

Same Sex Marriage – foundational issues

It is more and more necessary to think carefully about the issues surrounding the Same Sex Marriage (SSM) debate; especially given much of the rhetoric being used. We are told that changes are necessary to ensure ‘Marriage Equality’. It is a compelling tag, but does it really stand as a slogan when you look into it more deeply? We are told that anyone opposed to the proposed changes to the definition of marriage must be ‘bigoted and full of hatred’ (SMH 6th July 2015; Michael Koziol). This statement is a powerful tool intended to silence debate but is it necessarily true?

There is a great deal at stake in this discussion and it is absolutely worth every effort to make sense of the issues. I urge you to give it the time.

Assuming I have a motivated readership, I want to start somewhat back from the SSM debate and consider the theology of marriage itself. These thoughts will be rooted in the Bible but really extend beyond the Bible as simple observations about reality. That is, most of the things I draw attention to from the Bible are also readily observable in life – whether or not a person is religious (I make this point because in a secular society we need to not only reference the Bible, but draw attention to the kind of creation realities that all people share, whether or not they are religious).

I want to start with the fundamentals/foundations of marriage because the particulars of the SSM debate may well come and go, but marriage itself will long remain.

The following insights go beyond simply noting that marriage has always and everywhere been the union of a man and a woman, although this is certainly true. It is extra-ordinary that we may reach a point where this generation will necessarily say of every generation before it, and from every place on the planet, that they were profoundly wrong and bigoted to have failed to notice the importance of seeing marriage as appropriate for any two people, irrespective of their sex. However, I won’t pursue this line because we need far deeper moorings than simply this historical observation. So, take a breath and dive into the deeper and harder stuff first!

Firstly, the word ‘marriage’ has historically referred to a unique relationship unrepeated and unrepeatable in any other human relationship. This observation isn’t to suggest it is the ‘best’ kind of relationship or the only valid kind of relationship or even the only kind of ‘love’ relationship, just that it is a unique kind of loving relationship. There are significant implications that follow. But the foundational work first.

The thing that has, always and everywhere, been labelled ‘marriage’ is unique.

This is obvious when noting the language of Jesus in Matthew’s gospel, chapter 19.

He quotes from the second chapter of Genesis, highlighting the fact that when a man and a woman come together to form a new family they establish a union that is so profound they become ‘one flesh’.

What is this oneness?

It is an idea that is repeated in 1 Corinthians 6:16. There it is clear the ‘one flesh’ union is tied to the sex act of intercourse.

This makes perfect sense.

It is in this act that a man and a woman are ‘completed’. Saying this isn’t to offer a value statement – that without this a person is less than another. Jesus himself, who made the ‘oneness’ observation, never married, and yet was there ever a person who was more fully and truly human? To reiterate, this isn’t a value statement, it is to note that there is something that happens when a man and a woman join together, which is due to our inherent biology – a biology that is a point of observable fact.

Each human is biologically complete (except in one area). That is, (except in one area) we need no other person to perform our bodily functions. However, there is one function that *isn’t* complete - reproduction. A man and a woman need each other for this part of ourselves to be ‘completed’. And this completion properly occurs through one particular sex act - the act of intercourse. From a purely anatomical point of view this is obvious. There is a perfect ‘fit’ for this completion.

There is nothing particularly ‘religious’ about this statement. It is an observable fact. However, there is something important that the Bible adds to this observation of ‘fittedness’. It is the fact that this isn’t accidental. It was designed to be so, by the God of the Bible. God intended a mutual dependency between the sexes – that a man needs a woman and a woman needs a man (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). There is a real beauty to this – mutual dependency, complementarity and so a profound unity.

When a man and a woman come together they become one. Their bodies display this as they come together in one particular sex act which expresses their mutual need and intended completion. It ‘consummates’ their union as it physically expresses it and portrays it. Together with this sex act is an intentional affection, care, and respect for one another – which healthy sexual union expresses and reinforces.

Further to this, if that sexual union comes to *its* completion then a further unifying occurs. The two are able to produce a child that they share together as the product of both of them. Note carefully that this isn’t saying that the couple isn’t united until the child comes. The union particularly occurs in the act of intercourse because that act itself speaks to the incompleteness between the sexes and speaks to the union that is intended, whether or not a child comes from this act of uniting. But with the birth of a child a further uniting occurs. The two are now bound together by having produced *together* a child that is the fruit of both of them.

