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**September 2003 - Marriage on the Ropes**

September 2003

**Dear Friends: May I urge you to read this letter carefully? It has been written from my heart in the hope and prayer that you will give it due consideration and recognize the urgency that it conveys. Thank you. JCD.**

It is with great concern that I share with you our considered belief that the institution of marriage is about to descend into a state of turmoil unlike any other in human history. The homosexual activist movement, which has achieved virtually every goal and objective it set out to accomplish more than 50 years ago, is poised to administer a devastating and potentially fatal blow to the traditional family. And sadly, there is hardly a politician who has the courage to utter a word of alarm or protest in response. Indeed, there are very few Christians in positions of responsibility who are willing to use their influence to help combat it.

Researchers have been warning about this looming cultural storm for the past decade. The most prominent among them, sociologists David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead at Rutgers University, conducted a longitudinal study of the family between 1960 and 1999, and concluded that the institution of marriage appeared to be dying.<sup>1</sup> There is accumulating evidence now that they were right. A handful of power-obsessed judges is determined to impose the homosexual agenda on the nation and thereby change forever the legal definition of marriage.

The dire ramifications of what is happening in the United States and other western nations cannot be overstated. For millennia, traditional marriage has been celebrated by every culture on earth as the cornerstone of society. But in the late 1960s and early 1970s, no-fault divorce laws, radical feminism and a sweeping sexual revolution combined here in the United States to rip open the fabric of the family. They left it shaken and wounded. It was a growing apprehension about this situation that led me to resign from my academic position in 1977 and start a fledgling new organization called Focus on the Family. In the 26 years since, we have been working tirelessly to bolster and preserve traditional marriage and parenthood. There have been times of hope and times of despair during this struggle, but overall, the family has been steadily losing ground. Now, the institution of marriage is on the ropes and western civilization itself appears to hang in the balance.

The first blow came on June 10, 2003 when three imperious judges on the Canadian Supreme Court declared the exclusivity of marriage between one man and one woman to be unconstitutional.<sup>2</sup> Characteristically, the decision to redefine this historic institution was made by an unelected and unaccountable judiciary without the concurrence of the Canadian people or their representatives in Parliament. Legalization of so-called "same-sex marriage" thus became the law of the land for our northern neighbors, joining the Netherlands and Belgium as the only three such nations in the world.<sup>3</sup> Homosexuals everywhere cheered the decision, and for good reason. If it could happen in Canada, why not here, there and everywhere? National gay activist Evan Wolfson suggested that the Canadian victory is a foretaste of what is to come in America. He wrote, "The future is clearly the Canadian way. The United States cannot lag behind its major trading partner, the nation with the longest common border, its closest internationally. With the increased trade and travel between two nations, how can we avoid going the same direction?"<sup>4</sup>

Two weeks later, on June 26, 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Texas law prohibiting sodomy in the Lawrence v. Texas decision.<sup>5</sup> Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy cavalierly stated that the law's "...continuance as precedent demeans the lives of homosexual persons."<sup>6</sup> By ruling that sodomy is a Constitutionally protected "right," the Court decided that considerations of morality and decency were irrelevant. And as I write, the Massachusetts Supreme Court is expected to rule at any moment on a gay marriage case brought forth by seven same-sex couples who tried to obtain marriage licenses in that state.<sup>7</sup> By the time you read this letter, the matter will most likely already be decided.

