**Gay Rights and the Gay Marriage Debate**

**GTP Discussion and Debate**

**Professor Joe Carrier**

Vocabulary

1. a lifelong commitment
2. sexual orientation
3. reconcile my Christian faith
4. pursue happiness and fulfillment
5. overarching themes
6. well-intentioned people
7. minimal governmental interference
8. fundamental building block
9. how consensus is built
10. circumvent that process
11. run the risk of deepening divisions
12. people of good conscience
13. enlightened humanitarianism
14. the complementarity of the sexes
15. deeply dysfunctional

**“Rob Portman commentary: Gay couples also deserve chance to get married.”**

**From “The Columbus Dispatch” on March 15, 2013**

I have come to believe that if two people are prepared to make **a lifetime commitment** to love and care for each other in good times and in bad, the government shouldn’t deny them the opportunity to get married.

That isn’t how I’ve always felt. As a congressman, and more recently as a senator, I opposed marriage for same-sex couples. Then something happened that led me to think through my position in a much deeper way.

Two years ago, my son Will, then a college freshman, told my wife, Jane, and me that he is gay. He said he’d known for some time, and that his **sexual orientation** wasn’t something he chose; it was simply a part of who he is. Jane and I were proud of him for his honesty and courage. We were surprised to learn he is gay but knew he was still the same person he’d always been. The only difference was that now we had a more complete picture of the son we love.

At the time, my position on marriage for same-sex couples was rooted in my faith tradition that marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman. Knowing that my son is gay prompted me to consider the issue from another perspective: that of a dad who wants all three of his kids to lead happy, meaningful lives with the people they love, a blessing Jane and I have shared for 26 years.

I wrestled with how to **reconcile** **my Christian faith** with my desire for Will to have the same opportunities to **pursue happiness and fulfillment** as his brother and sister. Ultimately, it came down to the Bible’s **overarching themes** of love and compassion and my belief that we are all children of God.

**Well-intentioned people** can disagree on the question of marriage for gay couples, and maintaining religious freedom is as important as pursuing civil marriage rights. For example, I believe that no law should force religious institutions to perform weddings or recognize marriages they don’t approve of.

British Prime Minister David Cameron has said he supports allowing gay couples to marry because he is a conservative, not in spite of it. I feel the same way. We conservatives believe in personal liberty and **minimal government interference** in people’s lives. We also consider the family unit to be the **fundamental building block** of society. We should encourage people to make long-term commitments to each other and build families, so as to foster strong, stable communities and promote personal responsibility.

One way to look at it is that gay couples’ desire to marry doesn't amount to a threat but rather a tribute to marriage, and a potential source of renewed strength for the institution.

Over the past decade, nine states and the District of Columbia have recognized marriage for same-sex couples. It is understandable to feel cautious about making a major change to such an important social institution, but the experience of the past decade shows us that marriage for same-sex couples has not undercut traditional marriage. In fact, over the past 10 years, the national divorce rate has declined.

Ronald Reagan said all great change in America begins at the dinner table, and that’s been the case in my family. Around the country, family members, friends, neighbors and coworkers have discussed and debated this issue, with the result that today twice as many people support marriage for same-sex couples as when the Defense of Marriage Act was signed into law 17 years ago by President Bill Clinton, who now opposes it. With the overwhelming majority of young people in support of allowing gay couples to marry, in some respects the issue has become more generational than partisan.

The process of citizens persuading fellow citizens is **how consensus is built** and enduring change is forged. That’s why I believe change should come about through the democratic process in the states. Judicial intervention from Washington would **circumvent that process** as it’s moving in the direction of recognizing marriage for same-sex couples. An expansive court ruling would **run the risk of** **deepening divisions** rather than resolving them.

I’ve thought a great deal about this issue, and like millions of Americans in recent years, I’ve changed my mind on the question of marriage for same-sex couples. As we strive as a nation to form a more perfect union, I believe all of our sons and daughters ought to have the same opportunity to experience the joy and stability of marriage.