This unity has been called a ‘*comprehensive* unity’. It’s been given this name because it highlights the fact that their union is far more than a merely emotional or psychological one. The kind of sex act that consummates their union, and the fact that a child can be born that is truly the fruit of both people, creates a unique physical, as well as psychological, union. The two are united in body but also in heart, mind, will and purpose. This comprehensive union is unique to a male and female union. This should be uncontroversial. A same sex relationship cannot ever know this kind of union. If a same sex relationship is at all sexual it will never be able to be sexual in the sense that it completes a complementary process of reproduction, or even speaks to the possibility of completing it. It is, and must always be, an entirely different kind of sex act. Furthermore, they won’t ever be able to have a child together that truly shares the life of both of them. They may adopt a child but that child will at most only ever be the offspring of one of them. And so this comprehensive unity will always be missing.

I’m not suggesting that two people in a same sex relationship can’t love each other or *feel* as ‘united’ as a heterosexual couple. The above observations go beyond psychological observations. They are biological realities. These realities most often have a psychological consequence. Two people who together produce a child will be profoundly and forever united by that act and it will very often produce a sense of unity that is impossible to replicate in other relationships. However the birth of a child might not produce this sense of unity. The point is that the reality is there to be experienced for them in a way that it simply can’t ever be there for another kind of relationship. A same sex couple might choose to bond through the inclusion of a child, just as a heterosexual couple who adopt might choose to bond through their mutual act of adoption. The union that can be established through the adoption of a child can be a profound, beautiful and powerful thing. But the adoptive choice is different from the kind of choice the biological parents make. The adoptive parents choose a child who wasn’t theirs. They take on responsibility for the child (and the choice can be very powerful because of this active choice) and if they want the child to be *theirs* they need a legal ruling that says the child is to be counted as theirs. It isn’t physically their child, even though by law it can be counted as if it is.

Things are very different for the biological parents. The child *is* theirs. It is truly the product of each of them. They need to make choices concerning parenting. However their choices are very different. The choice the biological parents need to make is to accept the fact that the child *is* theirs (they need no outside body to rule that it is) and then act in accordance with this fact of nature. The two kinds of relationship create very different choices.

The bottom line in all of this is that the heterosexual union is a unique relationship. It is profoundly different to a same sex relationship at critically important points. It is not only different, but it is also impossible for a same sex relationship to ever be the same as a heterosexual one at these critical points. In this discussion to this point this isn't to say one is 'better' than another. Other issues come into play to bring further comment on the value of the differences. My point so far is to simply make as clear as possible the reality that the two relationships are profoundly different. And their differences aren't superficial.

Important implications flow from these observations.

Marriage equality?

Our current debate has traction because it is tapping into our concern for equality and justice. These are wonderfully important concerns. However, we ought only feel the need to apply equality to things when the two things are actually equal. If two things are equal and we are treating them as if they are not, then that is unjust and needs to be corrected. However, if two things are different, calling them the same, or equal, is itself an injustice, or at the very least a foolish fiction.

An illustration.

A man's brother resents the fact that his sister is able to be called 'sister' and he isn't and so he begins a fight for 'sister equality'. He ought to be able to be called 'sister', just like his sister. Now, we might end up passing a law that enables him to be called 'sister'. But will we have created equality? Only semantically. He will now be able to use the same word. But the reality is that he isn't a sister in the way his sister is a sister (at least as far as we have always understood that word) and in fact the process of applying the same label actually confuses the meaning of the label or even changes it. It now only means something far less than it once meant. It now means something as broad as 'sibling'.

This is a very close approximation to what is happening at present.

The name we have always given to the special and unique union that occurs when a man and a woman join together is 'marriage'. When a same sex couple fights for equality and so argues that they also ought to be allowed to share that name, we may be able to legislate the change, but it won't really be equality we have created but a semantic fiction. The two things will always remain different (heterosexual union and same sex relationships). We have simply called them by the same name and so changed the meaning of the label in the process. The word 'marriage' will now mean much less than it once meant. It will only mean 'institutionally endorsed romantic relationship'. If this issue were simply about words we might be tempted to just 'go with our gut' and accede to the concerns of a group that is in pain (important to note however - not all gay and lesbian people want this change). This explains in part what happened in Ireland in June 2015. A two-thirds majority voted to accept a change to marriage. But, according to a report in the SMH, only 34% of the population turned out to vote. The two thirds who carried the vote were two thirds of that very small percentage who bothered to vote. The majority of Ireland didn't turn out to vote. Why? For many it was because they didn't see that there was much at stake and were happy to go with whatever the most passionate wanted.