These and other disturbing judicial decisions are accompanied by a virtual avalanche of gay and lesbian advances that have descended on us. Consider:

- On July 28, the New York Board of Education announced the creation of a gay-oriented high school in New York City, because, in the words of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, "...everybody feels that it's a good idea."<sup>8</sup>
- On August 4, the United Nations began considering a proposal that would support "same-sex marriage" in countries around the world.<sup>9</sup>
- On August 5, the United Episcopal Church ordained its first gay bishop and on August 7, affirmed the establishment of "gay unions."<sup>10</sup>

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- The United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, the Evangelical Lutherans of America and many conservative Jews are struggling with the same issues.<sup>11</sup> On the liberal end of the religious spectrum, the battle is about lost. The United Church of Christ, the American Baptist Church, Reform Judaism and the Unitarian Universalists permit the ordination of gay clergy and bless same-sex unions in some form.<sup>12</sup>
- In the past year, the Roman Catholic Church has undergone a terrible sexual abuse scandal related primarily to homosexual priests who exploited adolescent boys. Fortunately, the Vatican's agency for policing Roman Catholic Orthodoxy - the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - recently issued a stern statement to the Catholic lawmakers around the world regarding the institution of marriage. In part, it said that each representative "...has a moral duty to express his opposition [to gay marriage] clearly and publicly and to vote against it." It continued: "To vote in favor of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral."<sup>13</sup> Senator Kennedy, are you listening?
- During the first week of August, the California State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 196 with the intent to "protect" transgendered people from employment and housing discrimination. Simply put, this bill would force Christian bookstores, and perhaps even the Boy Scouts, to hire or keep male employees who dress like women, or women who dress like men. The fine for violating this law is \$150,000!<sup>14</sup> The inmates are now fully in charge of the asylum.
- In an obvious attempt to solidify his small but radical liberal base leading up to the chaotic October 7 recall election, California Governor Gray Davis has publicly supported a bill that would give gay "partners" almost every legal benefit and privilege that married couples now enjoy. This act of legislative arrogance ignores the will of the vast majority of Californians. In March of 2000, Proposition 22, which declared marriage as a union "between a man and a woman" passed by the overwhelming margin of 61 to 39 percent.<sup>15</sup> Assembly Bill 205 will allow homosexual "couples" to share property, health insurance and government benefits - in addition to being permitted to file joint tax returns and claim the same exemptions as married couples.<sup>16</sup> The sponsor of the bill, Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg, called its imminent passage "a big step."<sup>17</sup> Indeed it is - but it's a big step off a steep cliff.
- Conde Nast's Bride's magazine is devoting a full-page article to same-sex "weddings" in its September-October issue - a first in the publication's 70-year history.<sup>18</sup>
- It seems as if every episode of every sitcom on television now includes a gay character portrayed in a positive light, whereas heterosexual men are displayed as bumbling fools. Then there are the programs that center on homosexuality. For example, Bravo's new makeover show, "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," features a team of five gay men who promise to "transform a style-deficient and culture-deprived straight man from drab to fab."<sup>19</sup> Yet another Bravo gay program this fall is entitled "Boy Meets Boy."<sup>20</sup> ABC will roll out its own gay sitcom on network television this month called, "It's All Relative." The pilot episode shows a male churchgoing couple in bed.<sup>21</sup> The bottom line was summarized in an article in The New York Times on July 29, which included this headline: "Gay-Themed TV Gaining a Wider Audience."<sup>22</sup> Who can deny that?

It's gay, gay, gay, wherever you look. Media critic Michael Medved made a similar point when he said that

"A Martian gathering evidence about American society, simply by monitoring our television, would certainly assume that there were more gay people in America than there are evangelical Christians."<sup>23</sup>

What makes these developments so shocking is that the legal acceptance of homosexual marriage was little more than a pipe dream just a few years ago, but it has become a tidal wave that is sweeping around the globe.

Furthermore, there are even more troubling changes on the horizon. The history of the gay and lesbian movement is that its adherents quickly move the goal line as soon as one has been breached, revealing even more shocking and outrageous objectives. In the present instance, homosexual activists, heady with power and exhilaration, feel the political climate is right to tell us what they have wanted all along. This is the real deal: most gays and lesbians do not want to marry each other. That would entangle them in all sorts of legal constraints. Who needs a lifetime commitment to one person? The intention here is to destroy marriage altogether.<sup>24</sup> With marriage as we know it gone, everyone would enjoy all the legal benefits of marriage (custody rights, tax-free inheritance, joint ownership of property, health care and spousal citizenship, etc.) without limiting the number of partners or their gender. Nor would "couples" be bound to each other in the eyes of the law. This is clearly where the movement is headed. If you doubt that this is the motive, read it for yourself.

