



ISSUE BRIEF

Keep the Definition of Marriage as the Union of One Man and One Woman

By Peter Sprigg

Why is marriage the union of one man and one woman?

- The primary public purpose of marriage is to **bring together men and women for reproduction** of the human race.
- Marriage then **encourages men and women to stay together to raise the children** produced by their union.
- Research shows that **children do best when raised by their own mother and father** who are committed to one another in marriage.

What harm would homosexual “marriage” do?

Several harms would result immediately:

- **Homosexual relationships would be subsidized.** All taxpayers, consumers, and businesses would be forced to provide financial benefits to homosexual couples.
- **Children would be indoctrinated.** Schools would teach children that homosexual relationships are an option fully equivalent to heterosexual ones.
- **Freedom of conscience and religious liberty would be threatened.** Faith-based organizations and individuals would be forced to compromise their beliefs, or be punished or driven from the public square.

Other social harms would likely become evident over time, because “the law is a teacher.” **What would we “teach” society if homosexual “marriage” is legalized?**

- **We would teach that procreation is no longer a uniquely important public interest.** The likely long-term result: birth rates would fall.
- **We would teach that children do not need a mother and father.** The likely long-term results: fewer children would be raised by their own, married mother and father; more children would grow up fatherless.
- **We would teach that homosexuals and homosexual relationships provide a role model for everyone,** because “marriage” is society’s stamp of approval upon a sexual relationship. Yet research shows that homosexuals are less likely to enter a long-term relationship, less likely to be sexually faithful or monogamous, and less likely to remain committed for a lifetime than heterosexuals. Thus, ironically, the long-term result could be that even among heterosexuals, fewer people would marry; fewer people would remain monogamous and sexually faithful; and fewer people would have life-long marriages.
- **We would teach that adult desires, not the interests of society or the needs of children, should drive the definition of marriage.** The likely result: increased demands for legalization of other forms of marriage such as polygamy.

Additional Questions and Answers on Homosexual “Marriage”

Q—Doesn’t defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman deprive homosexuals of a fundamental right?

A—The “fundamental right to marry” (as recognized by the U. S. Supreme Court) is one that belongs to every *individual*, not to every *couple or group*. No one has a right to marry a child (pedophilia), a close blood relative (incest), a person who is already married (polygamy), or, in most states, a person of the same sex. These are not restrictions on the *right* to marry; they are part of the definition of what marriage *is*.

Q—Aren’t laws “banning same-sex marriage” the same as the old laws that banned interracial marriage?

A—No. It is actually the *supporters* of homosexual “marriage” who resemble the *opponents* of interracial marriage. Both groups sought to exploit the marriage laws in pursuit of a social goal irrelevant to marriage. Neither racial segregation (in the one case) nor the social affirmation of homosexual conduct (in the other) was or is related to the basic public purpose of marriage, which is promoting responsible procreation.

Q—If the purpose of marriage is procreation, should *heterosexual* couples that can’t have or don’t want children be prevented from marrying?

A—No. To exclude specific heterosexual couples from marriage based on their intentions or infertility would require intrusive inquiries and the drawing of arbitrary and imprecise lines. While not *all* heterosexual couples *do* reproduce, it is indisputable that *only* heterosexual couples *can* do so naturally. *No* homosexual couples can do so. That fact provides a clear bright line for limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples.

Q—If marriage is for the benefit of children, wouldn’t homosexual “marriage” benefit children being raised by homosexual couples?

A—Most children being raised by self-identified homosexuals are the biological children of those individuals who were conceived in the context of a previous *heterosexual* marriage or relationship. It is not in such a child’s interest for society to affirm the separation of that child from his or her other biological parent. A biological parent has the same rights whether heterosexual or homosexual, but it is not in a child’s interest to be raised by a homosexual couple when he or she could be raised by both biological parents or by an adoptive mother and father.

Q—Shouldn’t homosexual couples at least be given the legal and financial benefits of marriage—perhaps through civil unions—so they can care for each other?

A—Society gives benefits to marriage because marriage gives benefits to society. Because homosexual relationships cannot give society the key benefits of marriage—natural procreation and mother-father households for children—there is no reason for society to give homosexual couples the legal and financial benefits of marriage. However, many of the supposed “benefits” of marriage—such as medical decision-making or inheritance rights—can already be secured by homosexual couples through private contractual arrangements (such as a health care proxy, a will, etc.).