But is it really the case that it is a small thing?

This change is serious

Marriage is a critical piece in our community life. It is critical because it anchors family and the care of children. The fact is, we can only produce a child through male-female union. This fact isn't altered by the possibility of less relational forms of conception. We need the male and female union. Without it we are dead. Therefore, we properly and critically need to foster man/woman unions – for the sake of humankind. And (weird as it is now to say) we need to foster this union as a relational union – where a man and a woman create life through a loving union which is lifelong and monogamous. Why? Because this kind of union is by far the best context for raising mature and healthy humans.

This is a situation where common sense aligns perfectly with academic research. All our studies show that children do best in the context of a stable, secure, loving union between their biological parents (see notes at end). This isn't to say that other families can't love a child. Or even that other family structures can't raise well-adjusted children. It is simply to say that when we are considering social policy across the widest possible range of circumstances, a child with its biological mother and father in loving union is best placed to grow into a responsible, well adjusted, mature adult.

This is not only important for children. It is critical for the good order of society.

Now, if same sex marriage comes in, it won't suddenly destroy marriage and family as we know it. Instinctively we are right to realize that if a new law comes in concerning marriage, everyone's marriages won't suddenly change. Of course not!

The problem is far deeper and more nuanced and more serious.

The problem isn't simply a change to the marriage laws. The problem is actually a view of marriage that has made it possible to even consider changing our laws. That is to say, our problem is actually a pre-existing view of marriage that is a very recent invention. This view is the reason we are even able to consider the changes we are considering. And it is this view that is causing untold damage to marriage, family and our children.

Any change to the law won't create this problem. Rather, it will enshrine in law this already existing problematic view of marriage. Once it is in law, dozens of complications will flow.

Let me explain.

We already have a view of marriage that is damaging our most important institution. This new view of marriage has come about because of profound changes in the way we think about gender, sexuality, love, parenting, identity, the individual etc. These changes have produced a new way of thinking about marriage that has no precedent in any other time or culture.

Marriage for the vast majority of people is now what might be called a 'romantic attachment' (or the 'Hollywood' view). Modern marriage is nothing more than the public endorsement of the romantic/erotic love two people have for one another. A person marries so that they can have the community endorse their romantic/erotic love for another person. This view of marriage is so pervasive it is the reason we are even having this current debate over whether or not two people of the same sex can be kept from marrying. The same sex marriage debate hasn't created this new view of marriage. The debate has come about as one of the consequences of having this new view. And I actually agree with popular logic. If marriage *is* nothing more than the society's endorsement of the romantic love two people have for each other, then how can a secular society withhold this from a homosexual couple?

This change in the way we think about marriage (and it is a change – only being with us for the last 40 years or so) is massively significant, and deeply damaging – to marriage, family, children and society (and the honour of God).

The simple fact is that this new view of marriage creates very much weaker marriages. This isn't hard to see in practice. Just note the collapse of long-term marriages over the last 30 years. And it isn't hard to see how this outcome necessarily follows from this modern view of marriage.

If marriage is simply a public endorsement of the romantic and erotic love one person has for another what do I do when I no longer feel that love? Marriage is naturally no longer relevant. And so I am almost beholden to leave it. It feels wrong to stay in a marriage (the thing that is all about romantic, erotic love), when I no longer feel these things for my partner. It might be that I try to get help to feel this love again – from counsellors or courses, etc. But if I can't get it back, I leave. For many moderns this is actually a matter of integrity. I cannot stay in an institution that is all about romantic love (as we moderns understand marriage) when I no longer feel that way about the person I am bound to. People speak of being forced to live a lie if they stay in marriage. Far more honest – people say - to find my real marriage partner. Or further, many have suggested we ought to give up the institution entirely – if it is understood as the 'romantic attachment' view. "Why bother going to the government to have it say my romantic love for another person is real?!" "Since when

did I really care about what the government thought?” “What really is the point?!” “Especially when I have all the legal protections I need after living with a person for a year?”

This surely is the narrative of the last 30yrs – a narrative that is possible and necessary given this new interpretation of marriage (the ‘romantic attachment’ view). The consequence of this new view of marriage is obvious - the collapse of long-term marriage.

‘So what?’ some might say. The answer? - the children. The impact on children is massive. We might wish it were otherwise, and we might wish it didn’t need to be said, but the fact is that when a child’s biological parents split it leaves a lasting impact on that child. Now of course, there is a way through even this pain. And praise God so many find healing. However the fact is, they need to find healing. As a society, we are paying a massive price. Some more capable and able parents manage these things better than others. We can’t do social policy on the basis of the strong and well adjusted however, and the fact is, as more and more hurting children come into marriage and parenthood themselves, we are seeing even greater problems emerging.