Liberal columnist Michael Kinsley wrote an op-ed piece in the Washington Post, entitled, "Abolish Marriage; Let's Really Get the Government Out Of Our Bedrooms." Note the date of the piece, July 3, 2003. In this revealing editorial, Kinsley writes, "(The) solution is to end the institution of marriage, or rather, the solution is to end the institution of government monopoly on marriage. And yes, if three people want to get married, or one person wants to marry herself and someone else wants to conduct a ceremony and declare them married, let 'em. If you and your government aren't implicated, what do you care. If marriage were an entirely private affair, all the disputes over gay marriages would become irrelevant." Without it, the author warns, "It's going to get ugly."<sup>25</sup>

Thank you, Mr. Kinsley, for that bit of tripe from the far left region of the universe.

Unfortunately, there is plenty of support for his wacky ideas. Judith Levine, writing in the Village Voice on July 23, offered similar words of wisdom in an article entitled "Stop the Wedding, Why Gay Marriage Isn't Radical Enough." She wrote, "Because American marriage is inextricable from Christianity, it admits participants as Noah let animals on the ark. But it doesn't have to be that way. In 1972 the National Coalition of Gay Organizations demanded the 'repeal of all legislative provisions that restrict

the sex or number of persons entering into a marriage unit; and the extension of legal benefits to all persons who cohabit regardless of sex or numbers.' Group marriage could comprise any combination of genders."<sup>26</sup>

Polygamy, anyone? That is precisely what the more radical activists want. And as we all know, they have gotten nearly everything they have cooked up in recent years.

Admittedly, this hostility to marriage is not all that new. In 1918, the Russian Revolutionary Vladimir Lenin abolished marriage and declared the family obsolete. His motive was simple: the "family" prevented women from doing work that was useful to the state.<sup>27</sup> Do you see the stunning parallel to the current crisis of our times? The stability of the American family today is not only being slandered, but slaughtered! Indeed, bad things will continue to happen if good people do nothing.

Stanley Kurtz, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, summed up the crisis in a recent Weekly Standard article. He noted that if gay marriage is legalized, "Marriage will be transformed into a variety of relationship contracts, linking two, three or more individuals (however weakly or temporarily) in every conceivable combination of male and female . . . the bottom of this slope is visible from where we now stand."<sup>28</sup>

In a recent National Review Online article, Maggie Gallagher noted that "Gay marriage is not some sideline issue, it is the marriage debate. . . . The consequences of our current retreat from marriage is not a flourishing libertarian social order, but a gigantic expansion of state power and a vast increase in social disorder and human suffering."<sup>29</sup> Her dire warning is echoed in a Boston Globe editorial by Jeff Jacoby. He notes that "the adoption of same-sex marriage would topple a longstanding system of shared values. It would change assumptions and expectations by which society has long operated - that men and women are not interchangeable, for example, and that the central reason for marriage is to provide children with mothers and fathers in a safe and loving environment."<sup>30</sup> His commentary concludes with these words: "My foreboding is that a generation after same-sex marriage is legalized, families will be even less stable than they are today, the divorce rate will be even higher and children will be even less safe. To express such a dire warning is to be labeled an alarmist, a reactionary, a bigot and worse. . . . But it is not bigotry to try to learn from history, or to point out that some institutions have stood the test of time because they are the only ones that can stand the test of time."<sup>31</sup>

To summarize, the legalization of homosexual marriage is for gay activists merely a stepping-stone on the road to eliminating all societal restrictions on marriage and sexuality. Perhaps it is evident now why I began this letter by predicting that unless we act quickly, the family as it has been known for 5,000 years will be gone. With its demise will come chaos such as the world has never seen before. Why? Let me explain.

