

Christian Founder of eHarmony: Gay Marriage 'Damaged' the Company

One of the country's most recognizable matchmakers, co-founder and CEO of eHarmony, recently said he believes the same-sex marriage debate has "damaged his company."

"I think this issue of **same-sex marriage** within the next five to 15 years will be no issue anymore," Neil Clark Warren, 78, said in a recent Yahoo! Finance interview. "We've made too much of it. I'm tired of it. It has really damaged our company."

According to eHarmony's website, 542 people get married every day in America after meeting through its site. The company says there's an eHarmony wedding every minutes, and claims responsibility for 565,000 marriages worldwide. The online matchmaker uses patented algorithms via 29 compatibility dimensions.

Warren, a Christian theologian who worked as a clinical psychologist counseling married couples for 35 years, describes himself as a "passionate follower of Jesus." He founded **eHarmony** in 2000 with his son-in-law and the promotional help of Focus on the Family, the evangelical organization James Dobson founded.

Warren primarily marketed eHarmony to a Christian clientele in the early years, showing off its connection with Focus on the Family. Now a secular site, eHarmony has been sued multiple times due to its refusal to match same-sex couples.

The dating site reached a settlement with New Jersey's Civil Rights Division in a 2008 discrimination case, in which it agreed to create a new website that would cater to homosexual

couples. Compatible Partners was launched in 2009.

Warren said the company did so “out of counsel that if we didn’t do it we were not going to have any business in New Jersey,” explaining, “we literally had to hire guards to protect our lives because the people were so hurt and angry with us, were Christian people, who feel that it’s a violation to Scripture.”

Warren concluded the interview by saying, “I have said that eHarmony really ought to put up \$10 million and ask other companies to put up money and do a really first-class job of figuring out homosexuality.

“At the very best, it’s been a painful way for a lot of people to have to live,” he said. “But at this point, at this age, I want America to start drawing together. I want it to be more harmonious.”

A 2005 *USA Today* article reported that Warren, at the time, was making attempts to distance eHarmony from its evangelical roots—especially its connection to **Focus on the Family**.

Though Warren is a longtime friend of Dobson, he stopped appearing on Dobson’s radio show and bought back the rights to his three books published by Focus on the Family.

“We’re trying to reach the whole world—people of all spiritual orientations, all political philosophies, all racial backgrounds,” Warren told *USA Today* when discussing the split from Focus. “And if indeed, we have Focus on the Family on the top of our books, it is a killer. Because people do recognize them as occupying a very precise political position in this society and a very precise spiritual position.”