This modern view of marriage is an impoverished version of the older view. The older view – where it was understood and acknowledged - helped people consider carefully the choice before them. Marriage was for life, and it was for the kind of comprehensive union described at the outset – the kind that made a choice to care most for the welfare of the other person and especially to care most for any children the Lord might give as a consequence of the marriage union. It was focused in very different directions. It didn’t happen simply because two people were romantically and sexually attracted and wanted that relationship acknowledged and legitimized. It happened because two people intended to band together for the sake of family, society and each other. The very ancient Prayer Book of the Anglican Church expressed exactly this and required that the proper purposes of marriage were taught at every wedding. It specified three purposes (that very largely correspond to all I’ve argued for above). First, it was ordained for the procreation of children; second, to ensure sexual faithfulness; third for the help it provides one to the other. Marriage was something other than endorsing the feelings of love a person has for another. Humans have never needed some kind of government ruling or event to endorse love in human relationships! It is very odd that this is now where we have landed.

My feelings might have brought me to the person I would choose to marry, however the act of marrying them was something far more than merely endorsing this feeling of ‘love’. It was a new step. It was the step to choose, from the point of marriage on, to commit my life, for all of my life, to the good of the other and others (children and society). This was at least the direction towards which the older view drove me. Being conscious of the older view encouraged a person to derive their satisfaction and sense of fulfilment from the good that is done to the other.

Our problem in considering these issues is that so few of us have ever known a society where this comprehensive view of marriage existed. The vast majority of us have grown up with this modern (Hollywood?) view – the ‘romantic attachment’ view, and any other way of seeing marriage seems foreign and strange. However the older view (expressed so powerfully in the Bible) was a way of thinking that built strong marriages. There were problems of course. I say ‘of course’ because we are sinful people. Any relationship will have problems. But the ‘comprehensive union’ view of marriage laid a foundation that created great strength – for people who are, by nature, selfish. That is, it was, and is, best suited for the sinful and the weak (all of us). By contrast, this new view of marriage basically endorses my selfishness by the very way I enter the institution!

Same sex marriage? It hasn’t created this modern view of marriage. However, and this is what should deeply concern us, it will irrevocably enshrine this new view of marriage into our legal code. The implications for society are massive.

This new way of thinking about marriage will be *the* way of thinking about marriage. It will filter into every area of life and will ensure that every marriage will be built around this new way of thinking (the ‘romantic attachment’ view), which will further weaken an already weak institution.

This new way of thinking has pushed marriage off a cliff. Same sex marriage didn't push it off. Our own set of distorted assumptions pushed it off (40 years ago). Same sex marriage, if it comes in, will add 200 kg to the body as it falls – ensuring we will never be able to slow its inevitable crash. This isn't just scaremongering. The experiences in other countries bear out some of these claims. In Canada, and increasingly in Great Britain, it is now impossible to speak freely about an alternate view of marriage – one that has the weight of history on its side and the power to build strong unions. To speak of the view of marriage held by all people everywhere, for all of history, is now regarded as 'hate speech' and it has led to protracted court cases. The result is that the 'romantic attachment' view of marriage is the only one that can now be taught. It is necessarily the view that is taught because, if same sex marriage is now enshrined as a legally proper marriage, then the meaning of marriage must now be locked in as being no more than the 'love two people have for one another' – the 'romantic attachment' view.

Every young child is now shaped and molded to this way of thinking. The weaker view of marriage (the 'romantic attachment' view) is now the dominant paradigm. It impacts all of society.

Further, it has and is creating massive discrimination problems. In the UK, it is now becoming increasingly difficult for people who hold to the 'comprehensive view' of marriage to hold down jobs in the public sector. So school teachers and doctors are being fired if they make known that they differ with the new orthodoxy. It is becoming problematic to even speak privately of these things.

The consequences of this new view are vast and all encompassing.

I trust it is obvious that all of the above stands on its own without any reference to the rightness or wrongness of homosexual practice. I have deliberately left that issue out of the discussion to this point. I've done this, not because I think the issue of homosexuality is irrelevant, but because I want to help us see the deeper concerns we need to have about marriage itself. The great concern we need to have in the same sex marriage debate is the health and quality of heterosexual marriage – for existing marriages and every new marriage that forms as young men and women enter into this union. Our great concern needs to be helping each of us know what it is we are entering into when we enter into a marriage union. Marriage isn't getting some public official to give credence to the romantic feelings we have for another person. Who needs the government to give us that? Rather, we are formally entering into a contract or commitment to devote ourselves for life to a comprehensive union with the only other human this is possible with – a member of the opposite sex - for their good and for the hope and possibility that we might also see children born, raised and helped to become mature members of society – for God's honour and the good of our society.