First and foremost, the Holy Scriptures set forth the Creator's plan for marriage and family. To deviate from that model is to invite disaster. As early as the second chapter of Genesis, we learn that God created Eve as a "suitable companion" for Adam who would complement him physically, spiritually and emotionally. This "marriage" was the very first institution that God created, and it continues to be the primary institution of society to this day. God designed marriage between a man and a woman as the first system of interdependent human relationships, as well as the means by which spiritual teaching is passed down through the generations. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul reminds us that men and women mutually complete one another: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (I Corinthians 11:11, NIV). Marriage is also upheld as a beautiful illustration of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the Church (see Ephesians 5:25-33).

God's design for marriage is not simply some lofty, spiritual ideal. The Bible also outlines a specific plan for human sexuality. Throughout Scripture, God's intention for human sexual relationships is clearly limited to the heterosexual union between a man and a woman in marriage (see Genesis 1:27-28, and 2:18, 23-24). By stark contrast, sex outside of that relationship, whether it be of a heterosexual or homosexual nature, is clearly identified as sin. With particular regard to homosexuality, Paul warns: "...God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relationships for unnatural ones. In 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" (Romans 1:26b-27, NIV).

But even for those who don't take the Bible into account, heterosexual marriage has been the cornerstone of every civilization from the beginning of humanity. Only in the last few "milliseconds" of human history have we even entertained the idea that marriage is anything other than the union of a male and a female. Yes, there have been times when homosexuality has been embraced by segments of certain cultures, as it was in ancient Greece or Rome. But if you spin a globe and stop it with your finger on an inhabited landmass, you can be assured that the region on which it rests has always embraced heterosexual marriage as the norm. There are no exceptions.

If the God-ordained basis for the family does indeed fail on a large scale, children will pay a terrible price. Social science confirms that two parents of the same sex, however loving or nurturing they may be, cannot meet the unique needs of children in the same way that a mother and a father can. A mother is ill equipped to teach her son what it means to be a man, just as a father cannot teach his daughter to be a woman. Same-sex relationships undermine the future generation's understanding of the fundamental principles of marriage, parenthood and gender. Further, girls and especially boys need long-term stability and predictability at home. The destruction of the traditional family will condemn millions of them to temporary relationships, involving multiple "moms" or "dads," six or eight "grandparents" and perhaps a dozen or more half-siblings who will come and go as those who care for them meander from one sexual relationship to another. These children will be shuffled from pillar to post in an ever-changing pattern of living conditions. Parenthood itself will come to be defined as only

an act performed by two (or more) androgynous beings. "Mother" and "father" will become meaningless words that will not define anything substantive about women and men. Any apparent differences between the sexes will be seen as merely superficial and of no practical consequence. Advocates of same-sex marriage cannot tolerate the idea that genuine, necessary differences exist between the sexes.

Studies show that homosexual men, in particular, have a difficult time honoring even the most basic commitments of "marriage." A recent study conducted in the Netherlands - a "progressive" nation in which gay marriage has been legal for several years - found that the average homosexual relationship lasts only 1.5 years, and that gay men have an average of eight sexual partners per year outside of their "primary" relationship! Does that sound like a stable child-rearing environment to you? By stark contrast, 67 percent of first marriages in the United States last 10 years or more, and more than 75 percent of heterosexual married couples report being faithful to their vows.<sup>32</sup>

I have only begun to describe the meltdown that will occur if same-sex marriage is finally thrust upon society. But for the moment, there is time to act. It will be too late if we don't act now. How can we counter the drive to obtain legal recognition of same-sex marriage? It is with a Constitutional amendment. In a recent article for National Review, Notre Dame law professor Gerard V. Bradley noted: "The only way to rein in this runaway Court is to change the supreme positive law: the Constitution. The Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) would do that. It would impose upon willful judges and justices a limitation on their ability to redefine the family. The amendment would leave legislatures free to extend some benefits to non-marital households. But courts could not."<sup>33</sup>

