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The Marriage Issue - An Attack On The Family

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The current debate over the definition of marriage is indicative of something of far greater importance than that recognized by many of our leaders today. By limiting the debate to marriage without understanding the influence that this change will have on the institution of the family is a grave mistake. Many are arguing the benefits of same-sex relationships versus hetero-sex relationships. It must be first understood that marriage and the family is an institution established by God.

God has established the institution of the family and it is He who sets the standards or rules of this fundamental institution. When God said that a man shall leave his 'father and mother' and be joined to his 'wife', He could not have stated it more clearly. The family is produced from the joining of husband and wife together into one flesh. To call same-sex relationships, marriages, does not alter the way God sees it. He sees it as an abomination!

*Lev 18:22 - Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is **abomination**.*

The sad truth is that many young people today are not being exposed to the truth regarding the homosexual lifestyle because of an atmosphere of 'political correctness' which stifles any debate regarding the issue. The Bible clearly states that if Jesus be lifted up people will be drawn to Him. (John 12:32) Yes there are those who will hate the truth, and us, for sharing it, but Jesus said to expect that because the world (of unbelievers) also hated and rejected Him.

John 15:18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

The issue becomes then do we allow those who hate the truth, cause us to become silent regarding it? Or do we change the truth to make it more acceptable?

From a Biblical perspective the fundamental emphasis should be this; will the relationship contribute to the development of the family. Regardless of what promoters of same-sex would have you believe, the statistics prove that children, raised in a loving family with both biological parents taking their biblical responsibilities, will grow to be well adjusted responsible adults.

Many might say that you or I already have relationships with gay people and are not even aware of it. The fact is, that as long as ones sexual inclinations are unknown it does not have a great influence on children or society as a whole. - There are people who harbour racist views, but as long as those views are hidden their impact is not immediately felt by the community at large. If a husband or wife is unfaithful to their spouse, the full effects of their unfaithfulness are not felt by the whole family unless or until it becomes public. This does not mean to say it has no effect but the effects are limited.

The community at large today is being challenged by the secular humanists of our society. They say that the Bible does not set the definitive standard of values in relation to marriage, the family etc. I contend that there are many, with whom their conscience has always affirmed the Biblical view of marriage. But now, because of perceived public acceptance of this 'alternative lifestyle' they are now questioning that long held view. The standards we have long held as a civilized society, are today being challenged and torn down as old-fashioned. We are being told that the standards of law are evolving into something more inclusive than the past. Parents today are finding it difficult to apply standards in their family without experiencing outright rebellion in the home. What can we do as believers?

- The Bible must be re-established as the manual for love and life within our own personal families.

- We must come to understand that God has laid down as unchangeable, the values and standards for life's relationships.

- We must ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom in understanding the principles of Scripture for the sake of our own relationships.

If the Christian does not soon understand and accept God's Word as truth, and live by it, society, as we know it today, will be thrust into chaos. God's clear commands cannot be violated without suffering consequences. In the Bible it was clear that when God's people sinned there was an affect on the whole of that society. Today we have come to the place where our Government wants to redefine marriage in a way that violates God's Word.

- What chaos will that produce in the families of the future?

This summer we have forest fires burning and causing the destruction of lives and property, not only here in our country but also around the world.

- There are suicide bombers in many parts of the world willing to kill innocent lives to make a statement.

- The AIDS virus is running rampant and killing millions of people around the world.

- We see the economic effects in the world caused by terrorism or just the fear of it.

- Negative effects on the economy have been caused by the recent power outage, the SARS outbreak, etc. etc.

Many are beginning to question their ability to cope with what seems an endless parade of natural and not so natural disasters.

Stability in these troubled times can only come as we establish our personal lives on that which is solid. The world cannot understand it because they do not know Him. They will, however, see how our lives are lived out before them. If we are full of fear, that will hinder our testimony that says the Bible has the

answers for the world today.

- We must get to the point where we don't care what the world says about the relevancy of scripture for today.

- We must base our lives on the teachings of scripture and not be afraid to express our beliefs in public.

The homosexual has come out of the closet, it is time that the Christian did the same. The homosexual is speaking out for change, we, as Christians, must not be afraid to speak out as well. The time has come for us, as believers, to let the salt out of the salt-shaker, to let our light shine. The first step to ineffectiveness was when we as believers exchange the "the truth of God for a lie, and worship and serve created things rather than the Creator" (Rom 1:25) The homosexual, as well as most of us, is more concerned with his/her own physical pleasure or satisfaction than with pleasing God. God wants to be not just our Creator but also our Spiritual Father as well.

So how have we arrived at this crossroad in our society? How have we lost our influence in the governance of our country? In reality many of us have become self-sufficient as individuals, as a society and as a culture. For this reason, I believe, we are in for some tough times ahead. The Bible says that those who refuse to honour God as Creator will find themselves deluded into believing lies;

ROM 1 - ²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

The debate over marriage is merely a demonstration of the cultural battle that we are facing in our society today.

