

Why Christ Must be the Center of Your Family

The debates over same-sex marriages and gay adoptions aren't likely to go away anytime soon. How should Christians respond?

If a lie is repeated often enough, those who hear it will begin to believe it is the truth. Such is the case regarding much of what we've heard concerning the legal, social and scientific ramifications of homosexuals being afforded the right to marry.

Civil union laws in Vermont and domestic partnership laws in Hawaii and California have fallen far short of declaring the legality of homosexual marriage. Biology refutes the idea of "same-sex marriage," and the law negates it. But our culture is still confused.

Is there such a thing as same-sex marriage? How can Christians think rightly, justly and graciously about these matters while also being salt and light in our culture? (See Matt. 5:13-16.)

Let me begin by explaining the most significant legal issues surrounding this debate. My goal is to set forth these arguments and then to arrive at a strategy for clearly and lovingly articulating the truth in order to positively affect our culture for Jesus Christ.

Is marriage a legal and fundamental right that should be afforded to all citizens, regardless of sex? And what is meant by the sanctity of marriage? These are specific and legitimate concerns to be considered.

THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS ARGUMENT Proponents of same-sex unions contend that same-sex couples are discriminated against in that they are prohibited from enjoying the fundamental right to marriage. But every American citizen does have free access

to the fundamental right to marry.

It's just that this right, like many others afforded by our laws, contains minimum requirements. For example, to vote one must meet the requisite age requirement. The minimum requirements to marry include: (1) the parties must be of minimum age; (2) they must be unmarried (the law allows for individuals to be married to only one person at a time); (3) they must be unrelated by blood or marriage; and (4) they must be of different sexes.

No court, legislature or legal body will ever stop anyone from marrying as long as he or she qualifies for that right. For this reason, the argument that homosexuals are denied the fundamental right to marry is fatally flawed from the outset.

Marriage has always been held as a fundamental constitutional right that must be afforded to all Americans, stemming from pre-Bill of Rights values upon which our nation is based and tested in the famous 1967 racial miscegenation case of *Loving v. Virginia*. When a white man was prohibited from marrying a black woman, the federal government ruled that it is illegal for any state to prohibit such a union.

Each party to the marriage met all the minimum requirements for entry into marriage. Race is not among those requirements, and to prohibit such a marriage was illegal.

When homosexual union proponents use this case, they evoke great sympathy for their argument. However, such an argument for homosexuals is flawed when examined in light of the minimum requirements for entry into marriage. This fact coupled with the constitutional standing of homosexuality renders the arguments void.

In 1993 homosexual plaintiffs in Hawaii asked the court to recognize a new fundamental right: same-sex marriage. But the right to marry someone of the same sex has never been held to be a fundamental right in any nation or civilization in the

history of the world, including that of the United States.

There is no new description of a fundamental right. Therefore, there is no right to same-sex marriage.

Homosexuals are not denied the fundamental right to marry as long as the minimum requirements for entry into marriage are met. However, just as two 10-year-olds cannot marry each other, two men cannot marry each other. These individuals simply do not meet the minimum requirements for entry into marriage.

THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE Proponents of heterosexual marriage argue that marriage is a sacred institution that will be irreparably harmed by altering its essential nature. Opponents dismiss this argument as discriminatory.

When a marriage is made, a new relationship is created—legally, morally, socially, physically and economically. The act of marriage is sexual intercourse, which consummates the marriage by uniting the spouses in a reproductive-type act, thus making them, in no merely figurative sense, two-in-one-flesh. It is precisely in this sense that sodomy is intrinsically nonmarital.

The “essence” of anything is that substance without which a thing cannot be itself. And the essence of marriage is the act of sex between a man and a woman in a sexually unitive capacity.

Two members of the same sex are simply incapable of entering into a reproductive and unitive marital act, making “homosexual marriage” an impossibility due to the essential nature of marriage itself. Marriage requires a man and a woman in the marital act.

Couples are not denied a marriage license because of their sex but because of the nature of marriage itself. Only in quite recent human history has the concept of the sanctity

(sacredness) of marriage begun to be questioned by cultural change.

The family—one man and one woman raising children within a unit—has survived every previous cultural shift. Because marriage is authentic by design, it is likely that it will survive any current or future cultural pressure for obsolescence.