Let me remind you that it is the courts that have run amok. They are out of control and beyond the checks and balances envisioned by our Founding Fathers. And the liberal establishment in this country knows that it can accomplish all of its hare-brained schemes, not by winning popular elections, but by enticing these few unelected judges in black robes to do their dirty work. This is why President George W. Bush is having a terrible time getting his judicial appointments confirmed by the Senate. The liberals are determined to protect their trump card in the courts - such as the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that last year declared the Pledge of Allegiance to be unconstitutional. Since neither the Congress nor the President have the will to use their Constitutional authority to reign in the power of the court, we must fight for an amendment that will do it for us - specifically with regard to marriage.

Here is the wording of the Federal Marriage Amendment, which the House and Senate will be debating shortly.

**"Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this constitution or the constitution of any state, nor state or federal law, shall be construed to require that marital status or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon unmarried couples or groups."**<sup>34</sup>

While not perfect, the FMA represents what may truly be our last opportunity to ensure that traditional marriage is legally protected. The first sentence prohibits the redefinition of marriage by either a court decision or an action of a state legislature. The second sentence preserves the democratic process at the state level by allowing state legislatures to determine the allocation of the benefits associated with marriage. The key strength of the FMA is that it precludes the courts from distorting existing constitutional or statutory law into a requirement that marital status - or the legal incidents thereof - be reallocated pursuant to a judicial decree. In layman's terms, that means the FMA will ensure that the constitutional status of marriage is determined by the American people and their representatives, rather than by unelected judges.

This effort to save the family is our D-Day, or Gettysburg or Stalingrad. This is the big one. If we cannot pass a Constitutional amendment protecting traditional marriage, gay marriage will become a reality. It will no longer be a matter of if, but when. And the answer to that question is, "soon."

I'm thankful that our President spoke out on this divisive issue during a recent press conference, saying "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman and I believe we ought to codify that one way or the other."<sup>35</sup> Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist also weighed in on the issue. He said, "Marriage is very simple: a union between one man and one woman, not two men or three men or three men or four men, or one man, or one woman, or two women, three women, or three women and three men. It's not that. It's one man, one woman. It's what the law of the land is."<sup>36</sup> More than 100 editorials and articles followed his statement, and all but three of them were negative! It's important that we encourage those leaders who are willing to form a strong, united front on this issue. We need to convey to them in the strongest possible terms how important this issue is to us. We cannot accept compromise or uncertainty in the face of the current onslaught of gay activism.

We should also express our displeasure to conservative representatives and senators who waffle on the FMA, such as George Allen, R-VA, who disappointed us all by saying that the amendment was only "...a last resort."<sup>37</sup> What was he thinking? Does he not know that marriage may be dying, and that the nation will never be the same again? Attorney General John Ashcroft, our great friend, was interviewed on FOX News on August 3 of this year. When asked whether he thought the Bush administration should support "civil unions," he said inexplicably, "...that's a very complex question that I'm not going to make a recommendation on. We're doing research on that now."<sup>38</sup> What, we would ask, needs to be researched about civil unions? The pressure on our national leaders to please the powerful gay lobby must be enormous.

Clearly, the struggle to pass the FMA is going to be long and arduous. Passage of any Constitutional amendment is a massive undertaking that requires widespread public involvement. The FMA will require the support of two-thirds of the House of Representatives, two-thirds of the Senate and a full three-quarters of the states in order to pass and become a part of our Constitution. Unfortunately, that cannot be accomplished through the efforts of only a few concerned citizens like you and me.

In light of this reality, I want to implore you to commit yourselves to an unprecedented degree of social activism in defense of marriage. Take the message that traditional marriage must be preserved to literally everyone in your circle of influence!

