

Question: What does my same-sex marriage have to do with you? Why the fuss over this?

Answer: Thank you for asking this question. It kind of seems like a big deal is being made over something that is basically between two people, right? I know that I am personally tired of hearing myself talking and writing about it; I can only imagine how sick readers must be of this topic in this column. I would rather write about something else, but it seems like this is an issue that is causing a great deal of confusion in our society.

One of the main reasons I am writing about this topic so much is that it isn't actually about two people, it is about society. We know this, right? We know that we cannot change the definition of the most essential building block of society and not affect the rest of society.

Marriage is not merely a social contract between two people that is private to them; it touches all of us. We cannot even regulate light bulb use and have it affect only a few; it affects all. Marriage is truly the most basic unit of society. Do we really believe that we can redefine it and it won't do something to every other element of society? That is short-sighted at best and foolish at worst.

Whether it affects society for good or for ill is another issue. But what is not at issue is whether it will change anything for all of us.

We don't have to pretend to know the future or become alarmists to see a few of the consequences that will most likely come from the redefinition of marriage. All we have to do is look to our neighbors to the north, Canada.

Canada worked to redefine marriage in 2005. Since then, there have been a number of consequences to this action.

For example, the Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Calgary, Bishop Fred Henry, was charged with a hate crime when he wrote a letter to the Catholics in his diocese reiterating the church's constant teaching that all men and women are to be treated with dignity and respect, yet marriage is reserved for one man and one woman. The charge was later dropped by the petitioner, but it highlights the threat facing the church even being able to teach on the topic of marriage if it goes against the view accepted by the culture.

Canadian sportscaster Damian Goddard was fired when he tweeted his support of traditional marriage in 2011. He didn't attack anyone, but merely supporting a belief that marriage is best understood as between one man and one woman was enough for him to lose his job.

Even private business owners are seemingly not free to dissent from the "party line." Among many other examples that might be mentioned:

Seven years ago, a Knights of Columbus chapter in British Columbia was fined for declining to rent its social hall to a lesbian wedding ceremony. In the year 2000, the mayor of London, Ontario, was fined for failing to proclaim a Gay Pride day.

Even in the United States, there have already been serious consequences. Because the Catholic Church believes that every child deserves a mother and a father, Catholic Charities of Boston was forced to close its adoption services. The organization had been helping orphans for more than 100 years, but because they wouldn't place children with same-sex couples, they were essentially forced to not help any children find parents.

A photographer in New Mexico was fined more than \$6,000 in 2009 for refusing to photograph a lesbian couple's commitment ceremony.

Perhaps the most disturbing consequence comes with regard to education. In Ontario, the Toronto school board has adopted a policy of educating children about the positive value of same-sex marriage, with no opt-out option for parents. Similarly, in Massachusetts, after same-sex marriage was legalized some children as young as second grade have been taught about it in class, while courts have ruled parents had no right to prior notice or to opt out. Apparently, redefining marriage will always affect the rest of the culture.

And if a teacher refuses to teach this? What is the consequence? What if a parent tries to remove a child and, while teaching the inherent goodness of all people, still teaches that some actions are not good? Will the teacher lose a job? Will the parent have a child taken away? This may seem extreme, but it is not farfetched.

This is why we must be very careful about redefining marriage as a society. It is never about some people and not others. It is about all of us. While we are called to love (to actively will the good of the other), we must first discern the good. All people are worthy to be loved, but redefining marriage is not necessarily an act of love.