

# Debate-Tested Soundbites on Defending Marriage

by Glenn T. Stanton

Here are helpful, debate-tested soundbites for defenders of natural marriage and the family.

**H**ere is a collection of lines and arguments that Focus on the Family has learned work best in the many public debates we have done on the issue of the same-sex family. These soundbites have also been tested by focus groups and rated very strongly.

## Four Key Points:

1. Same-sex families *always* deny children either their mother or father.
2. Same-sex family is a vast, untested social experiment with children.
3. Where does it stop? How do we say "no" to group marriage?
4. Schools will be forced to teach the homosexual family is normal. Churches will be legally forced to perform same-sex ceremonies.

These points and others are teased out in the sound bites below...

## Marriage Is Always About the Next Generation...

- o A loving and compassionate society *always* comes to the aid of motherless and fatherless families.
- o A loving and compassionate society *never* intentionally creates motherless or fatherless families, which is exactly what every same-sex home does.
- o The same-sex family is not driven by the needs of children, but rather by the radical wishes of a small group of adults.
- o No child development theory says children need two parents of the same gender, but rather that children need their mothers and fathers.

## A Vast Social Experiment Inflicted Upon Children...

- o No society, at any time, has ever raised a generation of children in same-sex families.
- o Same-sex "marriage" will subject generations of children to the status of lab rats in (name of debate opponent's) vast, untested social experiment.

But we know how the experiment will turn out...

- o America has raised millions of children in fatherless families for three decades and that experiment was a stunning failure by every measure! We know how damaging it is to raise children in intentionally fatherless families. Let's not create more child-suffering to satisfy adult desire.

(Thousands of published social science, psychological and medical studies show that children living in fatherless families, on average, suffer dramatically in every important measure of well-being. These children suffer from much higher levels of physical and mental illness, educational failure, poverty, substance abuse, criminal behavior, loneliness, as well as physical and sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup> Children living apart from both biological parents are

8 times more likely to die of maltreatment than children living with their mother and father.<sup>2</sup> )

### **Lessons From the World's Most Famous Lesbian Mom...**

Rosie O'Donnell shared this story in an *ABC Primetime Live* interview with Diane Sawyer:

Six-year-old Parker asks his mother, Rosie: "Mommy, why can't I have a daddy?"

Rosie answers: "Because I'm the kind of mommy who wants another mommy."

- Two most dangerous words for a parent to utter together: "I" and "want."
- Parker has never asked, "Momma, why can't we have all the rights and protections of marriage?" You see, such things only matter to adults. But he *has* said, "Momma, why can't I have a daddy?"
- What matters for children in marriage is whether their mothers are married to their fathers.

### **How Your Same-sex Family Will Harm My Family...**

- If this were just about *your* family, there would be no real danger. But same-sex "marriage" advocates are not seeking marriage for *you* alone, but rather demanding me -- and all of us -- to radically change our understanding of family. And that will do great damage.
- Your same-sex family will teach my little boys and girls that husband/wife and mother/father are merely *optional* for the family and therefore, meaningless.
- And I will *never* allow my (grand) children to be taught that their gender doesn't matter for the family. Their masculinity and femininity matter far too much, as does everyone's in this auditorium. (*said with great conviction and emotion...*)

### **Full Acceptance Will Be Mandatory...**

- My civil rights to object to homosexuality as an idea will be gone.
- Same-sex relationships and homes *are* tolerated in society today. Our nation has no existing problem where same-sex couples are evicted from their neighborhoods because of how they live. Americans tolerate such relationships.
- But this is not about mere tolerance. Instead it is about *forcing everyone to fully accept* these unnatural families.
- Only months after legalizing same-sex "marriage" in Canada, activists there successfully passed C-250, a bill criminalizing public statements against homosexuality, punishable by up to two years in prison! Say the wrong thing; go to jail. The same will happen here.
- Every public school in the nation would be forced to teach that same-sex "marriage" and homosexuality are perfectly normal – *Heather has Two Mommies* in K-12. Pictures in text books will be changed to show same-sex couples as normal.
- Your church will be forced to perform same-sex weddings. When courts -- as happened in Massachusetts -- find same-sex "marriage" to be a constitutional and fundamental human right, the ACLU will successfully argue the government is underwriting discrimination by offering tax exemptions to churches and synagogues that only honor natural marriage.
- Gay and lesbian people have a right to form meaningful relationships. They don't have a right to redefine marriage for all of us.

## The Public Purpose of Marriage...

- Marriage is a common good, not a special interest.
- Every society needs natural marriage -- as many men as possible each finding a woman, caring for and committing himself exclusively to her -- working together to create and raise the next generation.
- No society needs homosexual coupling. In fact, too much of it would be harmful to society and that is why natural marriage and same-sex coupling cannot be considered socially equal.