This view of marriage isn't arbitrary and so subject to the whims of public opinion. It is an objective 'good' and is necessary for human flourishing.

Having shown that this issue isn't simply about the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality it does need to also be said that the Scriptures are clear that the practice of homosexuality is against the express will of God. That we as a society might move to actively and institutionally endorse this lifestyle is a great concern. It is of great concern that this will necessarily mean that our public institutions will need to promote homosexuality as, not only a reality in our fallen world, but a 'good' to be pursued. Our teachers will be required to teach this in our schools. The consequences of this will be many and are already being felt. We rush into this new stage of human evolution with such foolish abandon it is terrifying to behold.

What ought we do about all of this?

We ought not just assume that these changes are inevitable. They aren't. And the changes themselves are so damaging to society, irrespective of our religious convictions, that we ought to be actively engaged in arguing our case. Like every other member of a democratic society we are able to express our opinions on what is best for our human society together. If the case presented above is right, it is firstly children who will be most impacted. This isn't merely children in same sex couplings, but children of many more of our society's marriages. They will bear the brunt of living in unions that are more likely to fail – because the marriages formed around the 'romantic

attachment' view are built on a weak foundation and so are less likely to be long-lasting marriages. The flow on effects will impact our broader society and our future generations.

We can't just be content to see this change happen. We ought to speak with great care and compassion and respect. Of course. But speak we ought.

What if the law does come in?

We will grieve the great loss our society will suffer. And we will need to be prepared for the impact it will have on our freedoms – to speak, to work in some professions, to engage in the expression of our religion, etc. However we will keep preaching the gospel and the life to which God calls us. We will keep doing what we have always done – working to rebuild people's paradigm of life so that they bring to all of their life a way of thinking that will best enable human flourishing. This will all be harder. We will need to support each other even more. There will be a lot more pain and a lot more dysfunctionality and brokenness. But we will keep prayerfully giving ourselves to these tasks. In other words - it will be business as usual.

In it all, we pray the gospel might actually become more clearly the light and life that it is.

Some questions.

1. Does this mean that a marriage without children is not a marriage? Or that older or infertile couples can't marry?

Not at all.

Marriage is a union of a man and a woman. And this union is consummated in the sex act – or more particularly, in a particular kind of sex act – intercourse. It doesn't need children to be a real marriage. But it does need the act that is designed to produce children. This is why we can annul a marriage – that is, declare it a non-marriage – if the couple never had intercourse.

The point though here is that marriage is orientated heavily towards children – either in the sense that it seeks to produce them (whether or not they actually come), or in the sense that it is only truly a marriage if it unites in the act that is designed to produce them.

This has always been our view of marriage. Humanity can of course decide to change the definition of the word. But either we introduce another word that means 'the relationship orientated towards intercourse that produces children', or we lose a profoundly important shape to our sexual relationships.

2. Some have critiqued the above presentation on the basis that the Marriage Act does not make fertility a precondition to marriage. How then can the above view be correct?

The assumption in this critique is that the Marriage Act is the totality of what marriage is and the authority over what we think about marriage. The thinking seems to be that if the Act doesn't spell it out, then it can't be part of our thinking about marriage. It is worth noting the 'catch 22' in this position. If the totality of what we can say about marriage is found in the Marriage Act then it isn't possible to change the Act. Any change assumes we believe there is more to marriage than the Act states. But if this assumption is wrong (as per the critique of my position) then no change is possible.

A far more accurate position is the one that sees the Marriage Act as a summary of the legally enforceable features of marriage – not the total definition of what marriage is. Annulment illustrates this point. The Marriage Act doesn't specify that marriage is only upon the union being consummated. But common law shows that we have always rightly held this view, since we can annul a marriage that isn't consummated.

3. During a recent ABC radio interview you said that you would support a person finding a same sex partner to share life with. Doesn't this deny what the Bible teaches about homosexuality?

The key word I used in the interview was 'secular'. In a secular society we must be prepared to allow a variety of lifestyles. In this we are different from the Islamic religion. We don't impose our religious, or even our ethical views on all people without regard for their wishes.