**“Five arguments against gay marriage: Society must brace for corrosive change.”**

**By Seth Forman in “The New York Daily News” on Thursday, June 23, 2011.**

[New York State](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/New+York), the media report with poorly disguised elation, is set to legally redefine marriage to include relationships between two same-sex adults. Before this happens, **people of good conscience**, supporters and opponents both, should at least be given the opportunity to consider the possible consequences.

1. Religious freedom. Proponents of gay marriage think their view is the latest expression of **enlightened humanitarianism**. That means people who believe in the sanctity of traditional marriage may soon wind up on the wrong side of "enlightened" bigotry. A recent [Newsday](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Newsday+Inc.) editorial said opponents "will be seen by future generations in much the same light as those who opposed school desegregation." Devout Catholics, Orthodox Jews and, ironically, the 70% of African-Americans who oppose gay marriage have become the new [Ku Klux Klan](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Ku+Klux+Klan)? Proponents of gay marriage insist that a "religious exemption" will be sufficient to protect the rights of faith-based traditionalists. Maybe, maybe not.

2. Rights of children. Legal equality for gay marriage will mean there can be no discrimination in favor of heterosexual couples in any sphere, including adoption, custody and reproductive services. Social workers showing preference to heterosexual couples in foster care or adoption placement will lose their jobs or face lawsuits. More children living in gay homes means more children living lives absent a relationship with at least one biological parent. One needn't deny the existence of many wonderful gay or adoptive parents to acknowledge that this will result in some emotional pain and confusion.

3. Whither traditional marriage? Gay marriage may, as its proponents insist, strengthen the ideal of marriage by offering the highest public acceptance only to those in committed relationships.   But even gay activists admit they are seeking to change the marriage ideal. Eliminating **the complementarity of the sexes** in marriage changes its essence. It may be old-fashioned to believe women are still necessary to domesticate sexually predatory men. But most social arrangements in which men operate without attachment to women are **deeply dysfunctional**. Many gay advocates tacitly admit as much. [Andrew Sullivan](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Andrew+Sullivan), in his book "Virtually Normal," writes that partners in a same-sex marriage should recognize the need for “extramarital outlets”, and that gays should not be constrained by a "single, moralistic model."

4. Education. It is possible the social impact of gay marriage on heterosexual marriage will be negligible. But the changes it will bring to our schools make this unlikely. A [California](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/California) task force appointed in 2001 recommended all curriculums there be changed to include alternative sexual lifestyles. In 2006, a federal judge in [Massachusetts](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Massachusetts) ruled that schools have a duty to teach children that there's moral equivalency between homosexual and heterosexual relationships - and have no obligation to let parents opt their children out of such instruction.

5. Husbands. Federal Judge [Vaughn Walker](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Vaughn+Walker)'s ruling in August on California's [Proposition 8](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Proposition+8) - that "gender no longer forms an essential part of marriage" - confirmed the view that marriage is foremost about sexual choice, not reproduction. Think there are too few marriageable males now? Ask sociologist [Orlando Patterson](http://www.nydailynews.com/topics/Orlando+Patterson) what happens when men are no longer tied to marriage through child rearing. He attributes high out-of-wedlock birthrates among African-Americans to the history of slavery, job discrimination and the welfare state, all of which separated black men from the expectation of secure paternity.

These are just a few examples of how putting gay unions on a legal par with heterosexual ones may radically alter our culture. We should not be deluded into believing that nothing will change.

Discussion Questions

1. What are “gay rights”? Should gay people have rights?
2. Are there gay rights movements in Korea?
3. Are there any openly gay celebrities or politicians in Korea?
4. Would you vote for a gay president?
5. Are there laws in Korea that discriminate against gay people?
6. Are gay men treated differently from gay women in society?
7. What do you think about same-sex marriage?
8. What do you thank about people in same-sex marriage raising children?
9. Senator Portman said that his opinion about same-sex marriage changed when his son told him that he was gay. Would your opinion change if a close friend or family member told you he or she was gay?
10. Do you think that gay people will have more rights in Korea in the future?

Writing Activity

Have you ever felt that people didn’t understand you? Have you ever had a difficult time understanding the lifestyle or decisions of another person in your life? Write about a time when you were misunderstood or misunderstood someone else and how you were able to overcome that challenge.

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