 200 years, America's moral compass has been rooted in the Bible. The *New England Primer* was a tool used to teach first-graders. It was first introduced in 1690 and taught for 200 years in America, until 1900. The alphabet was taught with Bible verses that begin with those letters of the alphabet. Lessons had questions about the Bible and the Ten Commandments.

The leadership of our nation and the growing liberalism of our population are signs of a nation that has lost its moral compass. Amazingly, 94 percent of the quotes used by the Founding Fathers who wrote our founding documents had their origin in the Bible, which shows the importance of God's Word in their lives and in this nation's founding. The moral compass for this country was the Bible for 200 years but is its compass no longer. We are now a secular society with some Bible verses and God-talk sprinkled on our currency and government buildings.

When the Defense of Marriage Act was signed in 1996, only 25 percent of the American public supported same-sex marriage; support has increased gradually ever since. California's Proposition 8, passed 52 percent to 48 percent by voters after a controversial campaign in 2008, has been declared unconstitutional by two federal courts but remains in litigation, and polling in 2012 shows 59 percent of California voters approve of same-sex marriage. National polls show that supporters of gay marriage first achieved a majority in 2010.

Mainline Protestants have shifted their views too. In 2003, 42 percent were in favor of gay marriage and 45 percent were opposed. Now, it's 52 percent in favor and 36 percent against. Black protestants are edging in that direction, but are still opposed in significant numbers, with 35 percent in favor and 52 percent against, up from 25 percent in favor and 65 percent against in 2003. The polls make it clear that younger evangelicals support gay marriage in larger numbers than their elders, but the exact number of supporters is still uncertain.

Public opinion on same sex marriage and unions in the United States thus reveals a great deal of change in a short period of time and significant regional disparity. While New England, the Pacific Coast and the northern Middle Atlantic states may support full-fledged marriage, comparisons of polling from a decade past to today reveals significant growth in support for same-sex marriages and civil unions in those regions. Meanwhile polling from other regions show that while support for same-sex marriages or civil unions has increased across the country, the growth of support is not uniform, with a significantly lower level of support occurring in the Deep South compared to the rest of the country. Given the wide diversity of opinions within the U.S., many supporters of same-sex unions believe that the most accurate way to discuss support for such unions in the United States is on a state-by-state or region-to-region basis.

Tim Keller, a nationally recognized pastor in New York City, explained that "you can believe homosexuality is a sin and still believe that same-sex marriage should be legal." This is the argument that some religious conservatives are already beginning to make and looks likely to be the position that most evangelicals end up settling on. Articles on changing attitudes among GOP youth illustrate the move toward separating government-sanctioned marriage and church-sanctioned marriage.

Editor's Note: *This is Part 1 of a five-part series. Be sure to check back to Charisma News for the remainder of the series.*

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