One example of this is drunkenness. We can't require that all people submit to Jesus' desire for self control and so insist that Eph 5:18 be made a law in our land (don't get drunk). This is especially the case as you come to the even more complex issue of homosexuality. As a matter of justice, in a secular society, I am fully supportive of a same sex couple wanting to register their relationship in some way to ensure certain legal protections and rights. This relationship need not be a sexual one. It might simply be two women who want to register their relationship in such a way as to ensure the other party's right to 'next of kin' privileges. This seems an important thing. And properly acknowledges diversity in a secular society.

This isn't the same as life as God's people in His church. Membership in church is a voluntary membership in a group that shares together a desire to submit to God's word. Membership in this community can therefore be withdrawn where a person actively refuses to submit to the Lordship of Christ (a step that is always taken with great care and pastoral sensitivity.)

4. The person interviewed on the ABC prior to you (Central Coast Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle) indicated that homosexuality isn't prohibited in the Bible. He made the point that there are only a few places that mention homosexuality and that it wasn't the same thing we are talking about today. Is this true?

Not at all.

If we determined whether the Bible is against something (or for it) on the basis of how many times it speaks of something, we would lose a great many important theological and ethical ideas. The Bible speaks against incest less than it does against homosexuality and Jesus never speaks about it at all – or rape etc. Do we then conclude then that incest and rape are OK? Strange logic indeed!

Further, the view that the ancient world knew nothing of homosexuality as we know it is also mistaken. The thinking seems to be that the culture of the Bible was shaped by a kind of same sex relationship that was always, and only, abusive. And so what it condemns isn't homosexuality but abuse of power or unfaithfulness in marriage. The problem with this view is two-fold.

Ancient authors indicate they knew of a same sex orientation that had much in common with our modern views (so Aristophanes recorded by Plato in his symposium on love c 400 BC). And secondly, when the New Testament speaks against homosexuality, it does it in the context of mutuality – Romans 1 - "men abandoned natural relationships with women and were inflamed with lust for one another". There is no indication this is only concerned with abusive relationships – or even that it was only concerned with a lack of faithfulness to one's wife. The text is quite clear. It is giving up natural relationships with women ('women' is generic, it isn't the more specific - 'your wife') and being inflamed with lust for one another (generic again).

Conclusion

The current push for same sex marriage is presented as a fight for equality. It is only possible to legitimately conceive of it as an issue of equality if everyone agrees that marriage is actually nothing more than the public recognition of the romantic love two people share for each other (what I've called the 'romantic attraction' view of marriage, or the Hollywood view).

However, if marriage is the label we apply to the comprehensive union that happens when a man and a woman come together (the way the label has been used in all places and at all times throughout history), then it is not possible for a same sex relationship to ever be a marriage. We can call it that but giving it the same name won't make it the same as a heterosexual union. It will never be 'equal'. This isn't some kind of unfair discrimination or hateful bigotry. It is simply acknowledging what is reality.

We might still go ahead with changing the use of the label so that it can apply to a very different thing ('romantic attraction' relationships) but if we do we will establish a profound and irrevocable change to the fabric of our society. It will establish this new view as law. 'Marriage' will now be

required to be viewed as nothing more than the public recognition of the romantic attraction one person has for another. This will be the view that will necessarily be taught throughout schools and in public life.

The consequences of *this* will be massive. It will impact existing marriages; either confirming a couple's current thinking about what it is they have entered into or by subtly shifting the way others begin to think about the thing they are in. It will impact future marriages. In a climate where it will become illegal to promote the 'comprehensive union' view of marriage (the one held everywhere for all time up until this current generation), every young adult who marries will marry thinking the thing they are doing is having their romantic attraction for another person validated by a public ceremony. This will further weaken marriages, which will in turn impact the most vulnerable members of our society - children. Children do best in lifelong stable marriage unions. The romantic attraction view of marriage is much less able to sustain those kinds of marriages. The comprehensive union view won't guarantee strong marriages, but it creates the climate that best enables them.

This issue isn't trivial. Its implications are massive.

Same Sex Marriage proposes a subtle but profound change to the fabric of our society. We rush down this path to our own peril.

Andrew Heard
2015

Endnote

"Do Moms and Dad's Matter?" -

http://www.marriedebate.com/pdf/Do_Moms_Dads_Matter.pdfhttp://www.marriedebate.com/pdf/Do_Moms_Dads_Matter.pdf

(Note Section II on page 171 for a brief summary of the research)

Another pathway into the research <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/06/5640/>