Enclosed with this letter you will find a booklet that includes a number of "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)" (FAQs) about same-sex marriage. This resource provides a wealth of solid information about the cultural and historical significance of heterosexual marriage and explains why same-sex marriage is a bad idea and why marriage matters. Please read it, study it and internalize it. Then, share the information with your friends, neighbors, co-workers and extended family members. It is vitally important that you do so.

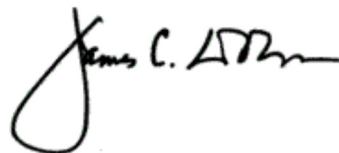
Sadly, many people feel that same-sex marriage is inherently wrong, but they have no idea how to articulate that view. Indeed, many would be afraid of doing so for fear of being labeled a "bigot" or "homophobe" by the cultural elite. As Christians, we believe that the Bible's admonitions against homosexual behavior, along with the design for marriage put forth in Genesis and affirmed by Paul, are reasons enough to oppose gay marriage. However, it is often said that God speaks to us through two books: the Bible and the "book of nature." Even for those who do not know Christ, the book of nature provides numerous reasons why homosexual behavior is harmful to individuals and to society as a whole. [The enclosed FAQs](#) argue in favor of traditional marriage from the standpoint of "natural law," without specifically focusing on the Christian Scriptures. Accordingly, they are applicable both to people of faith and to those who espouse no faith at all.

Please feel free to make as many copies of this brochure as possible, and distribute them to as many people as you can, including your pastor. (It will be expensive for us to print and distribute these materials. Your help is needed to help us pay for this effort.) Although brief, they provide a powerful counterpoint to every argument put forth by homosexual activists who are pushing for same-sex marriage. I'm convinced that, as Christians and non-Christians alike are exposed to this reasoned, common-sense defense of traditional marriage, the tide can begin to turn. But again, there is not much time. We must do everything we can to influence public opinion on this issue before it's too late.

Before closing, I want to offer a word of hope. I have said on numerous occasions that the institution of marriage was created and ordained by God. If that is true - and I wholeheartedly believe that it is - then no wrong-headed human law can destroy it. Even if my worst fears are confirmed, and gay "marriage" does become legal, true marriage as God intended will not cease to exist. It will be up to those of us who espouse traditional values to stand up in defense of marriage and to preserve it as an institution, just as we have proclaimed the humanity of preborn babies over the more than 30 years since abortion was legalized. But while God's plan for marriage cannot be undone, man's attempts at creating an "alternative" promise to leave a legacy of confusion, turmoil and broken lives throughout our society. Please pray with me that a meltdown of that magnitude will not happen. Yes, do be in concerted prayer for the family, for our leaders and for the nation. If we get out of the mess we are in now, it will require nothing short of divine intervention and guidance.

I know that we face a daunting challenge. However, the well-being of future generations is dependent upon the way we answer this imminent threat now. God and history will judge us on how we handle this crisis. In the aforementioned National Review Online article by Maggie Gallagher, the author notes: "Marriage is not an option, it is a precondition for social survival . . . Winning the gay-marriage debate may be hard, but to those of us who witnessed the fall of Communism, despair is inexcusable and irresponsible."<sup>39</sup> I pray that the Lord would grant us the wisdom and strength to defend marriage. For additional information, please visit our "CitizenLink" Web site at [www.citizenlink.org](http://www.citizenlink.org), or call us at (800)-A-FAMILY. God bless you.

Sincerely,



James C. Dobson, Ph.D.  
Founder and Chairman

P.S. The battle to defend biblical marriage will likely be long and difficult, and it will most definitely be costly. We are doing everything we can to devote sufficient resources to this fight while at the same time preserving funding for the many other worthy outreach endeavors being carried forth by the ministry. If you have met your obligations to your local church and feel led to make an additional contribution to our efforts to protect marriage, we would love to hear from you. Thanks in advance for standing with us during what could very well be a turning point in our nation's history.

**Endnotes**

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39. Maggie Gallagher, "The Stakes," National Review Online, July 14, 2003.

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