

Same-Sex Marriage: Answering the Toughest Questions

Strong majorities of Americans oppose gay marriage. Supporters of SSM therefore seek to change the subject to just about anything: discrimination, benefits, homosexuality, gay rights, federalism, our sacred constitution. Our goal is simple: Shift the conversation rapidly back to marriage. Don't get sidetracked. Marriage is the issue. Marriage is what we care about. Marriage really matters. It's just common sense.

The Most Effective Single Sentence

Extensive and repeated polling agrees that the single most effective message is: "Gays and Lesbians have a right to live as they choose, they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us." This allows people to express support for tolerance while opposing gay marriage. Some modify it to "People have a right to live as they choose, they don't have the right to redefine marriage for all of us."

Language to avoid at all costs: "Ban same-sex marriage." Our base loves this wording. So do supporters of SSM. They know it causes us to lose about ten percentage points in polls. Don't use it. Say we're against "redefining marriage" or in favor of "marriage as the union of husband and wife" NEVER "banning same-sex marriage."

Main Message the 3X5 Card

- Marriage is between a husband and wife. The people of [this state] do not want marriage to be anything but that. We do not want government or judges changing that definition for us today or our children tomorrow.
- We need a marriage amendment to settle the gay marriage issue once and for all, so we don't have it in our face every day for the next ten years.
- Marriage is about bringing together men and women so children can have mothers and fathers.
- Do we want to teach the next generation that one-half of humanity—either mothers or fathers—are dispensable, unimportant? Children are confused enough right now with sexual messages. Let's not confuse them further.
- Gays and Lesbians have a right to live as they choose; they don't have a right to redefine marriage for the rest of us.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are you a bigot? "Why do you want to take away people's rights? Isn't it wrong to write discrimination into the constitution?"

A: "Do you really believe people like me who believe mothers and fathers both matter to kids are like bigots and racists? I think that's pretty offensive, don't you? Particularly to the 60 percent of African-Americans who oppose same-sex marriage. Marriage as the union of husband and wife isn't new; it's not taking away anyone's rights. It's common sense."

Q: Isn't the ban on gay marriage like bans on interracial marriage?

A: "Bans on interracial marriage were about keeping two races apart so that one race could oppress the other. Marriage is about bringing two sexes together, so that children get the love of their own mom and a dad, and women don't get stuck with the enormous disadvantages of parenting alone." "Having a parent of two different races is just not the same as being deprived of your mother—or your father."

Q: Why do we need a constitutional amendment? "Isn't DOMA enough?"

A: "Lawsuits like the one that imposed gay marriage in Massachusetts now threaten marriage in at least 12 other states so far. We need a marriage amendment to settle the issue once and for all, so we don't have this debate in our face every day. The people get to decide what marriage means. No-end run around the rules by activist judges or grandstanding San-Francisco-style politicians."

Q: What's the harm from SSM? "How can Adam and Steve hurt your marriage?"

A: "Who gets harmed? The people of this state who lose our right to define marriage as the union of husband and wife, that's who. That is just not right."

A: "If courts rule that same-sex marriage is a civil right, then, people like you and me who believe children need moms and dads will be treated like bigots and racists."

"Religious groups like Catholic Charities or the Salvation Army may lose their tax exemptions, or be denied the use of parks and other public facilities, unless they endorse gay marriage."

"Public schools will teach young children that two men being intimate are just the same as a husband and wife, even when it comes to raising kids."

"When the idea that children need moms and dads get legally stigmatized as bigotry, the job of parents and faith communities trying to transmit a marriage culture to their kids is going to get a lot harder."

"One thing is for sure: The people of this state will lose our right to keep marriage as the union of a husband and wife. That's not right."

Q: Why do you want to interfere with love?

A: "Love is a great thing. But marriage isn't just any kind of love; it's the special love of husband and wife for each other and their children."

Q: What about benefits? Don't gay couples and their kids need the benefits and protections of marriage?"

A: "If medical proxies aren't working, let's fix that problem. If people need health care, let's get them health care. Don't mess with marriage."

A: "The issue isn't benefits, it is marriage. Local folks can decide benefits. This is about the meaning of marriage, our most basic social institution for protecting children."

Q: Isn't divorce the real threat to marriage?

A: "High rates of divorce are one more reason we should be strengthening marriage, not conducting radical social experiments on it."

Q: Are you saying gays cannot be good parents?

A: "Two men might each be a good father, but neither can be a mom. The ideal for children is the love of their own mom and dad. No same-sex couple can provide that."

Q: What about older or infertile couples? If they marry why not same-sex couples?

A: "Every man and woman who marries is capable of giving any child they create (or adopt) a mother and a father. No same-sex couple can do this. It's apples and oranges."

Copyright © 2009 National Organization for Marriage

Posted on StayCatholic.com