- We as Bible believing Christians are going to have to believe the Bible and walk in its truth or accept the belief patterns of those who are enemies of Christ?

- What are we teaching our children?

- Are we teaching them by our example that the beliefs of Christianity are optional for the Christian and unnecessary for the world?

- If they are **not** optional for the Christian then why do we send our children to be taught by those who not only undermine the values of the Scripture but mock them as out of date in a modern society?

- If the principles of the Bible are necessary for the preservation of true freedom then how can we stand by and not speak out when those very principles are being challenged and changed in the courts of our land.

As I started out to say, the view we have of marriage goes much beyond the relationship of two individuals. It affects the very institution of the family upon which the success of our society depends. The Roman empire, we read, was not destroyed by an outside conqueror but by a deterioration of the culture from within. - Our modern civilization, which has developed over the last 500 years (since the reformation) faces being eroded by a rejection of the family, which has been a part of the foundation of civilization itself. In Africa we see the family being decimated by AIDS which had its beginnings in an unhealthy sexual lifestyle. The book of Romans says "Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." Is part of that penalty, AIDS? Unfortunately many "Christians" have said to themselves, and in some cases out loud to others; they just got what they deserved. That, we know from reading the Bible, was not the attitude that Jesus demonstrated. Although there are consequences of living a sinful lifestyle of rebellion against God, those same individuals are people for who Christ came and died to save. The heart of God longs for all to come to repentance of having lived in opposition to the Lord God. At the same time we are all warned of the consequences of continuing to live in rebellion to God's clear commands. It is our responsibility as believers to declare the truth in love so that all can come to know the grace and mercy of God even as we have. Yes we must declare that anything that exalts man above God is sinful. We must also declare that Jesus has come to set people free from anything that would cause them to be separated from Him.

The way to sharing your love with a hurting world is not to compromise on the basic principles of Scripture but to speak for truth. We must stand up for truth and ask God to defend us when the attacks come. Jesus came full of grace and truth.

The gospel is a balanced message. To deny the truth is to make unnecessary the aspect of grace. If there is no truth then there is no need for grace or mercy. If no sin is committed then no payment for sin is required. There is no need for forgiveness if no sin has been committed. Half a gospel is no gospel at all.

The good news is that Jesus came to save the people in their sins. Are we willing to share the whole gospel? The legalist tends to only share the list of rules of do's and don'ts. The modernist Christian leans to only sharing the acceptance and forgiveness aspect of God. The one side makes man his own saviour through self-merit and the other side makes God's love unnecessary. Both ways do not lead to new life in Christ.

- What kind of gospel are you living?

- Do you readily accept the sinful lifestyles of others and condone them because of a fear of declaring sin, sin. This is not to say that we condemn the homosexual as some have done. We must however stand up for the godly principles that come under attack. We must repent for our own sin of accepting a lifestyle when God specifically rejects it.

We must also speak the truth in a way that our children and the young of our society will know what values we uphold, particularly the values of marriage and family as laid down in the Scripture. I personally may have to take a stand not to sanction a marriage that is not sanctioned by God. Parents will have to decide whether or not to send their children to be educated by those intent on undermining the values of family and church we see proclaimed in Scripture. I know we do not wish to face some of these issues. It may affect our comfort level and our pocket book. Never-the-less if I do not proclaim what I feel God is showing me, I will be guilty of undermining the very values I say I uphold. We must also understand that each of us is at a different level of understanding of what God has to say in His Word. The Bible also declares that "to know to do right and not do it is sin". (James 4:17) Once enlightened by God we all have the option to obey or not to obey. We also 'as Christians' will one day give account for those things we have done. The Scripture is full of testimonies of those who reaped the blessings of God for their obedience to Him even in those times where it would have been easy to say nothing or not get involved. Here are some examples of the men and women of faith. In Hebrews 11 we read:

⁴By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.

- ⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went,

- ²³By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

- ³¹ By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

- ³² And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

³³ who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

³⁵ Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

³⁶ and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

³⁸ (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

³⁹ And all these, having gained approval through their faith,

The writer of the Hebrews declares that through the obedience of faith " the men of old gained approval."

What must we do then?

1. We must repent

- 2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked** ways; then will I hear **from** heaven, and will forgive **their** sin, and will heal **their** land.

2. Walk in obedience to God and allow our lives to shine for the gospel.

- We must remember that faith without works is dead according to James.

- This means that we demonstrate our belief in the sanctity of marriage by being faithful to our marriage partner.

- We demonstrate our belief in God's Word by studying it and also by training up our children in the ways of God.

To do otherwise may indeed reveal in us a lack of 'true faith'.