

# Defining marriage: is it possible?

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Ground is breaking on the marriage debate. On February 23, 2011, Obama's administration declared that it will no longer oppose legal challenges to the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. For fifteen years the law has prevented same-sex marriages from being recognized by the federal government or states where the union was not originally performed. Journalists David G. Savage and James Oliphant from the Los Angeles Times wrote last Wednesday, "The administration's new stance was hailed as a 'monumental turning point in the quest for equality' by Jon W. Davidson, legal director for Lambda Legal, a gay rights group in Los Angeles." The significance of the shift is obvious. The controversial question arises: is it a shift in the right direction?

Marriage. What is it and what is it for? Is it definable? Is it for "love and profit," as suggested by an author published in TechNews two weeks ago? According to Webster's 1828 dictionary, marriage was defined as "the act of uniting a man and woman for life... marriage was instituted by God himself for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children." Today, the first of ten definitions from [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) reads "the social institution under which a man and woman establish their decision to live as husband and wife by legal commitments, religious ceremonies, etc." followed closely by "a similar institution involving partners of the same gender: gay marriage."

Clearly, the social and political environment has changed. The same-sex love stories that pop culture once considered taboo have slowly become the classic American underdog. Younger generations mourn with Collins as he sings about

Angel's death in the musical Rent. We gaily kick off the new year singing along to Katy Perry's "I Kissed A Girl." With all the excitement of being a part of something much bigger than ourselves, a cause that could change the course of history, we have failed to remember that committed heterosexual relationships

out the course of history. We still need unconditional love. We need people to know us intimately and love us in spite of our faults. History informs us that these life-giving relationships are formed within the context of a family.

Today the word "family" is nearly as loose as the word "marriage." When people refer to their family they could be referring to a mother and father, fraternity brothers, a step-mother and biological father, half-siblings, two mothers in a homosexual relationship, or perhaps a single mother. All too often, the very group of people God intended to love us most consistently and intimately is in flux. Why? The regretful disintegration of the family stems from human sin. Spouses stop forgiving each other and end their marriages in divorce. Pornographic and sexually perverse programs flood our televisions and destroy healthy sexual intimacy. According to Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, men and women with same-sex attractions base their identity in gay or lesbian relationships to fill the void left by an absent or unloving father. Familial flux therefore becomes generational.

Paul Popenoe, an American marriage counselor or in the twentieth century wrote, "It can be demonstrated from history that no society has ever survived after its family life deteriorated." Our generation needs men and women committed to one another in loving, heterosexual relationships. We need mothers and fathers committed to raising their children in families that intimately know each other and love one another in spite of our imperfections. Marriage transcends the state.

No government policy will change what God intended when he gave Eve to Adam in the Garden of Eden. But our generation must esteem and protect what marriage has traditionally instilled: life-giving, committed, loving relationships within the context of a family.



(Photo courtesy flickr/Goxyy)

are worthy of our esteem.

In the past, heterosexual relationships have been necessary to populate the earth. Modern technologies like artificial insemination have changed this. Now a man does not even need to know a woman before she bears his child. Yet people are still people; human nature has stayed constant through-

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