## A Civil Rights Issue...?

- There is no civil right to deny children their mothers or fathers, which is exactly what every same-sex home does. There is no civil right to conduct a vast, untested social experiment on children.
- It is an affront to African-Americans to say having past generations being prevented from taking a drink from a public water fountain or being sprayed down by fire hoses in a public park was on par to laws preventing a man from marrying another man. The comparison is shameful.
- Civil rights leaders strongly reject this assertion. Jessie Jackson explains, "Gays were never called three-fifths of a person in the Constitution...and they did not require the Voting Rights Act to have the right to vote."<sup>3</sup>

## Where Does It Stop...?

- If, as Andrew Sullivan says, "The right to marry whomever you want is a fundamental civil right," how do we say "no" to a woman who wants to become the third present-tense wife of a man or the two lesbians who recently sued in Canadian court to be able to marry their male sperm donor?
- (In response to their answer: "Well, marriage is about two people!"): How come your "that's just not right"/"that's not what marriage is about" objection to polygamy is more reasonable than my "that's just not right"/"that's not what marriage is about" objection to same-sex "marriage"? (This line has even won strong applause from my opponents!)

## Is Allowing Same-Sex 'Marriage' Like Allowing Interracial Marriage...?

- Striking down interracial marriage *affirmed* marriage by saying any man has a right to marry any woman. Same-sex "marriage" redefines marriage.
- Marriage has nothing to do with race. Marriage has everything to do with bringing men and women to build a domestic life together -- creating and caring for the next generation.
- Racism was about keeping races *apart* and that is *wrong*. Marriage is about bringing the genders *together* and that is *good*.
- And it is very different for a child to say, "I have a Korean mother and a Hispanic father" than to say, "I have two moms." (There are no negative child-development outcomes from being raised by interracial parents. There are thousands of social science studies showing negative outcomes for children who are denied their mothers and fathers.)<sup>4</sup>
- Sexual preference is *nothing* like skin color. Homosexuality is not a civil right.

## FMA: Why Would We Write Discrimination Into the Constitution...?

- Why would you write *radical* family redefinition into the Constitution?
- Our United States Constitution *is* going to be changed one way or the other. Either a small handful of unaccountable, activist judges are going to write a radical new definition of marriage into the Constitution, or, the American people can protect marriage constitutionally through the option the founding fathers provided via the amendment process.
- Supporters of the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) did not just dream up the need for such an amendment. We have been forced into this battle because a very small few want to constitutionally redefine marriage for all of us. Same-sex activists brought this fight to all of us.
- When, as president, Bill Clinton signed into law the federal Defense of Marriage Act, defining in federal law that marriage is between a man and a woman, no one accused him of writing "discrimination" into federal law as *The New York Times* and others have accused President Bush of doing regarding his support of a federal marriage amendment.

## Conclusion...

All of the family experimentation over the past 30 years – no fault divorce, the sexual revolution, cohabitation, fatherlessness -- have all been documented failures, harming adults and children in far deeper ways, for longer periods of time, than anyone ever imagined. Why do we think that this radical experiment will somehow bring good things? All we have is (opponent's name's) promise that everything will work out fine. Well, the advocates of each of these other experiments assured us the same thing. Their promises were empty. We all know that men and women are necessary for the family and that no child should intentionally be denied her mother or father in order to fulfill your adult desires. That is why we cannot accept the same-sex family. It serves no public purpose.

*Glenn T. Stanton is Director of Social Research and Cultural Affairs and Senior Analyst for Marriage and Sexuality at Focus on the Family. He is also author of Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society (Pinon Press).*

---

<sup>1</sup> David Popenoe, *Life Without Father: Compelling Evidence that Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children*, (New York, The Free Press, 1997); Glenn T. Stanton, *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society*, (Colorado Springs, Pinon Press, 1997); Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Deborah Dawson, "Family Structure and Children's Health and Well-Being: Data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53 (1991): 573-584; Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 103; Richard Koestner, et al., "The Family Origins of Empathic Concern: A Twenty-Six Year Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58 (1990): 709-717; E. Mavis Hetherington, "Effects of Father Absence on Personality Development in Adolescent Daughters," *Developmental Psychology* 7 (1972): 313-326; Irwin Garfinkel and Sara McLanahan, *Single Mothers and Their Children: A New American Dilemma* (Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1986), pp. 30-31; David Ellwood, *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 46; Ronald J. Angel and Jacqueline Worobey, "Single Motherhood and Children's Health," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 29 (1988): 38-52; L. Remez, "Children Who Don't Live with Both Parents Face Behavioral Problems," *Family Planning Perspectives*, January/February 1992; Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men and Women a Decade After Divorce*, (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990); Judith Wallerstein, et al., *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study*, (New York: Hyperion, 2000); Nicholas Zill, Donna Morrison, and Mary Jo Coiro, "Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Parent-Child Relationships, Adjustment, and Achievement in Young Adulthood," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7 (1993):91-103.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Stiffman, et al., "Household Composition and Risk of Fatal Child Maltreatment," *Pediatrics*, 109 (2002), 615-621.

<sup>3</sup>Marcella Bombardieri, *Boston Globe*, "Jackson Wary of Same-Sex Rift" Feb. 17, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> See Glenn T. Stanton, *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society*, (NavPress, 1997); David Popenoe, *Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage are Indispensable of the Good of Children and Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Ronald P. Rohner and Robert A. Veneziano, "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence," *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (2001): 382-405.