

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE MARRIAGE DEBATE by Jim Garlow

May I share some thoughts that form the biblical underpinnings for me, which is why I am doing what I do, and I suspect why you do what you do. Why are we willing to risk so much, for the sake of marriage? The answer is not as obvious as we might think.

THE FULL IMAGE OF GOD: MALE AND FEMALE TOGETHER

We know that God is neither male nor female. Yet we are made "in his image." In spite of the fact that we are, as individuals, made in the image of God, the true, full image is expressed when the two halves of humanity complement each other and become one.

If I understand the role of marriage properly, a male, by himself, is not fully representative of all the descriptors of the image of God. For example, a male, by himself, cannot manifest the full spectrum of God's features, historically associated with both femininity (tenderness) and masculinity (strength). Thus, no husband, for example, can fully represent the image of God.

At the same time, if I understand the early pages of Genesis correctly, a female, by herself, cannot do justice to the full spectrum of the image of God.

However, when the two complimentary halves of humanity unite - physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally and psychologically – the image of God, containing both tenderness and strength, is manifested. Male and female are made anatomically, emotionally and spiritually for oneness. Husband and wife, joined together, represent the full spectrum of the image of God.

One part of God's image is his creativity. In sexual union, husband and wife become co-creators, in a sense, with God. Children come into being as husband and wife unite, one more expression of the image (creativity) of God. A sperm and an egg unite to form (miraculously) a human! A person! Male and female becoming one is what Genesis establishes as the components for this image. The breathtaking image of God!

MARRIAGE IN BIBLE: ONE MAN / ONE WOMAN

This is the reason that the Bible does not affirm homosexual marriage. Nowhere. Not overtly. Not covertly. The only time Jesus participated in a wedding or spoke of marriage, he referred to male/female constituents. The reason is that "oneness marriage" - that is male and female - expresses the notion of the image of God.

The Bible opens with a marriage – between a man and a woman. The Bible closes with a wedding – between a groom and bride. In between, one man-one woman marriage is extolled in both Old and New Testament, as well as by Jesus Himself.

REAL MARRIAGE vs. THE "SHADOW" OR IMAGE OF MARRIAGE

Having said that, lets take our understanding of marriage to the next level. Often times, we think that real marriage is that which we see here on earth, that of a man and woman. We sometimes assume that God simply "borrowed" the metaphor or marriage in an attempt to describe what will happen in the book of Revelation at the culmination of all history, the marriage of Jesus and the church. But in reality we have it backwards.

Actually "marriage" on this earth, as wonderful as it is, might be spelled with a small "m." The real Marriage needs to be seen as being spelled with a capital "M." This Marriage is the one at the culmination of history, the Marriage of The Groom (Jesus) and The Bride (The Church).

Thus we have never ever seen the Real Marriage. That is yet to come – at the end of time. Here on earth, we only have a "shadow" of the real thing. With earthly marriage, we are experiencing merely the *hors d'oeuvre*, or appetizer, not the main course. God established earthly marriage – between a man and a woman – to provide a tiny glimpse of the spectacular True Marriage. Intimacy between a married man and woman is only a miniscule glimpse of the breathtaking oneness that Jesus and the Church will experience.

Therefore, Satan is obsessed in destroying marriage, the coming together, fitting together of the two complimentary halves of humanity – male and female, since they are on earth, a mirror, an image, of what is to be fulfilled at the end of this age.

And that is why we are in the battle we are in. It is not ultimately about earthly marriage, about our religious freedoms, our church's, or even about the practice of homosexuality as such. It is about the desire of Satan to decimate the picture of God's ultimate design for the Cosmos – the Grand Wedding of His Son to the Prepared Bride.

And that is why votes to preserve marriage must remain center stage in our lives. Much is at stake.