Add to this one of the primary factors for the staying power of marriage—the protection of children. Facts show that children do better in a two-parent family, particularly when the parents are married to each other.

The family based on the sanctity of marriage is not merely a historical tradition; it is the original design, and it works. A majority of Americans still choose the option of marriage, even though our culture has become more accepting of many different types of people groupings and living arrangements.

NEW CULTURAL NORMS The normalization of homosexuality has led to legal and cultural confusion. Our media and cultural elite consistently suggest that homosexuality is genetic. Political pressure suppresses any biological and scientific evidence to the contrary.

Nevertheless, some studies that contradict this claim are making headlines. Focusing on sexual abuse and molestation evidence found in gay groups, a California psychologist demonstrated overwhelming evidence supporting the notion that homosexuality is a sexual deviancy, often accompanied by disorders that have dire consequences for our children.

One of these consequences is the trend toward lowering the age for sexual consent, which, according to some psychologists, is driven by the homosexual community's targeting of youth for homosexual education, experimentation and even expansion of the homosexual movement. This concerted effort to "proselytize" our youth supports the idea that homosexual

behavior is learned rather than genetically determined.

Another consequence is the growing number of homosexual parents. Both legal scholars and psychologists agree that most studies of lesbian and gay parenting reported to date are flawed. It is still an open question whether gay parenting is associated with a higher incidence of sexual abuse and homosexual orientation development.

However, there seems to be enough evidence to raise serious questions about homosexuals as parents, foster parents and adoptive parents. Still, the media has tried to mask the real concerns for children with the political debates over rights for gays and lesbians.

Comedian Rosie O'Donnell has criticized Florida lawmakers and President Bush for opposing gay adoption. O'Donnell openly discussed her lesbianism and motherhood via adoption after learning of two homosexual foster parents who were suing the state of Florida to overturn its ban on gay adoption.

The question remains not only whether O'Donnell can make a difference with her high-profile support but also whether lesbians and homosexuals ought to be legally qualified to adopt children. Children are really the most critical concern in this issue of adoption.

The legal principles reviewed here set the stage for a thorough examination of the truth surrounding homosexuality and its effect on our culture. For Christians to be salt and light, we must educate ourselves sufficiently to be able to articulate a gracious, biblical response to assertions favoring homosexuality, particularly in the context of families.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY It is necessary to use fairness, accuracy and honesty in discussing homosexuality, marriage and our culture. But it is also necessary to know the scriptural basis for marriage and why

God designed it as the union between a man and a woman.

The law behind each of the minimum requirements for entry into marriage has a biblical foundation. Genesis 1:27 states that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them” (NIV).

Our two genders together were created to reflect God—each sex individually reflects only a part of Him. Oneness that occurs in marriage is designed to be a reflection of God Himself. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

When this occurred in the first marriage, it required no law but that of the Creator Lawmaker. The result is that “The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (v. 25).

God designed marriage long before there were any churches or justices of the peace to perform ceremonies. He defined it as a covenant between a man and a woman who are of the age to properly consent and commit themselves to each other at the exclusion of all others.

Only after man and woman sinned, turned from God and fell from His grace did we lose sight of His original design and plan. This is what occurred in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and hid from Him.

They allowed themselves to be deceived rather than turning to seek God on the matter at hand. The same thing is happening to us today.

Marriage in submission to Christ is the foundation for family life. Only when we have God’s perspective can we rightly judge the true design for marriage (see Eph. 5:21-6:4).

According to the writer of Hebrews, “Marriage should be honored by all; the marriage bed kept pure, for God will

judge” (13:4). It is the premier honorable estate.

The biblical definition and design for marriage is what matters most. Our contemporary culture is hungry for these truths.

We must be convinced of God’s design for marriage and ready to gracefully articulate a biblical basis for it. We must communicate our beliefs to friends and family and then to congressmen and other elected officials.

Whether or not we are able to preserve our culture for the glory and honor of Jesus Christ depends on whether we, as Christians, are willing to take a stand on the critical concerns of our day. When we do, we become the salt and light Jesus called us to be.

Read a companion article.

Lynne Marie Kohm is a professor at Regent University School of Law in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She is widely published on the topics of marriage and its associated rights; children and families; and euthanasia. Kohm lives with her husband, Joseph, and their two children.